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Being A “Bridge Builder”: A Literacy Teacher Educator Negotiates the Divide between University-promoted Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and District-mandated Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The divide between university and classroom is a longstanding issue in teacher education. The disconnect between sociocultural theory often endorsed by universities and more behaviorist practices frequently enacted in classrooms is particularly acute in elementary literacy instruction—and is often exacerbated in high-poverty schools that tend to serve minoritized youth. Studying how teacher educators facilitate preservice teachers’ (PSTs’) learning across this divide is imperative if PSTs are to take up research-supported sociocultural and culturally responsive literacy practices. Drawn from a larger study on PSTs’ literacy learning, this paper highlights one literacy teacher educator’s attempt to bridge the university-field divide. Implications for how literacy teacher educators can support PSTs to enact socio-cultural and culturally responsive literacy practices within the oft-occurring constraints in high-poverty schools are addressed.

KEYWORDS

Teacher education; Urban elementary schools; culturally responsive pedagogy

The frequent disconnect between university coursework and classroom instruction has been a longstanding concern in teacher education (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). With a current policy press to make teacher education more clinical (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010), preservice teachers (PSTs) have likely spent more time in the field where they may have observed and enacted instruction that does not reflect the most current theory and research (Anderson & Stillman, 2011). This theory-practice divide has been acutely problematic in elementary literacy instruction—and particularly in schools labeled “low-performing”—due to the high-stakes accountability climate of the past 15-plus years (Gutiérrez, 2006). In addition, these schools have tended to serve “minoritized” youth, a term that “conveys the power relations and processes by which certain groups are ... marginalized” (McCarty, 2002, p. xv), even when those groups make up the numerical majority. Scholars have shown that minoritized students—such as emergent bilinguals, students of color, and students from low-income backgrounds—learn optimally from literacy instruction centering comprehension, communication, and meaning (Au, 2003; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009). However, pressures from the high-stakes accountability policy climate have led to literacy instruction focused on decontextualized, low-level skills, such as an over-emphasis on isolated phonics instruction, in many classrooms serving minoritized youth (Gutiérrez, 2006; Pacheco, 2010).

Teachers have played a vital role in ensuring minoritized youth experience robust literacy instruction, which is why their preparation is crucially important. Thus, the larger project from which this paper draws explored the literacy learning of three PSTs in the contexts of the social justice-oriented teacher education program (TEP) they attended and their student teaching placements in high-poverty schools. Cultural historical activity theory, or activity theory, guided the investigation, which supported considering how various factors influenced PSTs' learning. As teacher educators were important in shaping PSTs' literacy learning—and particularly in bridging the university-field divide—I report here on a sub-question from the larger study: How did teacher educators mediate PSTs' literacy learning in the context of high-poverty schools? Specifically, I highlight one teacher educator, Jessica (all names are pseudonyms), and an explicit attempt she made to bridge the divide between the sociocultural and culturally responsive literacy instruction she endorsed in her Literacy Methods course and the mandated literacy curriculum PSTs encountered in the field.

To show it was possible to merge university-endorsed practices with field-based realities, Jessica presented a sample schedule in her Literacy Methods course that demonstrated how she would infuse TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy into a classroom that utilized mandated literacy curriculum. Jessica's sample schedule stood out for its uniqueness—both within this research project and within the literature—and for the impact the three PSTs, who were TEP peers and students in Jessica's course, ascribed to the schedule in terms of furthering their learning around literacy teaching. I discuss how Jessica's intentional mediation was beneficial for PSTs' learning to teach literacy in high-poverty schools and also how her foray into attempting to show PSTs how to bridge these two worlds did not go far enough, thereby falling short of being optimally educative. Note that throughout the paper I utilize three acronyms for the sake of brevity: TEP, for teacher education program; PSTs, for preservice teachers; and CTs, for cooperating teachers.

Literature review

Many researchers have documented the misalignment between TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and that enacted by CTs; this misalignment has been shown to constrain PSTs' learning when they were unable to observe and/or enact TEP-promoted pedagogy (e.g., Anderson & Stillman, 2010; 2011; Cherian, 2007; Sampson, Linek, Raine, & Szabo, 2013; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004; Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2013). For example, Smagorinsky et al. (2013) reported, a TEP's "hands-on, student-centered emphasis ... withered as [the PST] gravitated toward becoming the sort of teacher she had initially associated with ineffective instruction" (p. 178) during student teaching, due in part to her CT's influence.

The policy climate has exacerbated the university-field divide, particularly regarding the mandated implementation of scripted literacy curriculum often seen in high-poverty schools serving minoritized youth (e.g., Maniates, 2017; Pacheco, 2010; Shelton, 2010; Stillman, 2009, 2011; Timberlake, Thomas, & Barrett, 2017). Even the re-named Every Student Succeeds Act "fundamentally maintains a test-driven, top-down, remediate and penalize law" as its No Child Left Behind predecessor, likely leading to similar ramifications (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016, p. 7). Given these conditions, PSTs preparing to teach minoritized youth have been increasingly likely to student teach in classrooms where literacy instruction has been affected by high-stakes accountability policies; researchers have documented effects on PSTs' learning (e.g.,

Anderson & Stillman, 2010; Buchanan et al., 2019). In one study, student teachers in high-poverty schools had CTs that either rigidly followed or completely ignored a required literacy program. PSTs therefore either did not observe how to “strategically adapt mandated curricula to meet students’ needs” or did not become familiar with required curriculum (Anderson & Stillman, 2011, p. 450), limiting their opportunities to learn to teach literacy within instructional constraints.

Other scholars have demonstrated that although PSTs may be subjected to curricular constraints and have limited autonomy in their CT’s classroom, it was still possible for them to resist, adapt, and/or supplement the curriculum (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2019; Castro, 2010; Stillman & Anderson, 2011). For example, Stillman and Anderson (2011) analyzed one PST’s attempt to integrate an activity from her TEP—creating a mural—in the context of a classroom that followed a scripted literacy curriculum. The PST created an authentic learning opportunity for students to work together and draw on their prior knowledge to expand their content understandings. However, due to insufficient teacher educator support, the full potential of this opportunity was not realized. Taken together, these authors have shown the possibilities for PSTs to creatively negotiate policy-imposed instructional constraints, but there has been less evidence indicating how teacher educators can facilitate PSTs’ learning around such negotiations.

Specifically, although scholars have considered teacher educators essential in facilitating PSTs’ field-based learning, the research base has remained relatively thin regarding what constitutes effective teacher educator mediation (Anderson & Stillman, 2013b; Clift & Brady, 2005). Here, mediation refers to the ways teacher educators shape PSTs’ learning and reflects a sociocultural perspective, which many researchers have utilized to study PSTs’ learning (e.g., Stillman & Anderson, 2016; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). Notably, few studies have paid particular attention to the actual mediation teacher educators provided PSTs and with what consequences for PSTs’ learning (e.g., Brock, Moore, & Parks, 2007; Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006; Stillman & Anderson, 2016; Valencia et al., 2009). In one study that did focus on teacher educator mediation, authors found that through dialogue where teacher educators sought to “destabilize any stereotypical representations … by offering counter-stories” (Rogers et al., 2006, p. 211), PSTs’ perspectives broadened to become more encompassing of difference. Other authors highlighted the ways teacher educator mediation fell short (Brock et al., 2007) and led to “lost opportunities for learning” for PSTs (Valencia et al., 2009). Given the limited evidence of effective teacher educator mediation, researchers have called for additional, context-specific examples of targeted mediation shown to be critical for supporting PSTs’ field-based learning (Anderson & Stillman, 2013b). In addition, scholars have encouraged utilizing sociocultural theory, and activity theory specifically, as these theories are well suited to support contextually-specific understanding of PSTs’ learning (Anderson & Stillman, 2013b; Roth & Lee, 2007).

Therefore, in this paper, I address teacher educator mediation of PSTs’ learning to teach literacy while preparing to teach in high-poverty schools. Drawn from a larger study where I utilized activity theory to investigate how contextual factors—including teacher educators—shaped PSTs’ literacy learning, I provide an example of teacher educator mediation that holds potential for facilitating PSTs’ learning across the university-field divide.

Theoretical framework

As I investigated the various factors that shaped PSTs' learning, I employed cultural historical activity theory, a strand of sociocultural learning theory emphasizing the importance of context and culture in learning. Activity theory-based analyses have centered on "activity systems," represented in [Figure 1](#) (Engeström, 1999). In an activity system, individual learners—called "subjects"—are in a dialectical relationship with all facets of their environment, such as the established norms of a given setting and other community members (Cole & Engeström, 1993). In other words, learners both shape and are shaped by their environment. For example, CTs served as important community members that shaped PSTs' learning around literacy teaching, and the "rules" of their classrooms—such as the curriculum and participation norms—influenced PSTs' learning. Just as PSTs' learning was shaped by these (and other) environmental factors, PSTs—as individuals participating in the activity—also influenced their learning contexts. For example, PSTs brought their backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and ways of interacting with children into their student teaching placements, thereby altering the classrooms.

In this study, the "object"—or overarching purpose of activity—from the TEP's perspective was for PSTs to teach literacy in sociocultural, culturally responsive ways. Given the district mandate to adhere to an adopted literacy program—Macmillan/McGraw-Hill's *Treasures*—the object from the district's perspective was arguably for teachers to implement *Treasures* with fidelity. These purposes were often at odds with one another. Given the distinct sociocultural histories of the TEP and the urban school district where PSTs student taught, they can be conceived as two interacting activity systems where PSTs' learning was situated, as represented in [Figure 2](#) (Engeström, 1996). In this paper, I analyze one literacy teacher educator's mediation of PSTs' learning in relation to the two activity systems' objects, where she utilized mediating artifacts to orient activity toward a third object: enacting TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy while also meeting district curriculum expectations.

Learning is a central concept in activity theory, and it is conceived of as "appropriation," which refers to how learners take up socially- and culturally-created tools for their own purposes (Tolman, 1999; Wertsch, 1991). In other words, appropriation occurs when learners make a tool their own (Tolman, 1999). For example, a PST may initially complete a lesson plan

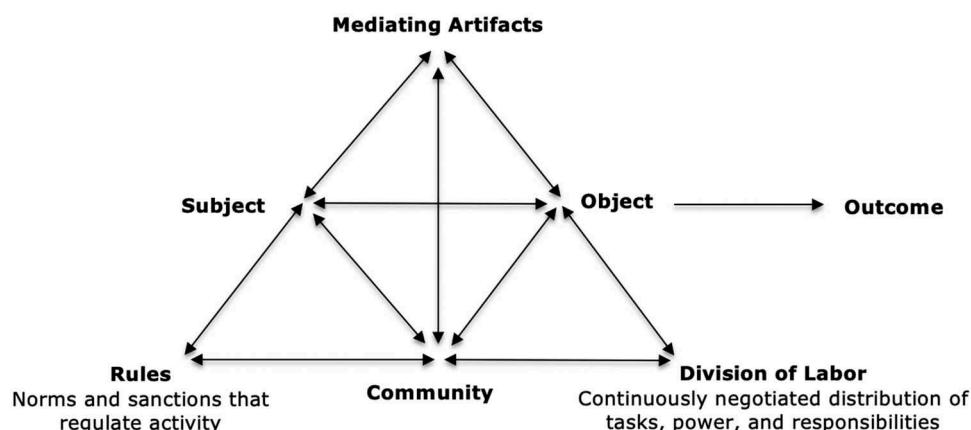


Figure 1. Interacting activity systems (adapted from Engeström, 1996).

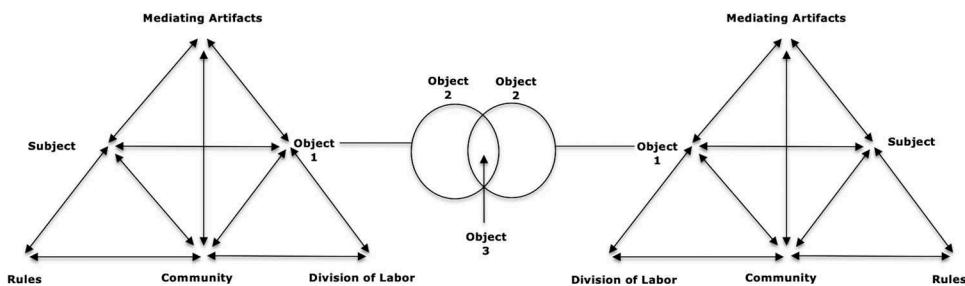


Figure 2. CHAT activity system (Engeström, 1999).

template for coursework, adhering to a professor's specifications; in time, the novice may utilize the template to serve her specific needs—perhaps some parts are more elaborated than others—and in even more time, she may discard the template, as the teacher has appropriated effective lesson design.

Mediation of learning is a key element of activity systems and is “the central distinctive characteristic of human[s]” (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 13). Specifically, humans are unique in that they are not confined to only interacting with their physical environment based on biological necessities but can regulate their behavior by using artifacts that allow for abstraction across time and place (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is humankind’s most important mediating artifact, but anything used to moderate behavior can be a mediating artifact. For example, a teacher’s questions and a graphic organizer can mediate a student’s comprehension, while standards and curriculum often serve as mediating artifacts shaping teachers’ literacy instruction. According to cultural historical activity theorists, mediation may be more or less intentionally targeted towards a particular “object” (Engeström, 1999). For instance, a teacher educator likely purposefully designs her syllabus to support PSTs to reach learning goals, whereas when she deviates from her plans may be incidental—but still sends messages about which topics are worthy of syllabus revisions. Additionally, re-mediation constitutes a “shift in the way that mediating devices regulate coordination with the environment” (Cole & Griffin, 1983, p. 70). In other words, re-mediation involves reorganizing the activity system and considering the various components that mediate learning within it, as opposed to remediating individuals (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Here, I address one teacher educator’s intentional re-mediation around the university-field divide.

Context and methodology

In order to study PSTs’ learning in depth, I conducted a qualitative nested case study, where three PSTs were individual cases nested within the group case (Stake, 1995). I used site-level “purposeful sampling” (Creswell, 2007), as I selected a TEP with a mission to prepare social justice educators for urban, high-poverty schools serving culturally and linguistically diverse youth. I was not affiliated with the TEP and did not know participants outside the study.

The TEP at the prestigious, public University of the West Coast (a pseudonym) was located in a large U.S. city and centered on “improv[ing] urban schooling” (TEP Handbook). Social justice and cultural responsiveness permeated the curriculum, such as using Freire (1970), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez’s (1992) work as core texts. These tenets also guided programmatic decisions, such as placing PSTs in high-poverty

schools serving culturally and linguistically diverse students and requiring courses on urban schooling and Critical Media Literacy. There were approximately 45 elementary PSTs in the TEP, split into two advisory groups for Student Teaching Seminar. Some courses, such as Literacy Methods, had two sections, with PSTs from both advisories; other courses, such as Critical Media Literacy, enrolled all PSTs. PSTs took Literacy Methods in the fall and began observing in CTs' classrooms midway through the quarter; they student taught the following two quarters.

Participants

Out of nine PSTs who volunteered to participate in the study, I selected three PSTs as focal case study participants because they were enrolled in the same sections of both the Literacy Methods and the Student Teaching Seminar courses, where I observed. In [Table A1](#), I depict how these three PSTs were the only volunteers in the same sections of both courses. Since course sections met concurrently, it was not possible for me to observe in different sections. Case study participants Emily, Megan, and Molly demographically represented the “typical” elementary teacher in the U.S.: monolingual, upper-middle class white women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). I observed in Jessica’s section of Literacy Methods upon the TEP director’s recommendation, who noted Jessica’s long tenure—nine years—as a clinical professor in the TEP and her alignment with the TEP’s mission. I chose focal participants from Tim’s Student Teaching Seminar because some volunteers from the other section student taught in bilingual classrooms; I am not bilingual so was unable to observe many of their literacy lessons.

Jessica, the teacher educator discussed here, was a white woman who taught courses and served as faculty advisor for first-year teachers completing the TEP. Jessica was very committed to her PSTs, as evidenced when she shared, “I always want them to know that there’s somebody that cares about them and wants them to do their best and wants them to stay … teaching in urban schools.” Jessica’s care clearly affected PSTs, such as when Emily claimed, “Jessica did such a good job with us that like so much of [what I’m doing] is … wanting her to be proud.”

Data collection

Case study data collected over one year included interviews, observations, and documents (Stake, 1995). Case study methodology and activity theory guided attempts to capture a thorough and holistic picture of PSTs’ learning and factors that shaped their learning, such as teacher education mediation. As such, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each PST—in the fall, winter, and spring—to study change over time in their literacy perspectives and their literacy instructional practice. In addition to interviewing Jessica, I interviewed Tim, who taught the Critical Media Literacy course and served as PSTs’ faculty advisor, as well as PSTs’ CTs. These interviews facilitated gathering teacher educators’ perspectives on PSTs’ learning.

To triangulate participants’ self-reports, I observed weekly in three TEP courses: Literacy Methods, Critical Media Literacy, and Student Teaching Seminar. Since I was interested in PSTs’ learning around teaching literacy, I observed in the required literacy courses; since I was interested in their field-based learning, I observed the Student Teaching Seminar. In addition

to data pertaining to PSTs' TEP-based learning, I observed PSTs teach literacy for 30–120 minutes on 4–6 different occasions in each of their two student teaching placements. I observed the PSTs' entire literacy lesson(s); I did not typically observe literacy lessons taught by CTs. Relevant documents included course syllabi, class handouts, and PSTs' assignments, lesson plans, student teaching reflections, and edTPAs—the teaching performance assessment required for PSTs' credential that included reflections around planning and teaching three literacy lessons.

Here, I examine one incident from Jessica's Literacy Methods course. Out of all data collected, this was the only time I observed or heard about a teacher educator explicitly bridging the university-field divide regarding literacy instruction. I therefore draw upon documents and observations from the methods course, and observation and interview data that addressed Jessica's practices to highlight the potential affordances and limitations of Jessica's re-mediation of the activity system. I report data pertaining to the study's overall findings elsewhere (Struthers, 2015).

Data analysis

Data analysis followed the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and was an ongoing, iterative process. I coded both deductively and inductively and engaged in multiple coding cycles, after each round of participant interviews and after I collected all data. The combination of deductive and inductive coding provided robust analyses guided by theory and participants' voices. Specifically, after initially reading the data, I imported activity theory-based deductive codes to ensure a theoretically grounded analysis. For example, activity theory-based deductive codes included codes for data relating to *learners*, or PSTs and their lives; codes for data pertaining to important *community members* in the activity system, such as CTs and university-based teacher educators; codes for data addressing the *TEP*, such as assignments and topics covered; and so forth. Next, I engaged in inductive coding within each deductive macro code, allowing codes to emerge from the data; open coding in this manner kept analysis close to the data and allowed me to code all salient instances (Stake, 1995). I subsequently reorganized and revised initial inductive codes as necessary. For example, initial inductive codes under the *TEP* macro code included *analyzing student work*, *building community*, *modeling best practices*, *addressing theory-practice*, and *utilizing video*. I reorganized these codes as tertiary codes under a new secondary code, *pedagogy*, reflecting multiple coding layers. Throughout analysis, I wrote analytic memos, reflecting on the coding process and general sensemaking.

After first-cycle coding of all data, I engaged in second-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013) and continued writing analytic memos. Whereas initial inductive codes remained particular to specific incidences in the data, second-cycle coding was "conceptual and abstract" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 11) and primarily involved coding for patterns. Second-cycle codes included *salience of field experiences*, *teacher educator mediation*, *TEP-aligned teaching*, and *TEP-field disconnect*. Writing memos facilitated sensemaking around how these patterns interacted. For instance, overall (and reported elsewhere; Struthers, 2015), there was a lack of targeted teacher educator mediation around bridging the TEP-field disconnect. However, in this paper, I discuss an exception and highlight one specific practice Jessica engaged in during her methods course and which PSTs reported as beneficial. Jessica's intentional and explicit

attention to bridging the university-field divide stood out for its uniqueness across the data set (Saldaña, 2013; Stake, 1995).

I ensured trustworthiness in three primary ways (Stake, 1995). First, I immersed myself in the setting through numerous observations over time. Second, I utilized methodological triangulation by using multiple data sources to address the research questions. Third, I engaged in member checks as participants provided feedback on interview transcripts and initial findings.

Findings

Teacher educator mediation shaped PSTs' learning around the disconnect between TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and the school district's mandated curriculum. Jessica purposefully re-mediated the activity system to facilitate PSTs' learning across this divide by constructing a third object that integrated TEP and district goals. Specifically, Jessica introduced a mediating artifact into the activity system—a schedule that incorporated aspects of TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and *Treasures*. Ultimately, PSTs appreciated but did not appropriate her example.

Constructing a third object: Jessica's goals for PSTs' learning about literacy teaching

Jessica's overarching aims for PSTs' learning aligned with the TEP's sociocultural and culturally responsive approach, yet she recognized field-based realities of the mandated literacy curriculum. Thus, Jessica constructed a third object, where the two interacting activity systems—and their oftentimes conflicting objects—could overlap in meaningful ways (see Figure 2). Jessica had several goals for PSTs' learning she hoped to attain by constructing the third object.

On the one hand, Jessica's course was both theoretically grounded—predominantly in sociocultural, cognitive, reader response, and critical literacy theories—and practical, as she wanted PSTs to leave with tangible pedagogical strategies “they can do right when they go into student teaching.” She listed read alouds of literature featuring diverse characters (e.g., Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016); word sorts for comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling (e.g., Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2016); and making words to explore phonics (e.g., Cunningham, 2016) as examples of literacy instructional practices she hoped PSTs could enact. Overall, Jessica aimed for PSTs to teach literacy in ways that emphasized student centeredness, small-group work, engagement, meaning-making, and matching culturally relevant books to readers, which reflected the TEP's object, or overarching aims, for PSTs' learning.

On the other hand, Jessica was realistic about the literacy instruction PSTs would see in the field, as the large urban district where PSTs would student teach had adopted the *Treasures* program. The district's object, or overarching purpose, for literacy teaching seemed to be implementing *Treasures* with fidelity. *Treasures* lessons I observed and those PSTs described in interviews tended to consist of teacher-centered, whole-class lessons based on texts from the program's anthology, with the PST or CT reading from the teacher's guide. Jessica lamented the texts were “either too hard or too easy for most students” and thus not

responsive to students' needs. These lessons tended not to reflect TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy.

Though the objects of the two activity systems were oftentimes at odds, Jessica attempted to address this issue head-on by constructing a third object, where TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and district-mandated literacy curriculum could be integrated. Jessica articulated this goal in several ways. For example, an "essential question" listed in her syllabus was, "How can we use our critical thinking skills when using adopted materials as tools based on our knowledge of literacy instruction?" When reviewing the syllabus in class, Jessica elaborated, "Often you're going to be told to do *this* but your kids will need [*that*] ... It always starts with *kids* and what they need." In line with this in-class statement and her syllabus, in her interview Jessica discussed her recognition that PSTs—as student teachers and as full-time teachers—could not ignore the mandated curriculum. Instead, she stated that her goals included wanting PSTs, Jessica emphasized teachers having agency and making decisions grounded in their knowledge of students and sociocultural and culturally responsive literacy instruction.

to learn how to use the curriculum that they're given in ways that make sense in order to engage the students and to move them forward in their literacy capabilities. So if they're given a set of worksheets, they can use the material ... in a more engaging way.

Jessica also took responsibility for supporting PSTs in this endeavor: "I need to find the ways to help them see the spots where they can make the choices," though she was adamant that her course did not morph into a "*Treasures* class," particularly given all the content she needed to cover. One way she addressed bridging the two worlds was by mentioning examples of ways to modify, adapt, and/or supplement *Treasures* throughout the course. For instance, she shared how her advisee determined that a *Treasures* anthology text was too challenging for her students when learning to determine cause and effect. The teacher therefore scaffolded students' learning by first introducing cause and effect with an accessible text before utilizing the anthology text. However, Jessica felt these anecdotes did not sufficiently support PSTs' learning toward the third object; thus, she introduced a new mediating artifact into the activity system.

Introducing a new mediating artifact: a sample, hybrid schedule

On the last day of the Literacy Methods course, Jessica introduced a new mediating artifact, or tool, into the activity system when she shared a sample schedule that incorporated *Treasures* requirements and TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy around one week from the second-grade *Treasures* program. Jessica began, "Let's think about scheduling and let's think about *Treasures* ... I wanted to show you that it's possible to live in this world and do this." She then projected a weekly schedule depicting how she would spend time each day, shown in [Table B1](#). She allotted time for practicing *Treasures* vocabulary words, reading the *Treasures* anthology, and employing some components of what *Treasures* called Universal Access Time. Jessica walked PSTs through this overview, adding commentary around utilizing additional class time for literacy. For instance, she encouraged PSTs to "use breakfast time," as the district provided breakfast in classrooms. She elaborated, "My [advisee] ... does phonemic awareness raps during breakfast ... so singing." Earlier in the course, Jessica had taught about the value of singing for developing phonemic awareness, so her suggestion reinforced a previously addressed concept. She continued, adding that for Universal Access Time, "[I'd do] small

group work so students get differentiated work ... [and] independent reading ... The anthology story is *My Name is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003)—one of my suggestions is to ... get the book.” In her overview, Jessica weaved in some core components of a balanced literacy approach that she had taught about all quarter, such as independent reading, differentiated instruction, and high-quality children’s literature.

After walking through the weekly schedule, Jessica shared schedules for the literacy-based portions of individual days. As an example, her Tuesday schedule is shown in [Table C1](#). Jessica again narrated her decision-making process, infusing instructional practices she had taught in the course into *Treasures* requirements. For instance, she took vocabulary words from *Treasures* and suggested utilizing the “four-quadrant strategy” (adapted from Frayer, Frederick, and Klausmeir (1969) and presented previously) to introduce the words to students, in order to have them work with the words in more interactive, meaningful, and research-supported ways. For the days’ “Anthology” portion, Jessica recognized that PSTs would need to utilize the *Treasures* text, as students were assessed on it. However, she had recommendations for how to make the text more engaging and relevant for students. In addition to reading aloud the actual book, Jessica demonstrated how she would teach the anthology story and designated comprehension strategies (making and confirming predictions and summarizing) in student-centered ways. She drew upon instructional practices PSTs had read about (Tompkins, 2012) and engaged with during the course.

She introduced the story on Monday using a “Book Box,” an instructional practice that involved bringing in realia representing the book and having students collaboratively make predictions; this had been introduced earlier in the course. On Tuesday, Jessica provided students with the following supports to make predictions: sentence frames, a two-column chart (what we predict/what happens), and a prompt for writing/drawing their predictions independently (Do you predict school will get better for Yoon? Why?). On Wednesday, Jessica had students work in pairs to summarize the story thus far using the “five-finger strategy,” where each finger represented one of the story elements: setting, characters, problem, events, and solution. Jessica had introduced the “five-finger strategy” previously and incorporated it here as opposed to calling on individual students in the teacher-centered, traditional initiate-respond-evaluate format of participation outlined in *Treasures*. She also planned to complete the two-column chart and engage the class in the *Treasures* “Critical Thinking” questions. Thursday involved revisiting the five-finger strategy in pairs to summarize the entire story and co-constructing a new four-column chart with the headings “somebody-wanted-but-so” (also introduced previously) as another way to support students’ summarizing before students independently wrote summaries. On Friday, Jessica had students use the *Treasures* “Retelling Cards” (with images of the story) to summarize the text in pairs before creating “Open-Mind Portraits” (also introduced previously), where students drew the character’s thoughts and feelings. As Jessica explained her choices, she shared her thinking: “I took a look at what the book had to offer, and then I thought, ‘What would make the most sense?’” She modeled how to make informed (though constrained) choices in literacy instruction—by utilizing required materials but considering how to use them more meaningfully.

As she went through each day, Jessica shared how she followed some parts of *Treasures* but departed from others. For instance, she noted that *Treasures* recommended *Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen (1987), as a read aloud, so she built from that and did an author study for the week, reading different Jane Yolen books during her read aloud portion of each day following students’ lunch—again demonstrating how she would use other times in the day for literacy.

Jessica explained that she would not use *Treasures* for writing, noting that in her experience, writing was where principals tended to allow more leeway to deviate from *Treasures*. She asked, “How could we do more responsive writing?” and shared the lessons she would teach during this “publishing week” in a personal narrative unit. Overall, Jessica’s schedule included required aspects of *Treasures*—predetermined vocabulary words, specified comprehension strategies, and both required and recommended texts—but made modifications in presentation and format as well as leveraged additional times in the day to engage students in authentic literacy endeavors.

Importantly, Jessica admitted that planning for this week was time-consuming and challenging. She explained, “I spent the majority of my Thanksgiving break planning a *Treasures* unit … This took me a really long time … Mostly because I was really pissed. This type of curriculum is so unresponsive to kids.” In addition to wrestling with the schedule, Jessica reflected in her interview on the process of showing PSTs what she created, saying it was, While another way of engaging PSTs with this content might have been preferable, Jessica lamented that there was not enough time to “get through what I need to get through.” However, she remained committed to being a “bridge builder” between TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and the mandated literacy curriculum implemented in PSTs’ student teaching placements.

… too much of me telling them what they need to be doing rather than maybe having us look at it all together and … think, ‘What are some things that we learned in this course that we could do with this if this was our story for the week, if this was our strategy?’

Considering the outcome: PSTs appreciate but do not appropriate the hybrid schedule

As Jessica introduced the schedule to further PSTs’ learning toward the third object of integrating TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy into mandated curricular requirements, it is important to consider the outcomes of her mediation. Jessica’s hybrid schedule influenced PSTs; however, they appreciated the example, but they did not appropriate it for their own purposes.

Despite Jessica’s concerns surrounding the effectiveness of sharing this schedule, PSTs were overwhelmingly appreciative of this direct TEP-field connection. PSTs often complained about *Treasures* and in particular, the “boring” anthology stories that students could not “relate to,” and the preponderance of whole-class, “one-size-fits all” instruction. Thus, they were eager to learn how to enact TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy while adhering to district requirements. For instance, while Jessica was sharing the schedule, one PST said, “We need a whole class on this.” The class nodded in agreement. Others asked questions, such as when Megan inquired whether CTs might be “insulted” if PSTs ask to teach in “more interactive” ways and when Molly asked, “What if you’re in the ‘workbook class?’” Jessica responded by addressing the unique challenges of student teaching: “Playing by the rules of your [CT] is important … [but] you have to meet the needs of kids,” and proposed minor changes: “Start working with a small group at recess … [S]uggest doing the worksheet for homework—sort words instead of doing the worksheet.” PSTs’ engagement indicated that they found this topic valuable for their learning.

Interviews with PSTs confirmed these observations. They spoke at length about how helpful they found the “practical” aspect of Jessica’s course, such as when Megan reflected, “[Jessica] taught us … practical application stuff, whereas a lot of my other courses have just been theory based … [W]hat she taught us was, honestly, more useful.” Molly echoed Megan, saying the course was “more concrete” and, “really focused on practice … and there was theory if we needed to justify ourselves, of course, but it was based more on what you’re doing, which I liked.” Though PSTs recognized the importance of being able to draw upon theory to support decisions, as Molly referenced, PSTs clearly appreciated Jessica’s tangible classroom strategies.

In addition to general comments about practical classroom strategies, PSTs specifically mentioned how Jessica addressed field-based realities head-on by introducing the schedule. For instance, Molly said, “[T]he thing Jessica did … with the lesson plan, for how to incorporate *Treasures*, but put your own spin on it, I am really eager to learn more about that type of stuff.” Similarly, Emily commented, “The most important thing for me in Lit Methods was the supplemental aspect … If your principal does want you to stick to *Treasures*, how can you build out of that and bring in other things?” PSTs clearly appreciated Jessica’s example, as it showed them that it was possible to incorporate TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy when utilizing *Treasures*. It is interesting, however, that PSTs attributed so much import to Jessica’s example when only 30 minutes of the entire course was specifically devoted to this topic. This speaks to the value PSTs attributed to making tangible connections between university and classroom.

That said, despite the usefulness PSTs attributed to Jessica’s schedule and their stated desire to teach outside of *Treasures*, PSTs did not appear to actually enact Jessica’s suggestions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, PSTs found it nearly impossible to diverge from their CTs’ literacy instructional program when in classrooms utilizing *Treasures*. Megan noted how much time *Treasures* took, adding, “[I]t was kind of hard to do much of anything outside of *Treasures*.” Similarly, Molly reflected: “[T]hey’re very strict about staying with the curriculum … they really have the teachers … stick to the script,” which is what Molly reported doing herself. She said that adapting the curriculum is “something I really want to do, but I also can’t take over the teacher’s situation,” stating how she felt constrained by her CT’s classroom rules. In rare instances when PSTs taught literacy outside *Treasures* while in classrooms where its use was enforced, they tended to ignore *Treasures* completely, such as when Emily and Molly selected different texts for their edTPA lessons (as reported elsewhere (Ahmed, *in press*)), as opposed to enacting a hybrid model.

In addition to feeling constrained by classroom rules, PSTs felt they were not yet skilled enough to modify, adapt, and/or transform the curriculum the way Jessica did—but they hoped to do so in the future. Megan’s comments exemplified others’: “I was just … learning how to do what you have to do and then as I go further, there’s more room to be more creative.” She elaborated, “… [I]nstead of reading *Treasures*, I’d like to read a book and learn how to … identify a theme.” Others echoed Megan’s sentiments, so their goal of using the mandated curriculum but “put[ting] my own spin on it,” as Molly said, remained elusive. This is unfortunate, especially given PSTs’ stated desire to teach outside *Treasures* and enact TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy.

Discussion

Jessica's sample schedule provided a concrete example of bridging the divide between TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy and the realities of high-poverty elementary classrooms. This was a notable example of teacher educator re-mediation across this frequent division—one that PSTs appreciated and for which scholars have called (e.g., Anderson & Stillman, 2013b; Stillman & Anderson, 2016). Examples of teacher educator re-mediation around the university-field divide, such as Jessica's schedule, can support teacher educators working to prepare PSTs to teach in ways that research suggests is how students—and particularly minoritized youth—learn literacy optimally while also preparing PSTs to navigate classroom realities.

However, in this instance, though PSTs appreciated the sample schedule, the potential benefit of Jessica's modeling was not realized fully, given the lack of evidence showing PSTs applied the information while student teaching. PSTs seemed to have taken up the idea of teaching outside of *Treasures* but not the pedagogical expertise to do so—or, using activity theory terminology, they had begun to appropriate the conceptual tool of integrating these two divergent instructional approaches but had not yet appropriated the practical tool of enacting a hybrid approach to teaching literacy (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Jessica's modeling likely was not sufficient for PSTs to fully grasp how and why she altered the schedule as she did and then put something similar into practice. Though it is challenging for PSTs to teach outside CTs' curriculum, it is possible (e.g., Castro, 2010; Stillman & Anderson, 2011). Utilizing cultural historical activity theory offers affordances in considering how Jessica's practice might have been more effective in supporting PSTs to actualize these practices.

Central to cultural historical activity theory is the emphasis on the situated nature of learning and activity (Engeström, 1999). Though Jessica was aware of—and responsive to—the district context where PSTs would student teach (i.e., it had adopted *Treasures*), her re-mediation of sharing the schedule was not conducted with particular learners and contexts in mind. That is, if Jessica had designed the schedule in consideration of individual PSTs student teaching in particular classrooms—with a CT, with students as learners, with norms governing interaction, and so forth—it might have been more immediately relevant to PSTs. (Though, considering that Jessica's class occurred before PSTs student taught, her opportunity to more fully contextualize her re-mediation was limited.) In short, though the district had adopted *Treasures*, different schools and classrooms may have had different norms and rules around utilizing the program.

Consider, for instance, Jessica's comment that there was often room to deviate from *Treasures* in writing, so she created her own workshop-based writing unit in her schedule. However, it is possible that some CTs might closely adhere to *Treasures* for writing. If that were the case, Jessica would have needed to modify her re-mediation in response to these classrooms' "rules," perhaps showing how she might utilize the *Treasures* writing prompt but incorporate topic choice (an important aspect in the writing workshop approach she advocated) within the prompt and/or during other parts of the day. In addition to varying classroom norms, elementary students are different in each classroom. How might *Treasures* adaptation look different in fifth grade than first grade, for instance? How might Jessica's thinking around the adaptation process vary if she were planning for emergent bi/multilingual students versus students who spoke only English? It is probable that aspects of

her decision-making and planning process would have looked different in different contexts, based on the students. Situating her re-mediation within the specific contexts of individual classrooms—as opposed to the general context of the district—could have further supported PSTs’ appropriation of integrating aspects of TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy into a schedule dominated by a mandated literacy curriculum.

Similarly, just as classroom contexts vary, PSTs as learners also vary. If Jessica were working with an individual PST to create weekly and daily schedules, she likely would have taken that particular learner into consideration, such as the PST’s prior knowledge and experience, the PST’s readiness to take on new tasks, the PST’s developing understanding of literacy instructional practices introduced in the methods course, and so forth. In sum, activity theory draws attention to the “multivoiced” nature of activity systems and the situated nature of learning (Engeström, 1999); thus, considering particular learners and contexts would have likely been beneficial in furthering PSTs’ learning around actually enacting a hybrid schedule.

Cultural historical activity theory also emphasizes knowledge co-construction; Jessica’s example was premade and presented to PSTs—it was not constructed with them. Jessica, of course, critically reflected on sharing the schedule when she expressed her worry that she was merely “telling” PSTs what to do instead of “having us look at it all together.” Expanding on Jessica’s idea, activity theory suggests that if Jessica and PSTs had jointly co-constructed a schedule, PSTs’ learning might have been deeper, or PSTs would have been better positioned to appropriate the practice of creating a hybrid schedule that met the demands of using mandated curriculum while incorporating TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy. Especially considering the challenging nature of working with mandated curriculum in this way—it took Jessica, an experienced educator, “all Thanksgiving weekend” to plan for the week—PSTs as novices likely would have benefited from working collaboratively, with Jessica’s continued mediation as the more experienced “other” in the interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, PSTs could have worked in small groups, perhaps by grade level, to co-create their own weekly schedules, with Jessica providing necessary scaffolding in the form of questions, comments, suggestions, reminders of topics and pedagogical practices introduced in the course, and so forth. In addition to facilitating co-construction of knowledge, these small groups could have also supported the creation of schedules that were more responsive to PSTs’ specific classroom contexts, both of which activity theory suggests would have likely served to further PSTs’ appropriation.

It is possible that these modifications of Jessica’s promising lesson—considering specific classroom contexts and having PSTs collaboratively design schedules—might have further supported PSTs to actually take up this practice of incorporating TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy into the mandated curriculum. However, although PSTs did not evidence appropriating this practice while student teaching, Jessica’s sample schedule planted the seeds of how to balance teaching *Treasures* with incorporating TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy in PSTs’ minds. It is possible that PSTs may return to this idea and their emerging understandings of how to integrate sociocultural and culturally responsive literacy pedagogy into their curriculum while also adhering to the mandated program once they have their own classrooms.

Implications

Jessica’s practice has many implications for literacy teacher educators and TEPs. First, Jessica was knowledgeable about the literacy curriculum adopted by the school district where PSTs would student teach, and she recognized that the literacy instruction PSTs would encounter in the field

would not reflect the sociocultural and culturally responsive literacy instruction she endorsed—and that scholars have suggested is beneficial for student learning, and particularly for minoritized youth (e.g., Au, 2003; Gutiérrez et al., 2009). This knowledge and recognition—coupled with Jessica’s commitment to bridging these two worlds—is important for all literacy teacher educators. Though individual contexts vary—not all districts have mandated curriculum, for example—being honest with PSTs about any disconnects and why they exist is an important first step. Drawing on Jessica’s example, literacy teacher educators would be wise to familiarize themselves with local curricular norms and be transparent with PSTs about field-based realities.

Second, Jessica did the difficult work of actually taking the district requirements and infusing more sociocultural and culturally responsive practices into the literacy instruction herself. Jessica’s modeling had the benefit of showing PSTs that it was possible to marry these two worlds, as too often PSTs do not see tangible examples of what this bridging might entail (e.g., Anderson & Stillman, 2013a; Stillman & Anderson, 2011). Literacy teacher educators can learn from Jessica’s practice and explicitly show PSTs how they might work within their particular contexts to integrate TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy into their classrooms. This might involve working with a mandated literacy curriculum, integrating literacy instruction into a math and science-focused school, launching a writing workshop, and so on. Though the work will vary based on context, it was crucial that Jessica worked with actual tools utilized in classrooms (i.e., *Treasures*) and created a new tool to serve as a model for PSTs (i.e., a sample schedule). Literacy teacher educators can modify and create tools from their own contexts to facilitate PSTs’ learning across the university-field divide in tangible and explicit ways.

Third, teacher educators can consider how to more intentionally connect literacy methods courses to the field (Zeichner, 2018). This might involve ensuring PSTs conduct fieldwork while taking methods courses, so TEP-field connections—and disconnects—are readily apparent and can be purposefully analyzed throughout the course. Integrated methods courses and fieldwork can also potentially facilitate teacher educators providing more classroom- and learner-specific mediation, which would have likely been beneficial for Jessica’s PSTs.

Fourth, utilizing an activity theory lens to consider how to support PSTs’ learning around literacy teaching may also prove useful. Viewing PSTs’ learning as situated within interacting activity systems can help teacher educators think about where and how they might strategically re-mediate the activity system(s) to further PSTs’ learning. While Jessica created a mediating artifact, others might reorganize different activity system components in response to particular learners and contexts (e.g., Anderson & Stillman, 2013a). As activity theory lends itself to analyzing and acting in complex situations, it is well suited as a lens through which teacher educators can plan ways to purposefully mediate PSTs’ learning. Overall, implications include providing tangible field-based examples, showing PSTs how to infuse TEP-promoted literacy instructional practices in particular contexts, integrating fieldwork into methods courses, and using an activity theory lens to intentionally plan re-mediation to facilitate PSTs’ learning.

Limitations

As the purpose of this paper was to share an example of one literacy teacher educator’s practice, there are several limitations. First, Jessica’s schedule was one example, presented by one teacher educator, in one TEP, situated in one urban locality. As such, the findings are not universally generalizable—though teacher educators can consider re-

contextualizing Jessica's example for their contexts. Second, the study did not follow PSTs into their own classrooms. The findings are thereby limited to what occurred—and did not occur—in PSTs' student teaching placements, which is not necessarily reflective of what they may enact in their own classrooms (e.g., Grossman et al., 2000). Recognizing the study's limitations, Jessica's sample schedule can still serve as an example of how teacher educators might bridge the university-field divide.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that this instance of Jessica sharing a sample schedule with PSTs was the only time I observed or heard about a teacher educator making direct connections between the instructional realities of classrooms and TEP-promoted literacy pedagogy. While sharing a sample schedule did not transform PSTs' literacy instruction, it shaped PSTs' learning as they recognized it was possible to bridge the divide between the sociocultural, culturally responsive literacy instruction promoted in the TEP and the prepackaged literacy curriculum enacted in the field. Jessica's sample schedule is one example of a first-step in intentionally remediating the activity system to promote PSTs' learning across the university-field divide; teacher educators can expand upon it within the specific contexts of their own—and their PSTs'—work.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Table A1. Course sections of volunteer PSTs.

	Jessica's Literacy Methods Section	Non-observed Literacy Methods Section	Critical Media Literacy Course
Tim's Student Teaching Seminar Section	3 Volunteer PSTs = <i>Case Study Participants</i>	2 Volunteer PSTs	All PSTs
Non-observed Student Teaching Seminar Section	4 Volunteer PSTs	N/A	

Appendix B

Table B1.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00–8:20	Breakfast and Morning Meeting				
8:20–8:40	Word Study	Word Study	Word Study	Grammar Study	Grammar Study
8:40–9:10	Anthology	Anthology	Anthology	Anthology	Anthology
9:10–9:40	UAT*	UAT	UAT	UAT	UAT
	-small groups -independent reading				
9:40–10:00	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS
10:00–10:45	Writing Workshop				
10:45–11:15	English Language Development				
11:00–11:50	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
11:50–12:30	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
12:30–12:50	Read-Aloud -author study -genre study -whole class chapter book				
12:50–2:00	Investigation Science or Social Studies	Art/Music/PE	Investigation Science or Social Studies	Investigation Science or Social Studies	Art/Music/PE Friday Fun
2:00–2:20	Clean-Up Classroom Jobs Closing Circle				

Jessica's Weekly Schedule

*Universal Access Time

Literacy Instructional Component	Plans for Enactment
Word Study – Vocabulary (patient, practiced, favorite, wrinkled, settled, cuddle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4-quadrant strategy with 3 of the 6 vocabulary words
Anthology (Making and Confirming Predictions, Summarizing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review the prediction sentence frames with the students to support their academic language as they talk about their ideas and predictions in the story – Mark spots to make predictions and add to the 2-column chart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What we predict/What happens – Read up to the part where Yoon tells her father that she wants to go back to Korea and he tells her that America is her home now. – Independent work: Students go back to their seats and write and draw their prediction to the following question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do you predict school will get better for Yoon? Why? – (Prompt students to think about the text as well as the pictures in describing their answers)
Universal Access Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Independent reading – Small groups – “On Level” Decodable Reader
Writing Workshop – Personal Narrative, Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Teaching Point: The information in our pictures can also be in our words. (Revisit minilesson from Week 3) – Help students begin their “Revision Strategies Checklist” – Continue to make the connection between writing and revising
English Language Development – Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Why do people move?
Interactive Read Aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Welcome to the Green House</i> by Jane Yolen