

# Creating Jaw-Droppingly Effective Rookie Teachers: Unpacking Teacher Preparation at the Sposato Graduate School of Education (Match Education)

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Program of  
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CREATING JAW-DROPPINGLY EFFECTIVE ROOKIE TEACHERS: UNPACKING  
TEACHER PREPARATION AT THE SPOSATO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION (MATCH EDUCATION)

Dissertation  
by

ANDREW FREDERIC MILLER

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CREATING JAW-DROPPINGLY EFFECTIVE ROOKIE TEACHERS: UNPACKING TEACHER PREPARATION AT THE SPOSATO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (MATCH EDUCATION)**

Author: Andrew Frederic Miller

Chair: Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith

Beginning in 2000, a number of new graduate schools of education (nGSEs) have been established in the U.S. in response to increasing calls for more effective teachers. Among these are programs affiliated with “No Excuses”-style charter schools, which are focused on closing the achievement gap in urban K-12 schools. Teacher education programs at nGSEs affiliated with “No Excuses” schools were designed to prepare teachers specifically for these schools. Although these nGSEs have been applauded by the press and by education reform advocates, there has been almost no independent research about them. Systematic study of the goals, practices and beliefs of teacher educators and candidates at these programs is necessary to understand the impact “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs may have on teacher preparation for urban schools.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to analyze teacher preparation from insiders’ perspectives at the Sposato Graduate School of Education, which is connected to the Match Education charter management organization. For this study, the Sposato GSE was regarded as an illustrative and an instrumental case of the nGSE phenomenon.

Drawing on multiple data sources and using qualitative data analysis methods, this dissertation found the Sposato mission was to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers,” and it argues this mission was in large part realized due to the remarkable coherence of the program’s design, curriculum, and vision. However, this dissertation also argues the success of the Sposato teacher education program came at a cost. My analysis shows that Sposato leaders and faculty members zeroed in almost exclusively on two goals: (1) implementing a technical, moves-based epistemology of teaching in their teacher preparation curriculum; and (2) socializing teachers into a gradualist and technically rational vision of equity and justice consistent with the goals of “No Excuses” schools. This study has important implications for the practice of urban teacher preparation, research into the nGSE phenomenon, and policies related to improving teacher education program quality and the goal of closing the achievement gap.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **New Graduate Schools of Education, “No Excuses” Schools, and Teacher Effectiveness in the Era of Education Reform**

Over the past thirty years, educational policy in the United States has been heavily influenced by the development and implementation of a set of policy solutions that is sometimes referred to as “education reform.” The assumptions behind education reform are rooted in the belief first popularized in *A Nation at Risk* that America’s schools have failed to produce an adequately educated workforce that will help the country maintain global economic competitiveness (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). Simultaneously, the academic achievement of disadvantaged and marginalized student populations has continually lagged behind the academic achievement of more advantaged student populations, leading many educators and policymakers to assume that persistent achievement gaps are directly related to the presumed low quality of America’s public schools and teachers. The purpose of education reform, as a set of educational policy solutions, is to implement standards- and accountability-based reforms designed to dramatically close persistent academic achievement gaps and increase the quality of America’s teachers and schools (Cuban, 2007; Mehta, 2013a).

As other problems related to these academic achievement gaps have gained attention, solutions have emerged that are consistent with education reform’s core assumptions about the link between education success and economic success and the presumed failure of America’s schools as a result of poor-quality teachers and schools rather than outside factors. Along these lines, it has been widely assumed that the quality

of the nation's teachers is both a major problem and the best solution to the problem of students' unsatisfactory academic achievement (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Cohen, 1995). Consistent with this assumption, teacher education policy within the past ten years has focused on holding teacher education programs accountable for the production of effective teachers (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press). Several new initiatives designed to enhance teacher quality have positioned teacher effectiveness, usually defined as the ability of a teacher to positively impact student learning (Hess & McShane, 2014), as the most desirable outcome of teacher education. One initiative that has emerged during the past decade is the establishment of "new graduate schools of education" (nGSEs), a phrase my research team has developed to refer to the small but growing number of schools or programs of teacher preparation with these features: they are unaffiliated with universities, offer preprofessional teacher preparation over a period of at least 9-12 months, and are state-authorized to grant master's degrees and endorse new teachers for licensure (Cochran-Smith, Miller, & Carney, 2016). The nGSE phenomenon is a relatively small but popular and growing education reform intended to address the specific problem of teacher quality by drastically reinventing (and improving) teacher preparation and thus ultimately closing the academic achievement gap in urban schools.

New graduate schools of education seek to accomplish this goal by moving beyond debates over the last 20 years that centered on the professionalization or the deregulation of teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, 2005; Zeichner, 2003). These debates were concerned primarily with whether or not states should allow alternative entry routes into the teaching profession, what the evidence was about the

impact of teachers from different routes and pathways on student achievement, and the implications of introducing market-based strategies into teacher education. As explained in more depth below, proponents of nGSEs have attempted to open a new space within education reform that embraces the idea behind the professionalization agenda that high-quality teacher education programs are necessary and simultaneously embraces the deregulation agenda's aim to break up the alleged monopoly university-based schools of education have had on the preparation of teachers.

Locating teacher preparation at nGSEs represents a distinct break from the dominant model of university-based teacher preparation over the last century (Labaree, 2004; Zeichner, 2016). From the perspective of the advocates and founders of most nGSEs, university teacher education has failed to produce teachers who can close the achievement gap (Gastic, 2014). Yet at the same time, nGSE advocates see fast-track entry routes such as Teach for America as focusing on the recruitment of teachers rather than their preparation; therefore, nGSE advocates see fast-track routes as insufficient to produce teachers who have learned the core skills and practices of effective teaching (Relay Graduate School of Education [Relay GSE], 2015; Sposato Graduate School of Education [SGSE], 2017a). According to proponents of nGSEs, neither university-based nor alternative entry routes have been able to solve the teacher quality problem in the U.S. and therefore new forms of preparation and entry into teaching that break away from and improve upon the design, organization, and evaluation of university teacher education are necessary.

During the same time as the rise of the nGSE phenomenon, there has also been growing concern with the instructional quality of the education of students of Color

living in low-income city school districts because of the persistent academic achievement gaps between these students and their wealthier, White peers (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2013). Urban school districts have seen the rise of “No Excuses” charter schools and charter management organizations (CMOs) as a way to address this problem of low instructional quality in urban schools. “No Excuses” schools and CMOs are not attached to an official or centralized educational organization. Rather, they function independently and autonomously. Yet despite this autonomy and independence, schools that adopt a “No Excuses” mentality tend to share a set of specific beliefs and practices for urban education that are designed to militate against the effects of social inequality by guaranteeing academic success for the low-income students of Color they serve (Miller, 2015). The “No Excuses” phenomenon, rooted in the curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices for which these schools are most famous (e.g., Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; KIPP Foundation, 2014a; Lemov, 2010, 2014) has come to influence an emerging common sense about how instruction should be organized in urban K-12 schools (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Miller, 2015; Sondel, 2015).

This dissertation sits at the intersection of these two sets of education reforms, intended to address various aspects of the achievement gap: new graduate schools of education (nGSEs) that move teacher preparation away from university-sponsored programs and the “No Excuses” model of urban education that focuses on boosting achievement in urban K-12 schools. The result – teacher preparation programs sponsored by charter management organizations (CMOs) that use the “No Excuses” model – is the focus of this dissertation.

“No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs are premised on the assumption that universities have not produced teachers who are familiar with the curricular and instructional methods that are most effective at closing the achievement gap. “No Excuses” schools claim to have identified a human capital problem due to high teacher turnover (Torres, 2014) and the need to staff the growing number of schools in their networks with teachers prepared to use the “right” curricular and instructional methods (Kronholz, 2012). In order to address this human capital problem, “No Excuses” charter schools and CMOs have within the past ten years expanded their operations beyond the articulation and practice of these curricular and instructional methods for K-12 schools and have now created teacher preparation programs designed to teach these same methods to people entering the teaching profession (Gastic, 2014; D. Goldstein, 2014; M. Goldstein, 2013; Mehta & Teles, 2014). In some instances, “No Excuses” teacher preparation programs have evolved into schools of education, which confer master’s degrees and have been authorized by state-level departments of education to grant initial teacher certification and licensure, therefore meeting the criteria for inclusion within the nGSE phenomenon described above. “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs have been created to enhance the instructional quality of urban K-12 schools by enhancing the preparation and quality of teachers being specifically prepared for those schools.

“No Excuses” nGSEs claim to be more successful than traditional schools of education at preparing teachers for the specific context of high-poverty urban schools serving students of Color because they focus on practice and because they are context-specific (Relay GSE, 2015; SGSE, 2017b, 2017c). The master’s degrees offered at “No Excuses” nGSEs prioritize the development of the habits and skills of effective teaching

for which the “No Excuses” model has been praised (e.g., Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Lemov, 2010, 2014). Ultimately, “No Excuses” nGSEs seek to transform and enhance teacher preparation for preservice teachers who will teach in low-income urban schools just as proponents of the model claim the “No Excuses” approach has transformed and enhanced the educational experience for students of Color in low-income urban K-12 schools. Yet as is frequently the case with education reforms, practice and policy have out-paced research into these new models of teacher preparation.

Almost no systematic and independent research has been conducted about the practice of teacher preparation at nGSEs that are connected to the “No Excuses” model. The work in this area that does exist is descriptive, highlighting the unique methods developed by teacher educators at “No Excuses” charter school sites (e.g., Gastic, 2014; Kronholz, 2012) or pointing out the ways teacher preparation at nGSEs differs from university-based teacher preparation in potentially subtractive ways (e.g., Zeichner, 2016). However, within the very small body of research about teacher preparation at nGSEs, there are no in-depth analyses of the guiding beliefs or the key practices in “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs or of the implications of these beliefs and practices for the field of teacher education. There is relatively more research about the curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices used in “No Excuses” K-12 schools (Miller, 2015), which of course influence practice at “No Excuses” teacher preparation programs. However, this literature is also limited, and the trends in the “No Excuses” K-12 literature, detailed in Chapter Two, mirror the trends in the nGSE literature more broadly.

This lack of in-depth research results in a lack of understanding about both the positive and negative consequences of supporting a new “No Excuses” model of teacher

preparation. More nuanced understanding of the practices and the beliefs of teacher educators who lead teacher preparation programs at “No Excuses” CMOs is necessary to understand the impact the nGSE and “No Excuses” phenomena are having on the processes of preparing teachers for urban K-12 schools. Both educational phenomena have been described by proponents as disruptive innovations (M.B. Horn, 2015), a phrase Christensen (2016) has used to describe innovations within particular marketplaces that begin their lives as concepts not widely accepted or used by consumers but then slowly gain traction and eventually displace their competitors in that marketplace as consumers begin to value the innovation. If “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs are actually the disruptive innovation that proponents claim them to be (Gastic, 2014), a deeper understanding about the complex beliefs and practices of teacher educators, teacher candidates, and program graduates who have engaged in this new model of teacher preparation is needed as the model increases in size and scope.

The following dissertation is a qualitative case study of teacher preparation at a new graduate school of education connected to a “No Excuses” CMO: the Sposato Graduate School of Education. This dissertation, which investigates the single case of Sposato, conceptually locates Sposato at the intersection of the two education reforms described above: nGSEs and “No Excuses” CMOs. Like many other nGSEs, Sposato has been intentionally re-located away from university-based teacher education and designed to emphasize teaching practices consistent with the urban and “No Excuses” charter schools where Sposato graduates are expected to work. The purpose of this case study is to understand and generate new knowledge about the methods, definitions, perspectives, and experiences of the participants in teacher preparation at Sposato, regarded as a

strategic research site for studying the larger phenomenon of nGSEs, from the perspective of Sposato insiders. This study provides in-depth insights and understandings of the nGSE phenomenon, which its proponents claim is a new model of urban teacher preparation with new practices that contrast with those of university-based preparation (Gastic, 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2014). In addition, this dissertation contributes to a further understanding of the beliefs and practices of “No Excuses” CMOs, the implications of these beliefs and practices for the future of urban K-12 education, and the relationship between these beliefs and practices and the practice of teacher preparation.

This dissertation also serves as the pilot study for a larger study of the nGSE phenomenon (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). This larger study involves analysis of documents and materials publicly available for all nGSEs that fit the criteria listed above, interviews with 15-20 leaders and proponents of nGSEs, and four case studies. The larger study investigates the practice of teacher preparation at nGSEs in order to understand and describe new models of teacher preparation that are part of the larger education reform movement. In addition, the larger study is designed to identify the consequences or trade-offs of dislocating teacher preparation away from the resources and knowledge sources of universities and relocating it within a larger education reform movement, where accountability is central and effective practice is the primary focus (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). The most highly visible and prolific examples of the nGSE phenomenon so far are the Relay Graduate School of Education, the High Tech High Graduate School of Education, and the Sposato Graduate School of Education. The Sposato case was chosen as the pilot for the larger study because of its location, its prominence in the discourse, and its fit with our definition of the nGSE phenomenon. In

addition to being the pilot site for the larger study, Sposato also serves as one of the four purposefully-selected nGSE sites of practice in the larger study.

It is important to note that nGSEs comprise an extremely controversial development within the field of teacher preparation. As is described in more detail in Chapter Two, published commentaries or studies about teacher preparation at nGSEs are currently split between those who support nGSEs because they believe the need for high-quality teachers in the U.S. necessitates new, non-university based programs (e.g., Caperton & Whitmire, 2012) and those who believe nGSEs further contribute to the inequitable distribution of highly qualified teachers (e.g., Zeichner, 2016). In addition, access for outsiders to study nGSEs has been essentially nonexistent because of the lack of trust between the nGSE and “traditional” teacher preparation communities. Many nGSE leaders have been understandably reluctant to grant access to university-based teacher education researchers because they feel that teacher education researchers and proponents of university-based teacher education have unfairly judged their programs without taking the time to understand their programs. For these reasons, the access my research team was granted to the Sposato Graduate School of Education for me to conduct this case study and to include Sposato as one of four cases in the larger study was highly unusual.

Sposato leaders agreed to participate in this study because they valued rigorous, independent research into their program and believed that they could learn more about how to improve their internal model of teacher preparation from participating in the larger study. But, the agreement made between our research team and the Sposato leadership was that this case study was not intended to judge or evaluate Sposato

methods. Rather the study was intended to understand the phenomenon of teacher preparation at Sposato from the perspective of those involved in the work. The research questions as stated below were intended to analyze the practices, beliefs, methods, experiences, and internal logic of teacher preparation at Sposato by unpacking underlying assumptions, considering intended and unintended consequences, and to raise questions about implications, but not to judge the program according to some externally imposed set of criteria.

### **Research Questions**

As mentioned, this dissertation unpacks the explicit and implicit theories of practice that exist at the Sposato Graduate School of Education, understood as a case of teacher preparation at a “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE. The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. What are the implicit and explicit theories of practice that guide teacher education at the Sposato Graduate School of Education?
  - What are the administrator, faculty, and candidate assumptions about: the core practices involved in good teaching, sources of knowledge, preparing teachers for underserved students, evaluating teacher preparation effectiveness, and equity and justice?
  - What are the core practices in which administrators, faculty, and coaches at Sposato engage?
2. What are the experiences and perspectives of teacher candidates at Sposato?
  - What are their backgrounds and why did they choose this teacher preparation program? What are their notions of justice and equity?

- How do candidates and graduates describe their experience in the Sposato program? What is their sense of their preparedness to teach given their Sposato experiences?
3. How do administrators, staff, faculty, coaches, and candidates conceptualize the goals and purposes of the practice of teacher education at Sposato?

These questions were designed to access the insider perspectives of research participants as well as to better understand the methods and definitions of teacher preparation at Sposato. As noted, this case study of Sposato is the pilot for a larger study of nGSEs titled, “Teacher Preparation at New Graduate Schools of Education: A Cross-Case Study of a Growing Phenomenon.” One purpose of the larger study is to understand how teacher educators and teacher candidates at nGSEs understand their own project locally, including the beliefs and practices that characterize these programs. The larger study also addresses the question of how nGSEs are framed by their proponents in relation to larger social and political agendas in education and the ways leaders and advocates use frame alignment and other strategies to promote nGSEs as part of the larger education reform movement. The questions asked in this dissertation help to answer both of these sets of research questions in the larger study.

### **Context: Education Reform, nGSEs, and “No Excuses” Schools**

Many contemporary educational debates in the U.S. are related to the fact that the U.S. has historically not provided a high-quality education for all K-12 students. Though there is not consensus about the root cause of persistent inequality (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2013), one of the primary problems is the existence of an academic achievement gap between White students and students of Color, as well as a gap between students of

high and low socioeconomic status. The achievement gap has become a proxy for the inequalities latent in the U.S. educational system and one of the guiding foci of efforts to change American educational infrastructure. In addition, many reform initiatives, policies, and programs tend to be assessed on whether or not they are having an impact on closing or narrowing these seemingly intractable achievement gaps. Subsequently, many change efforts have been directed toward addressing the needs of students who score on the lower end of academic achievement measurements.

Over the last 30 years of education reform, many responses to the problem of the achievement gap have been related to standards and accountability, and what Mehta (2013a) calls a new education policy paradigm. According to Mehta and others, this new education policy paradigm emerged with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, although it has deeper roots. Not only did *A Nation at Risk* acknowledge the long-standing problem of low achievement across student groups in the U.S., it connected low academic achievement to the concerns about the United States losing its supremacy in the global economy (NCEE, 1983). The United States has certainly not been alone in the push for standards- and accountability-based reforms intended to ensure a nation's place in the knowledge society and the new global economy. Sahlberg (2011) has referred to this trend internationally as "GERM," or the Global Education Reform Movement, which emphasizes five key features: the standardization of educational models; the focus on core academic subjects like literacy and numeracy; the search for efficient, low-risk ways for students to reach learning goals in these core subjects; the use of corporate management models to achieve these learning goals; and the implementation of test-based accountability to measure progress toward these outcomes.

Consistent with these five features, there have been trends in several Western and other nations to limit the desired goals of educational systems to only what can be measured, resulting in a technocratic focus on a very small set of outcomes (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). This limited focus has subsequently resulted in a weakened teaching profession, the increasing power of state-authority, and the rising belief that more and better data systems will help nations improve their educational outcomes. This state of affairs is not universal. In fact, there are several sites of resistance to the spread of “GERM,” including the nations of Finland and Singapore and the Canadian province of Alberta, wherein teachers have maintained or regained their professionalism and nations have emphasized a robust and holistic set of goals outside of those that can be measured on standardized achievement or knowledge-based tests (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011). These examples notwithstanding, the basic model of education reform, which emphasizes efficiency via market-based competition and effectiveness via standards- and accountability-based reform, remains the mainstream model of educational change throughout the globalizing world.

In the United States, concerns about economic competitiveness are manifested primarily in the dominance of technical solutions to issues of teaching and learning. Mehta (2013a) suggests that contemporary technical change efforts can be tied back to the way *A Nation at Risk* framed the problem in stark, urgent tones: American schools have failed, particularly in neighborhoods with marginalized populations; teachers and schools are primarily responsible for these failures; and massive reforms must be undertaken so that the country can begin to hold itself accountable for its educational progress. Implied within this framing was not only the belief that drastic change was

needed, but that change should and must begin with the immediate work of increasing the quality of teachers and schools. It is important to note that there have been several important critiques of this conceptualization of education reform (e.g., Apple, 2006; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Berliner, Glass, et al., 2014; D. Ravitch, 2010, 2013), but it is clear that most proposed solutions to the problem of the achievement gap operate from within these core education reform assumptions.

The following two sections provide further discussion about the two education reforms that are most relevant to this dissertation. Both nGSEs and “No Excuses” schools emerged out of the larger education reform movement and more specifically out of efforts to boost teacher quality for urban K-12 schools.

**Teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, and the rise of nGSEs.<sup>1</sup>** For more than a century, there have been controversies about teacher education and about how and for what purposes teachers should be prepared (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008). There have also been many debates about what the research says about effective teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005, 2009). What this means is that teacher education has long been a highly complex and contentious field within which there are multiple competing views about preparation. During the late 1990s and throughout the first two decades of this century, teacher quality and teacher education quality debates have become prominent in larger discussions and initiatives related to education reform and teacher education.

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<sup>1</sup> My framing of the teacher quality context draws in part on the work of the research team for the larger study and the ways the team identified and described the “problem” surrounding the nGSE phenomenon (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016).

Within these contemporary debates about teacher education, many people have assumed a “teacher quality gap” exists (Goldhaber, Laverly, & Theobald, 2015; Haycock & Crawford, 2008). This quality gap stems from the idea that America does not have uniformly high-quality teachers and that under-resourced urban schools with large numbers of minority and/or poor students are the most likely to have poorly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Teacher quality policy debates position teachers as both the problem and the solution to low-quality education, and it is assumed that better teachers will yield better schools (Cochran-Smith, 2005; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future [NCTAF], 1996, 1997; Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999).

But proponents of teacher quality policy solutions within this education policy paradigm no longer merely call for highly qualified teachers; they now demand highly effective teachers (Hess & McShane, 2014). Here the effectiveness of a teacher is assumed to be directly connected to the ability of that teacher to impact student learning as measured through some form of quantitative or standardized assessment. A major goal of contemporary educational reform policy, then, has been to increase teacher effectiveness in part by developing initiatives that require “traditional” teacher education programs and other providers to demonstrate program impact and the effectiveness of their graduates (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2015; Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2013; Henry, Kershaw, Zulli, & Smith, 2012). New accountability policies and initiatives in teacher education have been established to emphasize teacher effectiveness, or the relationship between a teacher preparation program’s practice and the ability of program graduates to have a direct impact on pupil

learning (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press). Despite ongoing debates about the appropriateness of this definition of teacher effectiveness, this new era in teacher education accountability policy has resulted in the widespread inclusion of teacher effectiveness in discussions of program outcomes (Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016).

During the past decade, though, there have also been several efforts to reshape the structure of teacher preparation programs themselves in order to more systematically and directly address teacher effectiveness. Gastic (2014), who was formerly the research director for the Relay Graduate School of Education, the largest and one of the most prominent nGSEs, refers to these collective efforts as “Teacher Prep 2.0.” She claims these efforts are needed because, “the demand for effective teachers far exceeds the capacity of the current human capital pipeline. By and large, teacher education programs have fallen short of recruiting and preparing teachers who are ready for the challenges facing students in twenty-first century schools” (Gastic, 2014, p. 91). Gastic and others who share her views assume that the country needs a dramatic departure from both university-based teacher education and fast-track alternative programs because neither of these approaches to teacher preparation and/or teacher recruitment has adequately addressed the lack of effective teaching in America’s classrooms.

Proponents of teacher preparation with a bottom-line focus on teacher effectiveness claim that teacher preparation must maintain a persistent (even relentless) focus on the outcome of pupil learning, which will thereby presumably increase equity in academic achievement (D. Goldstein, 2014; Green, 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2014). Teacher preparation programs with a focus on pupil learning are “anchored by purposeful linkages between clinical experiences, classroom- and/or Web-based seminars, and guided

practice with experienced educators, through which teachers learn both how to teach and how to understand their role in the lives of their students” (Gastic, 2014, pp. 91-92). Proponents of these methods, which are the cornerstone of “Teacher Prep 2.0,” claim they can be used to reliably produce the kinds of highly effective teachers America needs to maintain a high-quality educational system (Gastic, 2014). Redesigning and restructuring teacher education programs to focus on the outcome of program graduates’ classroom effectiveness is also consistent with the current movement to “hold teacher education accountable” for the production of effective teachers.

Although advocates of this outcomes-based approach to teacher preparation tend to call for the relocation of teacher preparation away from university-based schools of education, it is important to note that they have not rejected everything about university-based teacher education. Unlike reform advocates who push for alternative fast-track entry routes, which essentially bypass teacher preparation, proponents of “Teacher Prep 2.0” value preservice teacher preparation based on the assumption that context-specific preparation is essential for teachers prior to their becoming teachers of record. Along similar lines, Gastic (2014) states that clinical preparation is central to the needed new forms of teacher preparation since “Teacher effectiveness is not a function of experience in and of itself; instead it is the result of time well spent on disciplined and purposeful practice” (p. 100). The crux of the argument made by those who advocate for the “Teacher Prep 2.0” perspective is that adequate practice-based and context-specific teacher preparation does not happen within the current structures of university schools of education because they are too far removed from the school-based sites of practice where teacher candidates will eventually work. This perspective is consistent with critiques over

many years that university schools of education focus too much on theory and not enough on the daily realities of teaching and classroom management (Wilson, 2014). The teacher effectiveness solution to the teacher quality problem calls on teacher preparation providers to “embrace the possibilities of integrated and embedded teaching experience that cultivate teaching talent” (Gastic, 2014, p. 102) and to create new programs that are specifically designed to do so.

The leaders of different nGSEs share the assumption that university-based teacher education has focused too much on theory and not enough on practice (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). Claiming to have learned from the errors of both university-based and alternative fast-track entry routes to teaching, nGSE leaders and advocates have prioritized context-specificity and a practice-based approach to teacher education (Gastic, 2014; Kronholz, 2012). The assumption is that context-specific and practice-based approaches to teacher preparation are sustainable ways to emphasize teacher effectiveness and solve the teacher quality problem. In addition, nGSE proponents claim that holding themselves and their teachers accountable for student learning is a central way to gauge their effectiveness (Sposato, 2016; Relay GSE, 2016).

As noted above, there is currently a small, but growing number of nGSEs, the most well-known of which are the High Tech High Graduate School of Education, the first nGSE, and the Relay Graduate School of Education, which is the largest nGSE with 8 campuses serving upwards of 1,500 teachers/candidates annually. Interestingly, while across the country both university teacher education programs and alternative entry routes not located at institutions of higher education, like TFA, are experiencing declining enrollments (Rich, 2015; Sawchuk, 2014; Svarczkopf, 2015), nGSEs seem to

be thriving. One way to appraise this situation is the amount of funding nGSEs have been able to garner. The Gates Foundation recently announced that *Teacher*<sup>2</sup>, a consortium led by the Relay Graduate School of Education and including preparation programs at other notable nGSEs, is among the teacher education initiatives that will receive a \$7 million grant to focus on “effective” teacher preparation (Gates Foundation, 2015). Also along these lines, the December 2015 passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act allows states to use federal teacher quality funds to establish teacher preparation academies not tied to universities (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Despite these highly-publicized indications of interest in the emerging phenomenon of nGSEs, little research exists about this new phenomenon, including what practices are used, the connections between these practices and those assumed to be lacking in university-based models of teacher preparation, or the perspectives of faculty and candidates connected to these programs. I provide further discussion about the existing literature on nGSEs in Chapter Two.

**“No Excuses” charter schools and urban K-12 school reform.** The second education reform that is essential to situating my proposed study of the Sposato Graduate School of Education is the “No Excuses” model of urban education reform. “No Excuses” schools are intended to address the problem of the achievement gap by drastically altering the structure, curriculum, governance, and operation of urban K-12 schools. How best to teach and instruct students in high-poverty urban settings is one of the fundamental debates in K-12 urban education (S.C. Carter, 2001; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011; Merseth, 2009; Whitman, 2008). To a certain extent neoliberal education reform has been prompted by a motivation to discover efficient and effective ways of schooling, based on the assumption that such methods are in fact discoverable

(Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Farr, 2010; Lemov, 2010, 2014; Mehta, Gomez, & Bryk, 2012; Mehta & Teles, 2014). As part of the neoliberal turn in education, “traditional” urban public schools have been portrayed in the media and in policy discussions as failing to provide effective educational opportunities and positive educational outcomes for marginalized students (Brill, 2011; Carr, 2013; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Educational reformers in urban schools have long promoted the idea that the achievement gap can be closed if teachers in urban schools have the right set of tools (e.g., Achievement First, 2014; Lemov, 2010; Uncommon Schools, 2014). Several models that operate from this assumption were introduced into the urban education reform landscape during the era of educational reform in the U.S. (S.C. Carter, 2001; Merseth, 2009; Whitman, 2008). The “No Excuses” approach, first developed in the late 1990s (Mathews, 2009), is one of the most popular, technically sophisticated, and replicated of these models (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011; D. Goldstein, 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2014).

Behind “No Excuses” schools is the mission to provide otherwise unavailable educational opportunities to low-income students living in city school districts using a very specific set of instructional methods. Though these methods have been implemented in a wide range of school settings (S.C. Carter, 2001; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011; Whitman, 2008), the schools that most frequently align themselves with the “No Excuses” label tend to be public charter schools connected to particular CMOs. Educators who work within “No Excuses” schools work from the perspective that blame for the systemic failure of urban education should be placed on those who make educational “excuses” for these failures. An educational “excuse” is a belief that the negative effects

of socioeconomic conditions on students' achievement make it impossible for teachers and schools alone to close the achievement gap without the coordinated work of other social services, actors, and policies (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Proponents of the "No Excuses" model are not ignorant of the detrimental effects institutional racism and structural poverty have on students' academic development. For instance, Lemov (2010), a managing director of the Uncommon Schools CMO and author of the widely-cited book *Teach Like a Champion*, states, "In these schools, the price of failure is high and the challenges immense. Teachers there work in a crucible where, most often, our society's failures are paramount, self-evident, and overwhelming" (p. 2). Yet proponents of the "No Excuses" model ultimately claim this evidence has been used to rationalize the continued failure of urban schools to diminish educational inequalities and that such excuses distract urban educators from maintaining a relentless focus on implementing school-based methods for closing the achievement gap (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Lemov, 2010, 2014).

Although it has deeper roots (Apple, 2006; Howe, 1997), the contemporary "No Excuses" model has only been referred to by this label since about 2001 when the Heritage Foundation released a report entitled, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* (S.C. Carter, 2001; see also Green, 2014). This report has been critiqued for its lack of generalizability and representativeness (Kahlenberg, 2012; Rothstein, 2004) and its promotion of the problematic assumption that students in high-poverty schools require a different kind of pedagogy (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Yet the case studies in this report described district, charter, and private schools in low-income settings that had raised student achievement when compared to student

achievement in schools with similar demographics. According to this report, the core principle articulated in these schools was this: “America’s public schools have utterly failed the poor...Apologists claim that the legacies of poverty, racism, and broken families cannot be overcome when it comes to educating our nation’s neediest. They are wrong” (S.C. Carter, 2001, p. 7). The report claimed to speak on behalf of all educators in those schools, and further asserted that in order to enact this core principle, a “No Excuses” school should adopt particular administrative and organizational structures.

In more recent case studies of three schools in the city of Boston, Seider (2012) emphasized that “No Excuses” schools also share “a strict disciplinary environment, extended time in school, and an intensive focus on traditional reading and mathematical skills...relying heavily upon teacher-led direct instruction as the most efficient means of delivering academic content” (p. 94). These basic features, along with an emphasis on rigid behavioral expectations (Whitman, 2008) and character education (Seider, 2012; Tough, 2012), create the foundation for the curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices present in “No Excuses” schools.

The “No Excuses” model is currently best represented by the work of highly visible CMOs such as KIPP, Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools, each of which has been frequently cited by the press, educational journalists, and policymakers for educational innovations in urban education and their students’ academic successes (Carr, 2013; Kronholz 2012; Peyser, 2011; Pondiscio, 2013). These CMOs represent the collected work of a group of education reformers who first began to test and employ the “No Excuses” style of curricular, instructional, and behavioral practice in the late 1990s (Green, 2014; Mathews, 2009). These CMOs also operated with the high measure of

autonomy granted them by local school authorities and/or states with the intention of developing unique educational communities that would work efficiently toward raising student achievement (S.C. Carter, 2001; Whitman, 2008). Several of the earliest “No Excuses” providers were also connected via professional and personal relationships. For example, as Mathews (2009) explained in his account of KIPP’s history, KIPP’s co-founders Mike Levin and Dave Feinberg first met as Teach For America corps members in Houston. The networked and supportive community that exists among “*No Excuses*” educators prides itself on its dedication to achieving its singular purpose: closing the achievement gap and placing students of Color who live in high-poverty urban settings on a safe path to college and beyond (KIPP Foundation, 2014c; Lemov, 2010; Peyser, 2011).

Recent research has demonstrated that students at “No Excuses” schools have in some cases performed better on standardized achievement tests than students at district public schools within the same low-income districts where these schools are located (e.g., Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, Pathak, & Walters, 2010; Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2011; Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO], 2013; Tuttle et al., 2013). Proponents of the “No Excuses” model claim this evidence demonstrates the success of their model. Though the way this success has been measured has been questioned both conceptually and methodologically, as I describe in Chapter Two, the idea that “No Excuses” schools have consistently lived up to their claim to raise student achievement has bolstered the argument that the “No Excuses” model is the best pedagogical and instructional method currently available to remedy educational inequalities in the poorest

urban districts across the nation (KIPP Foundation, 2014b; Lemov, 2010, 2014; Peyser, 2011).

These methods also appear to be growing in popularity because of the ever-present desire within the field of urban education to find a scalable, successful model to close the achievement gap (Fryer, 2011; Levin, 2013; Tough, 2012; Whitman, 2008). The curricular and instructional practices developed at and promoted by “No Excuses” CMOs continue to be promoted and used in a wide variety of urban educational settings (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Carr, 2013; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011; Lemov, 2010, 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2014). This may become problematic because, as I show in my discussion of the relevant literature, some research has shown that these curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices have important unintended negative consequences for the educational development of students in “No Excuses” and other urban schools (Ellison, 2012; Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2008). In addition, research has not yet determined whether the academic successes seen at “No Excuses” schools are caused by the specific instructional and curricular practices implemented in these schools or are an effect of other social and educational factors influencing the academic culture of these schools (Duckworth, 2013; Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014; Fryer, 2011; Rothstein, 2004; Tough, 2011). More research is needed to understand the connections among the core assumptions of the “No Excuses” framework, the practices used in these schools, and the nuanced perspectives of educators who develop and use these practices.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

For this dissertation, I conducted a qualitative case study of teacher preparation at the Sposato Graduate School of Education, a strategic research site that is connected to

both the new graduate schools of education (nGSE) and “No Excuses” urban education reform phenomena. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand from the perspectives of those actually involved in the work how Sposato functioned as a new graduate school of education that operated within a “No Excuses”-affiliated CMO. As a way of making sense of the Sposato model of teacher preparation, then, this dissertation makes three central arguments.

First this dissertation argues that the Sposato mission to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” was in large part realized. That is, Sposato insiders were able to achieve this mission through the efficient and effective implementation and enactment of a specific approach to teacher preparation, a model intentionally designed both to show that a new way of preparing effective rookie teachers was in fact possible and to prepare new teachers to be effective in “No Excuses” schools. As mentioned above, some nGSEs work from particular assumptions about teacher effectiveness and determine their program’s success by the extent to which the program produces effective teachers as the program defines that term. In this dissertation, I show that Sposato leaders maintained a strong commitment to their specific definition of teacher effectiveness, rooted in core beliefs about what the purpose of education is related to equity and social justice.

Therefore, I demonstrate that Sposato at a certain level was a successful, effective nGSE. In particular, my analysis takes up Hammerness’s (2006, 2010, 2013) articulation of the three qualities of effective teacher preparation programs: coherence, curriculum, and vision. I show in this dissertation that Sposato leaders and candidates were able to realize the program’s mission by concentrating on two primary goals: enacting a practice-based teacher preparation curriculum that could serve as a model for other programs, and

preparing teachers to enact a particular vision of equity and justice designed to effect change in context-specific environments.

However, this dissertation also argues that the way in which Sposato insiders worked to achieve the program's coherence, curriculum, and vision led to certain unintended consequences that limited and narrowed the scope of the program's effectiveness. For example, Sposato insiders valued internal program coherence so highly that the result was the exclusion and silencing of dissenting voices within their program. Internal coherence allowed Sposato leaders to efficiently and effectively implement their model. The "healthy exit" mechanism built into the Sposato model helped achieve internal coherence but also resulted in the unintended elimination of the kind of healthy disagreement and debate which some people have argued helps a program refine its model of teacher preparation (Hammerness, 2006; Kennedy, 2016). Also, internal coherence led some candidates to question whether the Sposato model had only been designed to meet the needs of middle class, White teacher candidates.

This dissertation also shows Sposato leaders believed that the program's practice-based curriculum and pedagogy would serve as a "revolutionary" example of how to better prepare effective teachers, yet the epistemology of teacher effectiveness underlying this "revolutionary approach" relied on a technical, linear definition of the work of teaching, teacher learning, and the relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Floden, 2001; Forzani, 2014). The consequence of this approach to curriculum meant that Sposato candidates were trained to be technically proficient but not necessarily prepared to adapt this technical knowledge to the complexity of the teaching profession.

In addition, this dissertation shows that Sposato insiders promoted a vision of equity and social justice that assumed that educational inequities and injustices would be solved if technically rational educational solutions were put into place in schools (Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Mehta, 2013). But this vision promoted technical solutions to complex social problems, which resulted in the further promotion of a gradualist theory of change limited in scope to only the work that can be accomplished within schools or teacher preparation programs. This vision was used to prepare candidates for the context-specific locations of “No Excuses” schools and classrooms, but there is little evidence that this vision would be effective in other urban contexts. Furthermore, the cost of pursuing only compensatory and distributive notions of equity and justice was that the larger social problems underlying immediate educational inequities and injustices remained unaddressed and therefore unsolved by the Sposato approach.

The third and final argument of this dissertation is that Sposato was able to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” because they focused only on preparing these teachers to be immediately successful in the early parts of their career and only in the specific context of high-achieving, high-poverty schools with “No Excuses”-aligned instructional cultures. This indicates that Sposato as a new graduate school of education promoted a fundamental redefinition of what teacher preparation should be designed to accomplish. The way the Sposato model emphasized the “No Excuses” context in its vision of equity and justice and defined practice as the successful moves done by teachers in “No Excuses” classrooms suggests that Sposato leaders believed teacher preparation depended on a discrete, practice-based, context-specific definition of effectiveness during their preservice preparation. Paradoxically, though, this consistent, prescriptive, yet

narrow approach to teacher preparation ended up reinforcing the “rightness” of the Sposato model, confirming insiders’ core assumptions about teacher effectiveness, the achievement gap, and the success of “No Excuses” schools rather than highlighting the partialness and limitedness of this approach. Therefore, the Sposato case highlights that a “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE can produce effective teachers, but that this success may come at the cost of setting limits on teacher effectiveness. This study suggests that “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs, because they are only able to offer solutions to America’s assumed teacher quality problems consistent with “No Excuses” approaches to urban educational reform, are not well designed to serve as generalizable or scalable models to address the problem of teacher education quality writ large.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In Chapter Two, I present the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks as well as the literature review that guided the research design, data collection, and data analysis of this dissertation. This chapter includes an analysis of the conceptual and empirical research that has been conducted in the major fields of teacher preparation and urban education research relevant to the contexts described above. I organize the studies reviewed into the following categories: research on new graduate schools of education, research on urban teacher education and urban teacher residencies, research on practice-based teacher education, and research on “No Excuses” charter schools. After my review of each category, I also provide an indication of the contributions of these bodies of research to this case study as well as a critical commentary about major trends and silences within these bodies of research.

In Chapter Three, I articulate the research design and analytic plan used in this qualitative case study. I describe in brief the Sposato case, the data sources and research participants, as well as the approach I took to collect data. I then discuss the strategies and methods I used for qualitative data analysis, drawing primarily on Erickson (1986), Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), Stake (2006), and Yin (2014).

Chapters Four, Five, and Six present the central findings of this dissertation related to the research questions and arguments described above. Chapter Four addresses the first research question: what are the implicit and explicit theories of practice that guide teacher education at the Sposato Graduate School of Education? In order to answer this question, I describe what the core dispositions, primary motivating interests, and essential actions of teacher preparation at Sposato were in order to articulate the underlying theory of practice present at Sposato. This analysis was conducted using the Bourdieu (1977, 1990) frameworks I discuss in Chapter Two. Since I found a single, dominant theory of practice present at Sposato across all levels of the teacher preparation program including candidates, I demonstrate in this chapter how this single, dominant theory of practice was constructed and maintained as part of the Sposato “habitus.” I then draw on the first of Hammerness’s (2006, 2010, 2013) three qualities of effective teacher preparation programs – coherence – to make sense of the Sposato theory of practice and the implications of this internally coherent theory of practice as a model of teacher preparation.

I argue in Chapter Four that Sposato insiders valued and achieved internal program coherence because they assumed coherence would help them to create an effective teacher preparation program. But coherence was achieved at the cost of

eliminating from their model of teacher preparation and theory of practice dissenting viewpoints. This had the further effect of reinforcing rather than challenging or refining the a priori assumptions Sposato insiders had about the problems of the persistent achievement gap and the lack of highly qualified, effective teachers in urban schools, as well as their assumptions about how a teacher preparation program should be designed to address these problems.

Chapters Five and Six each address, in part, the third research question: How do administrators, staff, faculty, coaches, and candidates conceptualize the goals and purposes of the practice of teacher education at Sposato? The reason for splitting this research question into two separate analysis chapters has to do with the two overarching goals Sposato insiders had for their program.

In Chapter Five, I detail the first of these two goals: to show that a new way of preparing effective rookie teachers was in fact possible. I demonstrate that the reason Sposato leaders thought a new way of doing teacher preparation was necessary was because of their assumption that traditional teacher education had not done enough to teach teacher candidates to be effective in real classrooms with real students. Sposato, in their mind, served as a “revolutionary proof point” in the field of teacher preparation, implementing a teacher preparation curriculum inherently designed to produce the kinds of effective teachers Sposato leaders assumed could enter classrooms and have an immediate impact on student learning. I draw on the second of Hammerness’s (2006, 2010, 2013) three qualities of effective teacher preparation programs – curriculum – to make sense of what the Sposato curriculum was designed to do and what the implications of this enactment were.

I argue in Chapter Five that Sposato leaders were able to achieve this goal and demonstrate that a new way of conducting teacher preparation was in fact possible. However, I also show that this “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation was built on a narrow “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness. This epistemological stance limited the definition of what kinds of knowledge and practice actually matter in teaching to the view that teachers’ knowledge and practice should only be focused on having demonstrable impact on student learning. I show the ways in which this epistemology of teacher effectiveness reduced the purpose of teaching to instrumental ends. Even though the Sposato curriculum was explicitly practice-based, following contemporary trends in the design of effective teacher preparation curricula (Forzani, 2014), their approach to practice-based teacher preparation was far more technical and linear than other practice-based approaches which account for a more complicated or complex view of the teaching profession. This practice-based approach had the further consequence of preparing candidates to only be effective curricular implementers and instructional technicians.

In Chapter Six, I detail the second overarching goal Sposato insiders had for their program: to prepare new teachers to be effective in “No Excuses” schools. I demonstrate that Sposato insiders, because of the affiliation of the Sposato program to “No Excuses” schools, worked specifically and exclusively within the context of high-achieving, high-poverty charter schools. I show that the reason for this exclusive context-specific relationship was in large part due to the equity and social justice goals shared by Sposato, “No Excuses,” and urban education reform insiders. I draw on the third of Hammerness’s (2006, 2010, 2013) three qualities of effective teacher preparation programs – vision – to

make sense of how Sposato insiders positioned “culturally affirming teaching” as a way to respond to the educational inequities and injustices experienced by the students of Color attending “No Excuses” schools.

I argue in Chapter Six that Sposato leaders were able to achieve their goal of preparing teachers to be successful in “No Excuses” schools. However, I also show that the approach to equity, justice, and “culturally affirming teaching” built into the Sposato model was insufficient to help candidates redress larger social inequities and injustices Sposato insiders had identified as the exacerbating factors behind the educational inequities and injustices their program intended to fix. I show that the Sposato vision for equity and justice was fundamentally compensatory and distributive. Along these lines, Sposato insiders assumed that providing more equitable access to a rigorous curriculum and bringing historically marginalized student groups into “culturally affirming” classrooms with positive classroom cultures would allow for students in “No Excuses” schools to raise their levels of academic achievement and attainment. I demonstrate that Sposato insiders chose to pursue this gradualist political strategy intentionally because schooling and teacher preparation were areas over which they had control, unlike larger social problems such as poverty or institutional racism. The result of this decision, though, meant that their vision of equity and justice was inherently limited to the “No Excuses” context rather than being a replicable or scalable systemic solution to the problem of the achievement gap.

Answers to the second research question, on candidate experiences, were divided across all three of these major analysis chapters. Because of the unified and coherent curriculum and vision of the Sposato program, I found that candidate experience was best

articulated in relation to the tightly-knit model of teacher preparation designed by Sposato leaders. The broader themes of teacher preparation I discuss across Chapters Four, Five, and Six are corroborated and challenged by the candidate experiences I mention in each of these chapters. That being said, the candidate experience was a direct result of the beliefs and practices of the Sposato habitus (as discussed in Chapter Four). Though there were some candidates who voiced reservations and concerns about some of the unintended consequences of the Sposato model, examples of which I demonstrate in each of these three chapters, I ultimately show that because candidates were satisfied with their preparation, their collected experience could not be seen as distinct from the central model of teacher preparation implemented by faculty and staff.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I provide a summary of the main findings of this qualitative case study of the Sposato Graduate School of Education and the implications of these findings for research, policy, and practice. This chapter connects my findings to relevant literature in the fields of teacher preparation and urban education, particularly as the findings relate to the connections between the Sposato model and what I refer to in Chapter Seven as the “teacher effectiveness doctrine,” the emerging perspective in teacher education quality debates that states teacher quality should be defined primarily by teacher effectiveness, or the ability of a teacher to directly impact student learning. In addition to offering brief suggestions for how the practice of teacher preparation at “No Excuses”-affiliated or practice-based nGSEs should proceed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

This qualitative case study of teacher preparation at the Sposato Graduate School of Education was informed by complementary theoretical frameworks and a review of related literature. In this section, I introduce the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided the research design and data analysis of this dissertation as well as the theoretical frameworks underlying the larger study for which this dissertation is the pilot study. I then present a review of related literature to account for research on new graduate schools of education (nGSEs), urban teacher education, practice-based teacher education, and “No Excuses” charter schools.

#### Theoretical Frameworks

The conceptual frameworks and methodological tools used in this dissertation primarily draw on the critical cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1990). In this section, I describe the reasons these theories are well suited to address the research problem as established above, the ways that Bourdieu’s theories have previously been used in education and the implications of using these frameworks as both a theoretical and conceptual tool for the purposes of this case study.

Then in order to link the framing of this dissertation to the broader research problem connected to the nGSE phenomenon, I briefly review the two theoretical frameworks that inform the larger study: social constructionist approaches to social movement theory and knowledge-practice-justice approaches to theorizing teacher learning initiatives. These frameworks are aligned with the larger study’s goals of addressing how leaders and advocates of teacher preparation at nGSEs understand the

nGSE project and unpacking the assumptions nGSE teacher educators and teacher candidates have about knowledge, practice, learning to teach, diversity, and teacher effectiveness. While the research design and data analysis for this case study of Sposato were informed primarily by the Bourdieu-informed approaches described in the next section, the social movement and knowledge-practice-justice frameworks guiding the larger nGSE study informed the construction of interview protocol questions and observation foci, so are also included in this review.

**Bourdieu’s approach to social fields and theories of practice.** One of the overarching purposes of this dissertation is understanding teacher preparation at Sposato as it manifests in the beliefs and practices of Sposato insiders, including program founders, leaders, teacher educators, and teacher candidates. The project of both this case study and the larger study is to uncover and analyze the concepts, theories, and assumptions of participants as a way of accessing local meanings related to the practice of teacher preparation at nGSEs and therefore to have a grounded approach to the social, historical, and contextual practices used across various nGSE models and sites. Uncovering “emic,” or insider, perspectives (Headland, 1990) is considered an especially appropriate research goal in the investigation of educational phenomena not yet adequately researched or theorized.

Given the lack of current research into “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs, the research design and analytic plan were informed by a set of theoretical propositions that share these same emphases about the relationship between beliefs and practices. In this study, I also regard the emic perspectives of participants involved in teacher preparation as defining and shaping the practice of teacher preparation at Sposato, and vice versa.

Given this perspective on the mutual relationship between beliefs and practices, the frameworks informing this dissertation reject the false dichotomy commonly found in educational research between theory and practice. The proposed dissertation has primarily been informed by Pierre Bourdieu's critical cultural sociological theories (1977, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1990) because they allow for the analysis of the ways beliefs and practices intersect and react in dynamic social settings.

Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) work on social fields and the theories of practice that exist within those social fields, in particular, help illuminate the beliefs and practices of those who engage in the work of teacher preparation at Sposato. Bourdieu (1990) suggests that a social field is a constructed community of individual social agents and groups within a definable and bounded social space. Social fields are not organic or pre-existing; rather, "groups, such as social classes, are *to be made*. They are not given in 'social reality'" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18, emphases in the original). Social fields are not merely analytical entities; they also signify a group identity that emerges from within a group. According to Bourdieu (1989), "The class (or the people, the nation, or an otherwise elusive social collective) exists if and when there exist agents who can say that they are the class, by the mere fact of speaking publically" (p. 24). Therefore, inquiry into social fields must take into account the ways individuals within a field interpret both the validity of the field itself and their role or roles within the field. Inquiry into social fields must also take into account the ways in which individuals identify themselves within multiple different, potentially nested or intersecting social fields. For the purposes of this dissertation, the most immediate and relevant social field is defined as the Sposato case. I have created this boundary given this study's focus on Sposato as a single case, though

Sposato is also connected to the social fields of the nGSE and “No Excuses” phenomena, as well as the social field of education reform defined as a social movement. Questions about participants’ beliefs and motivations related to their role within Sposato and its connections to other fields were developed in the interview protocols described in Chapter Three to investigate the validity of treating Sposato as a distinct social field.

According to Bourdieu (1977), the individual agents and groups that interact within a given social field also share a common social framework of cultural habits, traditions of practice, and ideological orientations best represented by what Bourdieu calls the “habitus” of that social field. Essentially, habitus is the complex set of the dispositions that shape the beliefs and practices that are normalized within the social field. These are not individuals’ dispositions or beliefs, but rather the implicit assumptions and ideologies that arise from a given sector of society that interact with individual beliefs and perceptions. According to Bourdieu (1985), “I wished to put forward the ‘creative,’ active, and inventive capacities of habitus and of agent...by recalling that this generative power is not one of a universal mind, nature, or of human reason...[habitus] is an experience and also a possession” (p. 13). Not only do individuals within a distinct social field both experience and internalize the implicit social rules governed by the habitus, their individual assumptions, actions, and decisions are also influenced by those implicit social rules.

Bourdieu’s work on social fields and habitus provides the background for the use of a conceptual and analytical tool he developed in order to make sense of the relationship between ideologies and practices emerging from social fields: articulating a theory of practice. Bourdieu (1977, 1990) argues that social scientists must look at the

way a social field functions in reality through the theories of practice that emerge from within social fields. A theory of practice is a methodological heuristic that demonstrates a set of relationships between the beliefs and practices of actors in a social field, and further identifies the possibilities for individual convergence toward or divergence from the reproduction of the habitus. According to Bourdieu (1990), uncovering a theory of practice allows for the identification of the location of possibilities for resistance toward and transformation of the social structures and habitus within a social field. Bourdieu (1977) claims that in order to articulate a theory of practice it is

necessary to establish in each case a complete description...of the relation between habitus, as a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures, and the socially structured situation in which the agents' *interests* are defined, and with them the objective functions and subjective motivations of their practices. (p. 76, emphases in the original)

This quotation suggests that the theory of practice of a social field must account for: (a) dispositions, or the ideologies and assumptions underlying the actions implemented within this social field; (b) interests, or factors that motivate people within this social field to act; and (c) actions, or the practices people in this social field use to fulfill their interests yet which are limited in scope by the assumptions which govern their actions.

This theory of practice framework will allow me to access and interpret the beliefs, motivations, and practices of those engaged in the practice of teacher preparation programs as they define, shape, and discuss what teacher education should or could look like.

Following Bourdieu's framework for uncovering a theory of practice through the identification of dispositions (beliefs), interests (motivations), and actions (practices), I explore in this dissertation the dominant theory of practice that emerged from the "social field" of the Sposato case, inclusive of the charter management organization that runs the graduate school of education where Sposato is housed. This social field is tightly bounded because of the shared ideological commitments of the various schools and programs run by Sposato's sponsoring CMO. Though I did not anticipate prior to data collection and analysis there to be only one dominant, explicit theory of practice within this social field (as discussed in Chapter Four), making sense of this explicit theory of practice ultimately helped make sense of the ways in which diverse theories of practice can and do exist within the loosely bounded social field of nGSEs broadly construed. This theme is explored in more depth in Chapter Seven.

***Bourdieu's theories in educational research.*** The most commonly used of Bourdieu's sociological theories in educational research is his work on social and cultural capital and symbolic violence (e.g., Horvat, 2003; James, 2011, 2015; Nash, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) foundational text about ideological reproduction in schools provided a non-economic account of how ideologies are passed down through the processes of schooling. This text unpacks such concepts as social reproduction, which has become central to the work of critical educational research over the past thirty years (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). Yet according to James (2015), in his review of the use of Bourdieu in educational research, "Many educational researchers find Bourdieu's concepts attractive and useful, though there is great variability in what we might call 'depth in use'" (p. 97). Cultural and social capital and social reproduction

are concepts frequently employed in educational research to help explain the influence of sociocultural context and economic class on students' academic experiences (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Sullivan, 2002). Yet most of this research, while using the concepts of cultural capital, social capital, and social reproduction, does not tend to treat social institutions as social fields or investigate the complex relationships between the beliefs and practices of individuals within those fields.

In addition, the theory of practice framework as defined by Bourdieu is not frequently employed as a conceptual or analytical framework for investigation. The term "theories of practice" has been used in teacher education to make sense of broader issues related to teacher education and teacher education for social justice (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2010), but Bourdieu's (1977) specific framework for articulating theories of practice is less cited in the educational literature. Similarly, the relationship of habitus to concepts of social and cultural capital is frequently addressed in educational research (James, 2011), but to this point Bourdieu's work on social fields has tended to be used in overviews of pre-existing educational phenomena, such as higher education (Davies & Guppy, 1997) and teacher education (Wilson & Tamir, 2009), and less frequently employed in the emergence of new educational phenomena.

The above conclusions are consistent with the perspective offered by Gale and Lingard (2015) in their co-edited special issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* focused on "evoking and provoking" Bourdieu's theories in educational research. Gale and Lingard argued that previous ways of using Bourdieu's frameworks provided only a surface interpretation of his theories. According to them, this "'Bourdieu-lite' approach of this kind underestimates the importance of Bourdieu's contributions to understanding

social relations, at the same time as it fails to sufficiently illuminate the empirical contexts on which his work is brought to bear” (p. 1). In order to adequately incorporate Bourdieu’s theoretical frameworks and methodological tools in educational research, Gale and Lingard call for researchers not only to “evoke” Bourdieu, or use his theories as a useful starting point for conceptual analysis, but also to “provoke” Bourdieu, or push thinking in educational research forward from the concepts of social capital, fields, and habitus. Waters (2017) attempted to do this kind of evoking/provoking by taking the concept of symbolic violence and showing what he called “symbolic nonviolence” in alternative schools trying to resist dominant social orders.

One of the major theoretical contributions of this dissertation is to treat the Sposato case as a social field that has dynamic connections to the broader social fields of nGSEs, “No Excuses” schools, and education reform. This case study adapts the theory of practice framework to a greater understanding of new models of teacher preparation present at nGSEs and identifies the ways in which explicit and implicit, as well as dominant and non-dominant, theories of practice can co-exist within a single social field. There are limitations to employing Bourdieu’s theories on social fields and theories of practice to the kind of case study research presented in this dissertation. Treating a case as a social field can lead to inadequate connection of the case to broader ideological movements, especially since no single case study can ever account for the complete set of social fields to which all individuals involved in that single case are connected (Murphy, 2013). Despite this limitation, Bourdieu’s work on social fields and theories of practice is appropriate for this dissertation because of the complex approach to the relationship between beliefs and practices implicit in these theories, as established above. This study,

like Waters' (2017) use of symbolic violence following from Gale and Lingard's (2015) framework, attempts to "evoke" the methodological tool of articulating a theory of practice and the theoretical frameworks of social field and habitus, while "provoking" these concepts to see how they are complicated within a single case of a "No Excuses"-affiliated nGSE.

In addition, this dissertation has also been influenced by the two theoretical frameworks that have informed our proposed larger study of the nGSE phenomenon: social constructionist theories of social movements and the knowledge-practice-justice relationships that emerge out of teacher learning communities.

**Education reform as a social movement.**<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, my research team has conceptualized teacher preparation at nGSEs as part of the contemporary education policy paradigm known as education reform (Mehta, 2013a). Relatedly, Wilson (2014) suggests that a new ideology has emerged in teacher education reform, including the involvement of social entrepreneurs, the use of data, and high stakes accountability. Social movement theory and constructionist approaches that emphasize frames and framing are therefore very helpful in making sense of the perspectives emerging around the social entrepreneurs working within this social movement and its surrounding ideologies.

Tilly (1995) describes social movements as "sustained, organized challenge[s] to existing authorities in the name of a deprived, excluded or wronged population" (p. 144) using noninstitutionalized (and other) tactics (Flacks, 2005) for prompting social change,

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<sup>2</sup> The following two sections draw from a description and interpretation of these theoretical frameworks conducted for the larger nGSE study (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016).

including demonstrations, petition drives, and public statements and meetings (Staggenborg, 2016). Social movements involve interactions among movement leaders, their opposition, the public, and other relevant actors (Buechler, 2011; Staggenborg, 2016). Understood as a social movement, education reform has been remarkably successful at mobilizing resources and influencing policy.

By including attention to symbols, meanings, discourses, identities, and culture (Snow & Benford, 1988), framing approaches emphasize the role of social movements in constructing cultural meanings about justice/injustice (Gamson, Fireman, & Rytina, 1982), blame- and praise-worthy individuals and organizations (Entman, 1993), and central problems and solutions (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Snow & Benford, 1988). In the larger study, we identify the collective action frames, frame alignment strategies, ideologies, and tactics of leaders and advocates of the nGSE phenomenon tied to the social movement of education reform. For the purposes of this dissertation, which is nested inside the larger study of nGSEs, constructionist social movement theory informs the ways in which I connect the Sposato theory of practice to underlying theories of practice emerging from the “No Excuses” model of urban education (Miller, 2015) as well as education reform conceived as a social movement (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014, 2016).

### **Knowledge-practice-justice relationships in teacher learning communities.**

The larger study involves case studies of Sposato, as the pilot case study, and three additional nGSE sites. To sort out the assumptions, practices, and agendas of these various programs and to conduct cross-case analyses, our research team has combined Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999, 2009) knowledge-practice framework for analyzing

teacher learning initiatives with Cochran-Smith's (1998, 2010) framework for theorizing social justice in teacher preparation.

Preparation programs at nGSEs have explicit urban education missions and equity goals. In addition to zeroing in on preparing teachers to teach in the context of practice, they emphasize accountability for achievement in urban charter (and other) schools. A theoretical framework that integrates knowledge, practice, and social justice/equity (as do those mentioned above) provides an intentionally broad scaffolding, similar to that found in the theory of practice framework, for unpacking trends related to what teachers need to know in order to teach well, core practices used to help teachers learn, and the equity and justice ideas administrators and candidates maintain. The similarities between the knowledge-practice-justice framework informing the larger study and the theory of practice framework informing this proposed dissertation provide a coherent set of concepts and constructs of interest to be included in the interview protocols. These topics include the goals of teacher education, the purposes of teacher education, the practices of teacher education and the other core assumptions that teacher educators and candidates have about teacher education both relevant to their context and broadly construed.

The knowledge-practice-justice frameworks complement the social movement frameworks in helping to make sense of nGSEs as both a problem of education policy and a problem of educational practice. Whereas framing and social movement frameworks create a way to understand how nGSE advocates propose the development of nGSEs as a solution to pre-existing problems, the knowledge-practice-justice frameworks described here allow my research team to unpack individual conceptions and perspectives on the practice and purposes of teacher preparation. These frameworks also help to

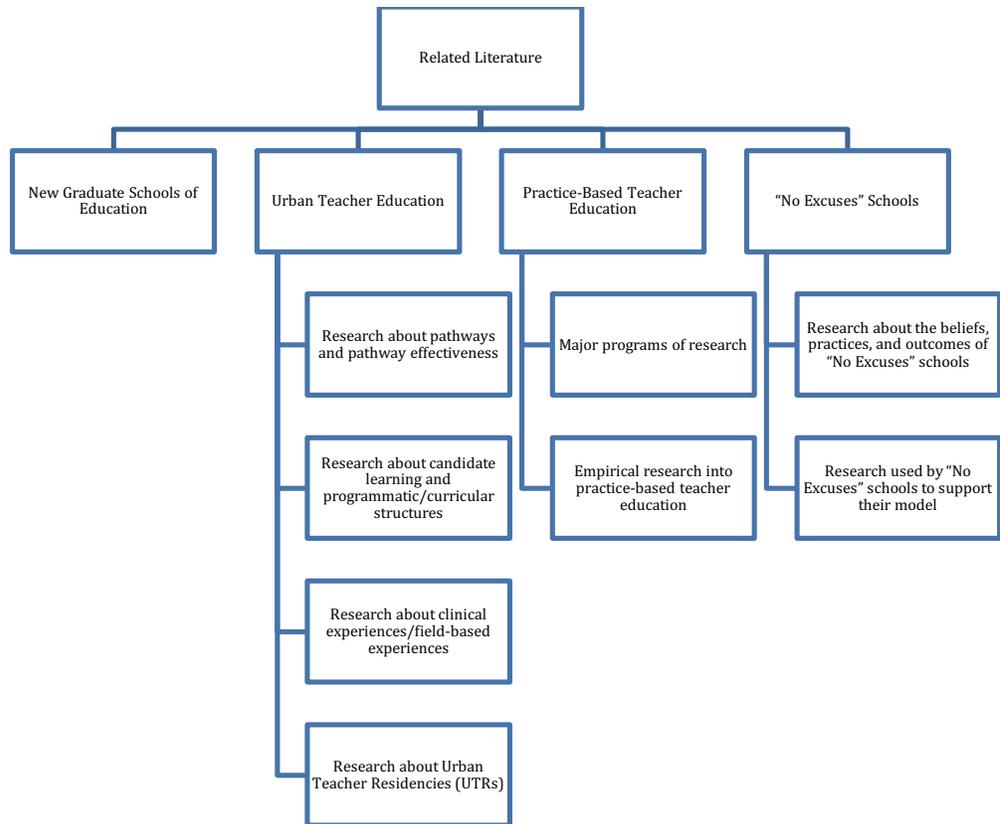
address the limitations of the theory of practice framework in that they allow me to also treat Sposato as a dynamic nGSE case in which individuals define and articulate their connections to the nGSE movement in different ways. Ultimately, these two additional frameworks allow me to link this dissertation to the nGSE phenomenon in a much more systematic way.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This dissertation about teacher preparation at Sposato builds on and is informed by conceptual and empirical research in four related bodies of literature: research on new graduate schools of education; research on preparing teachers for urban settings, inclusive of research on urban teacher residency programs; research on practice-based teacher education; and research on “No Excuses” charter schools and management organizations.<sup>3</sup> A graphic representation of the areas of literature reviewed for this study is presented in Figure 1.

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<sup>3</sup> The sections of this literature review concerning nGSEs, urban teacher education/urban teacher residencies, and practice-based teacher education draw heavily from a review of this literature conducted for the larger nGSE study (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). Many of the conclusions and implications for future research mentioned in this literature review are drawn from that proposal.



*Figure 1.* Major areas of literature reviewed. This figure includes information about the four major branches and sub-areas of literature I articulated in the literature review conducted for this study.

In the following sections, I first articulate the methods employed to identify the literature reviewed for this study. I then review each of the four areas in the order in which they appear in Figure 1. Each section contains a description and analysis of the research-based trends within the four areas, as well as my critique of these trends and an articulation of the current limitations present in these areas of research. I conclude with a brief overarching analysis of the trends I identified across all four areas of research.

**Locating the research.** To identify the conceptual and empirical research in each of the four major areas of research shown in Figure 1, I conducted a series of online

searches using the *ERIC* and *Education Research Complete* databases. Literature was identified using a series of descriptors, in some cases involving Boolean strings, related to the key terms that define the four areas of research examined. Examples of these terms and strings for each area of research are as follows: for nGSEs, “new graduate schools of education,” “new schools of education,” “new forms of teacher preparation,” and “innovative teacher education;” for urban teacher education, “urban” combined with “teacher education,” “preservice teacher education,” or “teacher preparation;” for practice-based teacher education, “practice based teacher education,” “practice based teacher initial education,” and “practice based teacher preparation;” and for “No Excuses” charter schools, “no excuses,” “high performing charter,” and “high performing urban school.” In addition to these online searches, hand searches through back catalogs of key journals (e.g., *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Urban Education*) were conducted to identify relevant studies that had not been identified in the online searches. I also searched the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database for dissertations using several of the key terms, which was particularly helpful to identify research about “No Excuses” schools as several emerging scholars have researched these schools but have not yet published this research in peer-reviewed journals.

Most of the literature I located was published in peer-reviewed journals between 2001-2016, in the post-NCLB period of education reform in which new graduate schools of education and “No Excuses” charter schools saw their greatest growth. There is no literature that was included earlier than 1983, which as Mehta (2013) suggests marked the beginning of the education reform era following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. Because three recent comprehensive literature reviews related to urban teacher education

and the preparation of teachers for diverse and/or urban settings have been recently published (C.R. Anderson & Cross, 2013; L.M. Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016), each of which reviews the urban teacher education literature up through the year 2012, the urban teacher education portion of this literature review updates those three literature reviews and concentrates on literature published from 2012-2017. The research in this review is primarily limited to peer-reviewed research conducted in the United States, though studies that used international settings to compare their U.S.-based findings were not excluded. This is appropriate given that, at least to date, the nGSE model is exclusive to the U.S.

**Conducting the literature review.** The four areas of research shown in Figure 1 were chosen because of their relevance to the phenomenon of interest and the Sposato case. Each of these areas of research, though, contains a wide variety of approaches to empirical and conceptual scholarship related to the topics of interest. In order to pay attention to these differences, the methods I used to review the identified literature were loosely informed by the “research as historically-situated social practice” framework developed by Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2014). According to Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2014), research shapes and is shaped by social, economic, and political forces, therefore these larger forces must be taken into account when unpacking and analyzing trends across multiple studies in a given field of research. Research is not merely a method of producing knowledge; the decisions made by researchers, tied to the sociohistorical contexts in which the researchers worked, affect the knowledge they produce and how this knowledge is interpreted by others. Though I did not use the “research as historically-situated social practice” framework in a systematic way, its

principles guided the way I categorized and analyzed the research questions asked, the methods used, the research designs employed, the findings generated, and the overarching themes developed across all studies.

For the purposes of this literature review, I concentrated on how the researchers constructed the research questions and the research problem and the assumptions and positionality of researchers. These two categories allowed me to further categorize the studies in each area of research according to trends and to speak more holistically about the trends in the research findings.

**Research on new graduate schools of education.** Most of the existing literature about nGSEs is not peer-reviewed and falls into one of three categories: program documentation, press releases, or websites (e.g., Relay GSE, 2015); white papers and policy briefs released by privately funded policy organizations that contain reports of single nGSE programs (e.g., Arnett, 2015; Candal, 2014, Doyle & Han, 2012); or news reports about the development of new teacher preparation programs (e.g., Sawchuk, 2013). I used these materials to help make sense of the nGSE phenomenon because, as I note below, at this point in time there are only nine peer-reviewed articles and chapters about teacher preparation programs at such institutions. Most of this non peer-reviewed material, published within the past five years, describes programs or features of programs but does not employ research questions or systematic data collection.

Similar to the non peer-reviewed materials about nGSEs, four peer-reviewed articles or chapters described the features of programs and compared these programs to university-based teacher education programs. Callier and Riordan (2009), Newman (2009), Kronholz (2012), and Gastic (2014) each situated nGSE programs within the

research problem of the teacher quality gap and the need for more highly effective teachers in the United States. Each of these analyses also described design principles and program structures that are intended to allow new schools of teacher education to respond to human capital needs and make important innovations within the field of teacher education. These four analyses agreed on which programs should be considered part of the nGSE phenomenon (e.g., High Tech High Graduate School of Education, Relay Graduate School of Education, and Sposato), but attributed the presumed effectiveness of these programs to different program features. Newman (2009) focused on selectivity in recruitment and admissions, Callier and Riordan (2009) discussed the importance of situating these programs in K-12 schools with a focus on the practice of teaching, whereas Kronholz (2012), and Gastic (2014) emphasized that nGSEs have started to link pupil learning to nGSE program outcomes as a way to ensure teacher education emphasizes accountability for pupil learning. Our research team for the larger study has used these analyses to locate and identify the nGSE phenomenon; they also provided us with insight into the work occurring in programs that meet the nGSE criteria.

In contrast, there are other articles in this emerging body of research which are more critical of the practices that exist at nGSEs, including the critique that nGSE programs downplay the role of theory and promote instructional practices that limit the potential for pupil learning (B.A. Smith, 2015; Stitzlein & West, 2014; Zeichner, 2016; Zeichner & Conklin, 2016). Although Zeichner and Conklin's (2016) critique is conceptual, the other four critical studies used qualitative research methods to address the questions about the instructional methods or programmatic features found in nGSEs. Zeichner (2016) examined the websites and publically available curricular materials of

programs he referred to as “independent teacher preparation programs,” which also included programs not within the boundaries of the nGSE definition established above. Zeichner argued that some nGSEs have contributed to the inequitable distribution of unqualified teachers and the promotion of narrowed preparation curricula by concentrating on what he refers to as controlling pedagogies and management techniques and paying little attention to what he refers to as less punitive, more enriching techniques. Stitzlein and West (2014) and B.A. Smith (2015) both suggested that methods employed at two specific nGSEs were inherited from the “No Excuses” charter schools to which these nGSEs are connected. These two studies were critical of these methods and used discourse analysis of program materials to unpack the ideologies they saw as being transferred from “No Excuses” schools to the nGSEs they identify.

Similarly, Mungal (2015) analyzed public documents and 21 interviews with faculty and staff and found that the creation of an nGSE program in one northeastern city, which was ideologically aligned to the education reform environment in that city, led to the growth of that nGSE at the expense of enrollment in other more diverse teacher education programs. These empirical studies align with Zeichner and Conklin’s (2016) conceptual argument that certain nGSEs promote problematic assumptions for urban teacher education and create an “echo chamber,” or a closed system where certain ideas are amplified and repeated and competing or different ideas are disallowed, within this branch of education reform. It is important to note, however, these critical studies (which do not use the nGSE term itself) have only examined a small number of nGSE programs and have concentrated on either nGSE policy or practice, lacking a more complex perspective on the relationship between nGSE policies and practices.

It is not appropriate to suggest trends based on this very small group of peer-reviewed analyses. In our review of the nGSE literature for the larger study, we noted that these analyses seemed to suggest that nGSEs were considered as either constructive disruptions of the teacher education marketplace or as threats to democratic and social justice goals based primarily on the positionality or affiliation of the researchers conducting the study (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). We noted that these two dramatically different characterizations were consistent with the two groupings of the studies mentioned above: the four studies describing and/or praising programs come from those who work for or support nGSEs whereas the four studies that critique programs at nGSEs were written by critical educational scholars or university-based teacher educators, or in the case of B.A. Smith (2015) an educator and former resident in an nGSE program. Collectively these articles make it clear that research of the kind presented here is sorely needed. This literature also shows the need to look into the broader research literature on teacher education and education reform. The three subsequent areas of research described in the next several sections help to make sense of the connections among nGSEs, the overarching research problem of the achievement gap, and the education reform solutions which have been promoted within the current educational policy paradigm.

**Research on urban teacher education.** A number of recent reviews of research have been conducted about preservice teacher education (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, Abrams, Chavez-Moreno, Mills, & Stern, 2016) and teacher preparation for urban schools (C.R. Anderson & Cross, 2013; L.R. Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). These reviews agreed that most of the literature on urban teacher

education began with the assumption that “traditional,” university-based teacher preparation had not succeeded at providing enough well-qualified teachers interested in and committed to teaching in urban schools. Yet as is made clear in C.R. Anderson and Cross’s (2013) review, which includes a discussion of how the literature uses the “urban” construct, the question of how best to address the needs of low-income students of Color is eclipsed in this body of literature in favor of questions about how best to meet the needs of mostly white, female teachers who are being prepared to teach in classrooms with these students. Similarly, L.M. Anderson and Stillman (2013) found that the urban teacher education literature tended to focus on the importance of what occurs during student teaching and various ways to address the inconsistent quality of urban clinical fieldwork experiences.

While consistent with the findings in the C.R. Anderson and Cross (2013) and L.M. Anderson and Stillman (2013) reviews, Cochran-Smith and Villegas’s (2016) review, further subdivided the urban teacher education literature into three broad programs of research which represent the most prevalent categories of questions/research problems related to urban teacher preparation research. The first of these includes research on recruitment and entry routes and pathways into urban teaching and the effects of policies regarding alternative preparation/certification on urban teacher shortages and student achievement. They conclude that alternative programs do have the capacity to change the nature of the teacher workforce in particular labor markets, but also that although there are some differences in program impact between and among different pathways, results are mixed and inconclusive, differences tend to be small, and they disappear quickly. Cochran-Smith and Villegas’ second and third programs of research

work from the assumption that teachers' biographies shape their beliefs and practices. The second is the largest branch of urban teacher education research and addresses the preparation of White, middle class teacher candidates for urban schools. They found that this program of research demonstrated that some coursework/fieldwork arrangements showed promise in introducing teacher candidates to the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary to teach in urban settings but also tended to emphasize teacher candidates' beliefs rather than actual practice. In addition, they find the focus in this program of research was on the needs of teacher candidates and their learning rather than on the needs of students of Color in predominantly low-income city schools. Cochran-Smith and Villegas' third program of urban teacher education research focused on the recruitment of teachers of Color into teacher education. They found that this third branch of studies showed that increased use of scholarships and partnerships boosted the recruitment of teachers of Color despite the fact that many challenges existed for teacher candidates of Color, particularly within predominantly white institutions of teacher education.

Because each of the three major reviews discussed above was based on research on urban teacher education published between 2000 and 2012, I conducted a review of urban teacher education literature from 2012-present and found 46 additional studies (as well as 29 studies beyond these 46 related to urban teacher residencies) written from a variety of methodological perspectives and research approaches. My analysis of this recent literature indicates that the major foci identified in previous reviews of research continue to be valid, in particular: studies that identified the differential effects of recruitment pathways and policies (e.g., Eckert, 2013; Lincove, Osborne, Mills, &

Bellows, 2015; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, & Jacob, 2014); studies that focused on the preparation and needs of mostly White, female teacher candidates and the specific program structures within university-based teacher education programs that cater to this population (e.g., Aragon, Culpepper, McKee, & Perkins, 2014; Kumar & Hamer, 2012; Marri, Michael-Luna, Cormier, & Keegan, 2014; Matias, 2016a; Schultz & S.M. Ravitch, 2013; Whipp, 2013); and studies that emphasized the importance of clinical fieldwork as a necessary part of urban teacher education (e.g., Bergman, 2013; Lees, 2016; Noel, 2016; Ronfeldt, 2015). Below I discuss these recent studies in further detail, using the following categories which are based on the primary focus of a given study: research on pathway effectiveness, research about candidate learning and the effective practice of urban teacher education, research about clinical fieldwork and community-based experiences, and research about urban teacher residencies.

***Research on pathway effectiveness.*** Four recent studies focused on the relative effectiveness of different pathways into urban teaching (Eckert, 2013; Lincove et al., 2015; Ronfeldt, Reininger, & Kwok, 2013; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, et al., 2014). All four defined the problem of urban teacher education as a human capital and teacher quality problem and used quantitative analyses of large data sets to inquire into program effectiveness. Despite the similarities in research methods and problem framing, these four studies asked different questions related to program effectiveness. Eckert (2013) investigated whether commonly held forms of teacher quality, such as having advanced degrees or the necessary competency in a given subject area, could be used to predict either teachers' personal sense of efficacy or administrators' assessment of teachers' efficacy, with implications for how programs should be restructured to produce effective

teachers. She found that these commonly held proxies for teacher quality could be used to predict an individual teacher's sense of efficacy but not administrators' sense of a teacher's general efficacy in the classroom and concluded that districts should identify measurable elements of quality if they desire to use quality to predict efficacy.

Ronfeldt, Reininger, and Kwok (2013) and Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob (2014) also investigated potential predictors of teacher efficacy but tied these findings more explicitly to program quality than individual teacher characteristics. Each study assumed that some aspects of preservice programs were likely more important than others in preparing teachers to teach in urban settings. They conducted secondary analyses of surveys with large samples to identify relationships between individual teacher characteristics or features of clinical preparation models and teachers' perceptions of their individual quality and career persistence (Ronfeldt, Reininger, et al., 2013) and to determine whether the amount of practice teaching and methods coursework built into a program could be used to predict levels of individual teachers' sense of their preparedness to teach (Ronfeldt, Schwartz, et al., 2014). Ronfeldt, Reininger, et al. (2013) found that clinical preparation is more predictive of teachers' sense of persistence in the profession than the individual characteristics of those teachers. Ronfeldt, Schwartz et al. (2014) similarly found that the more practice teaching a teacher candidate experiences is related to relatively higher levels of teachers' sense of preparedness. Ultimately, these two studies found that quality clinical preparation has an important relationship to the ability of teachers to feel prepared for teaching and used these findings to discuss the importance of clinical preparation within teacher education programs.

In contrast, Lincove, Osborne, Mills, and Bellows (2015) investigated the effectiveness of different program types rather than characteristics of individual programs within the crowded urban teacher education marketplace in Texas by looking at the difference in pupil learning in math from teachers who had been prepared at different teacher preparation providers. Yet they found that differences in student learning could not be attributed to the characteristics of different teacher preparation programs. When compared to the findings from Eckert's (2013), Ronfeldt, Reininger, et al.'s (2013) and Ronfeldt, Schwartz, et al.'s (2014) studies, there is a suggestion that certain features of teacher preparation (e.g., practice teaching and clinical preparation) can be used to predict whether or not a teacher will feel prepared to teach; but these findings cannot yet determine what other program structures are important to investigate measurable impacts of programs on student learning. Together these four studies provide some very limited evidence that sound measures of teacher quality could hypothetically predict teachers' efficacy and retention (Eckert, 2013), that programs with high-quality clinical experiences tend to produce higher quality teachers (Ronfeldt, Reininger, et al., 2013; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, et al., 2014), and that a diverse teacher education marketplace with multiple different kinds of providers has neither a positive or negative impact on the number of highly qualified teachers produced in that marketplace over the long term (Lincove et al., 2015). But none of these four studies identified a causal relationship between a program focusing on measures of teacher quality and the production of more highly effective teachers.

Each of these four studies admits the limitations of their statistical analyses and identifies the ways in which research following different methodological perspectives is

also necessary. For instance, Eckert (2013) used qualitative analysis of follow-up interviews with survey participants to help make sense of her quantitative findings. Yet the other three studies related to effectiveness tended to quantify a set of desirable outcomes and to measure whether certain urban teacher education program features or structures could be used to predict future teaching effectiveness. This feature of these studies adds to the conclusions about research on alternative certification and pathways reached by Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al. (2016) based on research on teacher preparation up through 2012: these effectiveness studies “are inconsistent and thus ultimately inconclusive at a broad level in terms of what they tell us about the effectiveness of alternative pathways and programs” (p. 33). Effectiveness studies can illuminate important questions of program structure and the practice of urban teacher education but have not yet been able to determine what the nature or structure of the human capital pipeline into urban teacher education should look like with any certainty. The nuanced, qualitative analyses in the second branch of the urban teacher education literature, which I describe below, provide an interesting counterpoint to this perspective through their in-depth investigations of the practices of specific urban teacher education programs.

***Research about candidate learning and the practice of urban teacher education.***

This second branch of the urban teacher education literature is by far the largest and most diverse. Of the 46 total studies I identified published from 2012 to the present related to urban teacher education, this branch on innovative program features or practices and candidate learning contains 26 conceptual and empirical studies. Two of these studies (Sealy-Ruiz & Greene, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014) are conceptual arguments for

the importance of preservice urban teacher education. Consistent with C.R. Anderson and Cross's (2013) conclusions, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) discussed what it would mean for a program to put the needs of non-dominant populations first in teacher education program design. Sealy-Ruiz and Greene (2015) point out the ways that urban teacher education programs must focus on issues of racialization and teacher candidates' racial assumptions in order to enact a social justice mission. Neither of these conceptual analyses denied the need for preservice urban teacher education. These conceptual arguments are consistent with the ways in which the other articles related to candidate learning framed their empirical research: urban teacher education is important in order for teacher candidates to be prepared to enter classrooms serving high populations of low-income students of Color, therefore programs focusing on urban teacher education must think intentionally through program design and program practice.

Nine of the 26 studies in this branch of research focused on candidate learning and belief structures: Aragon, Culpeper, McKee, and Perkins's (2014) study of the differences among preservice teachers' attitudes being prepared for suburban and urban settings; Kumar and Hamer's (2012) study of preservice teachers' beliefs toward diversity; Schultz and S.M. Ravitch's (2013) study of preservice teachers' beliefs about their professional identity; Whipp's (2014) study of the ways social justice orientations either do or do not develop among teachers prepared in urban-specific preparation programs; Matias and her colleagues' program of research into the perceptions of White teacher candidates as these perceptions apply to students of Color (Matias, 2016a, 2016b; Matias & Grosland, 2016; Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2016); and Bauml, Castro, Field, and Hamer's (2016) study of perceptions of preservice teachers toward the nature of

urban schools. These studies do not share a single methodological or conceptual framework. Aragon et al. and Kumar and Hamer used samples of students from large universities to investigate preservice candidate beliefs whereas Bauml et al., Matias and her colleagues' program of research, Schultz and S.M. Ravitch, and Whipp both used much smaller sample sizes to conduct qualitative analyses based on candidate perceptions.

Despite this difference, each study assumed that there was a relationship between a teacher candidate's beliefs and that candidate's practice in the classroom. In addition, each study looked at different groups within its sample to make comparisons across participants. For example, Aragon et al. (2014) found that teachers prepared for urban settings are more likely to hold positive images of teaching for diversity. Schultz and S.M. Ravitch (2013) found that their two groups of teachers had vastly different perspectives on what their professional identities should be, yet found coherence within each comparison group. While these studies agreed that beliefs do in fact affect an urban teachers' practice, the studies were not designed to interrogate what the relationship between beliefs and practices were. Rather beliefs were treated as a separate entity from practice, in part due to methodological limitations (Aragon et al., 2014; Matias, 2016, 2016b; Matias & Grosland, 2016; Matias et al., 2016; Kumar & Hamer, 2012), but also due to how research questions and interview protocols were constructed (Bauml et al., 2016; Schultz & S.M. Ravitch, 2013; Whipp, 2014).

The remaining empirical studies in this branch of research focused on unique and innovative practices within urban teacher education tended to connect these practices to a set of desired effects or outcomes on teacher candidates (Bhatnagar et al., 2016; Castro,

Field, Bauml, & Morowski, 2012; Conklin & Hughes, 2015; Evans, 2014; Haddix & Dennis, 2013; Kaden & Patterson, 2014; Lyon, 2013; Marri, Michael-Luna, Cormier, & Keegan, 2014; Parsons, Mallow, Vaughn, & Croix, 2014; Philip, 2013; Philip & Benin, 2014; Powers & Duffy, 2015; Rabin, 2013; Seglem & Garcia, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013). These 15 studies were primarily qualitative studies of one or two programs with relatively small sample sizes (based on the number of teacher candidates enrolled in the specific urban preparation program within a given university-based school of education).

Marri, Michael-Luna, Cormier, and Keegan (2014) is conceptually and methodologically representative of this group of studies. The authors assumed that certain programmatic structures (here, an emphasis on civic and citizenship education) would be necessary to increase the social justice understandings and practices of their teacher candidates. A sample of 15 teacher candidates from the authors' program was gathered (similar sample sizes exist across these studies). Candidates were interviewed and the responses they shared in the interviews were used to draw immediate conclusions about the relative effectiveness of the program practice under investigation. The research findings were then used to draw larger conclusions about the relationship between certain social justice beliefs and the practices candidates should take with them once they become teachers of record, assuming that these specific beliefs are important because urban teachers must be prepared to take on systemic social inequalities which pervade low-income communities of Color in the U.S.

This same pattern can be seen in the other studies I have grouped with Marri et al.'s (2014) study, but there is no consistent set of program structures or features that are

called for in these studies. There is not at this time a consistent trend in this group of studies on candidate learning and innovative practice except for the common finding that the practice of urban teacher education was enacted in different ways depending upon the mission and orientation of a given urban teacher education program.

Overall, this set of 15 studies demonstrated a social justice orientation within urban teacher education, though there are slight differences in how social justice was defined. The unit of analysis of these empirical studies was almost always the teacher candidate him/herself, but the implications of these studies tended to be directed at the programmatic or coursework level. In addition, these studies performed the opposite function of the nine candidate learning studies emphasizing beliefs mentioned above. These authors studied practices without a more in-depth exploration of the beliefs that shape and are shaped by these practices. None of the studies in this sub-set of the urban teacher education literature treated beliefs and practices as situated social behaviors in the way called for by this dissertation's theoretical framework.

***Research about clinical fieldwork and community-based experiences.*** The final set of urban teacher education studies I located that were published since 2012 shared a focus on the importance of clinical fieldwork or community-based approaches in teacher preparation. Though clinical fieldwork is a distinct idea from community-based approaches, I have grouped the following set of 16 studies together because of their shared definitions of research problems and research questions. This set of studies contains three conceptual studies (Boutte, 2012; Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015) that present a distillation of the way the empirical studies in this group ask and answer their larger research questions. Boutte (2012) analyzed the current

landscape of urban K-12 schooling and argued that there is a wealth of resources within K-12 school settings in historically underserved neighborhoods that can help teacher education programs produce complex models of successful teaching. According to Boutte, urban schools in the U.S. have been able to address problems related to endemic racism while simultaneously focusing on the academic learning needs of students in urban communities. Therefore, teacher education programs must build collaborative grassroots efforts rooted into their program in order to work toward a model of success that meets the needs of these urban communities. This argument is consistent with the common assumption across the small group of empirical studies I found related to community-based and clinical practices that urban communities and schools have inherent value and worth that must be tapped into when preparing teachers to teach in these settings.

Complementarily, Zeichner, Payne, and Brayko (2015) argued that opening up “third spaces,” or places that are not solely university- or school-centric in teacher preparation, will allow for teacher candidates to better negotiate the institutional boundaries between and among program, community, and school. Zeichner et al.’s argument is consistent with the assumption present in the empirical studies within this subset that in order for teacher candidates to be ready to teach within communities, their time before becoming teachers of record must be spent in an intentionally-aligned combination of university-, school-, and community-based settings. Kretchmar & Zeichner (2016) extended this concept of a community-based teacher preparation focus into a term they referred to as “Teacher Prep 3.0,” to contrast their view with the teacher effectiveness doctrine described as “Teacher Quality 2.0” as promoted by Hess and

McShane (2014) and Gastic (2014). Kretchmar and Zeichner's view of "Teacher Prep 3.0" claims that orienting the work of teacher preparation more in relation to the communities they serve will allow for the larger structural reform of inequitable educational systems.

There are 13 empirical studies related to the importance of clinical fieldwork and community-based practice in urban teacher education in my collection of 46 recent urban teacher education studies. Each addressed some version of the following general research question: Are community-based approaches necessary and effective for the preparation of teachers for urban settings? Despite asking this general question, only one study (Ronfeldt, 2015) maintained a level of agnosticism about whether or not community-based and clinical experiences are in fact necessary. Ronfeldt (2015) used a large set of administrative data including teachers and students in a large urban district in order to measure the relative effectiveness of using the experience of different field placement sites as a predictor of teaching quality. He found that teachers who had student teaching placements in high-quality clinical fieldwork sites, defined by measures of positive school culture, a school's effectiveness at raising student achievement, and low faculty turnover within a school, ultimately were more effective in the classroom once becoming teachers of record.

The other 12 studies in this set of empirical research tended to operate from the assumption that clinical and community-based experiences are necessary, though they found that there is a variable level of effectiveness dependent upon the situation. Three of these studies are qualitative inquiries into the authors' same home teacher education institution (Heineke, Ryan, & Tocci, 2015; McCullough & Ryan, 2014; Ryan et al.,

2014). These related studies described the community-based and clinical experiences present in this program, the program design which supports these experiences, and the opportunities afforded teacher candidates in this program because of the community-based clinical focus the program has established. The findings across these three studies are not generalizable to other programs, though, because this collection of authors made clear that the effects the program had on teacher candidates' development occurred because of their unique program structure, which included the creation of professional learning communities that included both student teachers and field placement site faculty and the process of intentionally exposing candidates to community school settings that range from early childhood to high school. They offered their program as a model while admitting that it may not be a universally achievable model.

This is a common finding across this literature: specific structures are necessary to ensure that community-based, high-quality clinical experiences have their desired effect on teacher candidate development. However, there was no consensus across the studies about what these specific structures were. Bergman's (2013) analysis of pre-test/post-test data from a group of urban teacher candidates who completed the Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships survey found that the number of methods this group of teacher candidates could identify to communicate with families increased after a community-based clinical experience, which implies the importance of urban clinical experiences. Brayko (2013) found in her case study of an urban-focused teacher education program that having coursework situated in urban communities and connected to clinical fieldwork allowed teacher candidates in this program to increase their proficiency in leading student discussions. These qualitative

and mixed-methods studies, together with Ronfeldt's (2015) statistical analyses, demonstrated the importance of community-based and clinical fieldwork with certain features or structures in urban teacher education for teacher candidate development. But none of these studies answered Zeichner et al.'s (2015) lingering question about what balance of university-, school-, or community-based governance structures should be used by a program to ensure these qualities are included in the program.

Across the urban teacher education studies published since 2012 I identified, there were issues and silences that were similar to those identified in the C.R. Anderson and Cross (2013), L.M. Anderson and Stillman (2013), and Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2016) literature reviews. There were few investigations of the complex relationships between teacher candidate beliefs and practices and the ways candidates' assumptions about what it means to teach in an urban setting were shaped by the practices used in programs focused on preparing teachers for urban classrooms. The bulk of these studies on urban teacher education investigated an isolated practice or set of practices embedded within university-based programs and treated this practice as if it is universally applicable to urban teacher education rather than contextually situated. There is a recent trend in the clinical fieldwork branch of this literature to emphasize context-specificity, but this branch of the urban teacher education literature tends to reinforce the notion that more clinical fieldwork is the best solution to the problem of teacher quality (as described in more detail in the next section on urban teacher residencies). The major silence in the urban teacher education literature is a lack of methodologically diverse research on urban teacher education that treats teacher candidates' beliefs and practices as complex, intersecting, and situated elements.

*Research on urban teacher residencies.* The empirical and conceptual studies that emphasize the importance of clinical fieldwork as a necessary part of urban teacher education among the recent studies I located on urban teacher education were most closely aligned in terms of their framing of the problem of urban teacher education with conceptual and empirical literature about urban teacher residencies (UTRs). Yet for the purposes of this literature review, I treated literature on UTRs as a distinct branch of urban teacher education literature because of the similarity of the way the following 29 studies, distinct from the 46 studies that discussed urban teacher education as a more general research phenomenon, frame problems related to urban teacher education as being addressed specifically within urban teacher residency programs. Each of these studies tended to assume that new models and innovations outside of university-based teacher education programs are required to drive up the quality of teacher preparation for urban settings.

In this group of 29 studies, UTRs were often conceptualized as “context-specific” and/or as a “third way” between university and alternative programs (which is distinct from Zeichner, Payne, and Brayko’s “third spaces”), combining full-year residencies alongside experienced teachers with masters-level content coursework delivered through program-university partnerships (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2008). Gatlin (2009) argued that UTRs have been able to find some success within the field of urban teacher education because they have appealed to both those who favor alternative teacher education programs and those who favor more clinical fieldwork at university-based programs, and they are also informed by the research on urban teacher education literature. Gatlin’s (2009) framing of the positive reception of UTRs is reflected across

the other 28 empirical studies focused on UTRs (e.g. Hammerness & Matsko, 2012; Hammerness, Williamson, & Kosnick, 2016; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Papay, West, Fullerton, & Kane, 2012; Solomon, 2009). In addition, this subset of studies about UTRs is the most immediately relevant to the study of nGSEs since most nGSEs incorporate residency-like models. Consistent with the nGSE literature, which focuses on a very limited number of highly publicized programs, most of the peer-reviewed studies of UTRs included in this literature review were focused on one or more of only three sites: the Boston Teacher Residency [BTR] (Bogges, 2010; Papay et al., 2012; Solomon, 2009), the Newark Montclair Urban Teacher Residency [NMUTR] (Klein, Taylor, Monteiro, et al., 2015; Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom, & Abrams, 2013, 2016; Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014; Taylor, Klein, & Carletta, 2016), and the Academy of Urban School Leadership-National Louis University Urban Teacher Residency [AUSL-UTR] (Bogges, 2010; Gardiner, 2011; Gardiner & Lorch, 2015; Gardiner & Salmon, 2014; Jagla, 2009).

There are two foci in the UTR studies: those that are exploratory or descriptive and are conducted by program administrators or affiliates and those whose researchers are situated outside of the programs investigated in order to examine the effectiveness or quality of a given set of UTRs. Most of these 29 studies about UTRs were exploratory or descriptive case studies conducted by administrators or participants in particular UTRs. Solomon's (2009) description of the Boston Teacher Residency core principles, Gardiner and Salmon's (2014) analysis of practices used at the AUSL-UTR to close the theory-practice gap, and Klein, Taylor, Monteiro, et al.'s (2015) description of residents' action research projects co-facilitated by school and university mentors at the NMUTR are

representative of this subset of research on UTRs. These three descriptive studies began with an articulation of core principles, which differed across programs. For example, Solomon (2009) organized the BTR's five central principles in the following way:

- a) the program serves the school district, b) the program is structured to blend theory and practice, c) the program emphasizes the selection, recruitment, and support of the mentor teacher and treats the mentors as teacher educators, d) the program creates an aligned set of induction supports which extend for the first three years of the new teacher's career, e) the program treats student achievement as its ultimate outcome. (p. 478)

In contrast, Gardiner and Salmon (2014) stated the AUSL-UTR placed more emphasis on full-time faculty investment in classrooms than on the selection and recruitment of mentor teachers, and Klein et al.'s (2015) study makes clear that the negotiation of different sources of knowledge at the NMUTR is the guiding focus of their work. Common themes across the different articulations of core UTR principles included an emphasis on practice and clinical fieldwork, partnerships with local teachers in local districts, and the development of high-quality teachers.

These descriptive studies did not set out to analyze empirical evidence about the nature or quality of the particular programs they examined. In this way, they were consistent with the descriptive literature about nGSEs and/or urban teacher education programs that emphasized clinical and community-based practices. Rather, the research questions asked and the methods used to investigate UTRs in this group of studies began with the assumption that UTRs were an important form of clinically rigorous preparation

and then highlighted the ways their specific programs enhanced the preparation of teacher residents who attend their program.

Only a handful of analyses conducted by researchers external to a given UTR program examined the impact of UTR programs on teacher quality, teacher recruitment, teacher diversity, teacher retention, and/or student achievement (Bogges, 2010; Gatti, 2016; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Papay et al., 2012). Each of these studies employed a different methodological framework to ask somewhat similar questions about whether or not UTRs increased teacher quality. Papay, West, Fullerton, and Kane (2012) used available student achievement data from the BTR's partnership district to compare the effectiveness of BTR teachers to non-BTR teachers. They found that, initially, BTR graduates were less effective math instructors than non-BTR teachers and no more effective than non-BTR teachers in English language arts; by the fourth or fifth year of teaching, though, BTR teachers were much more effective math teachers than non-BTR veteran teachers. In general, Papay et al. could only determine that modest effects in the long run were caused by the BTR model. The lack of conclusive data on effectiveness implies that quality cannot simply be assessed via this kind of statistical analysis, though this is not a claim Papay et al. make strongly in their analysis.

Gatti (2016) and Gatti and Catalano (2015) used qualitative methods to critically analyze the life stories of residents from a single UTR and found that ideological clashes concerning how teaching and teacher quality between the resident and the program's administration affected this teacher's professional development. These investigations emphasized the importance of programs introducing inquiry into residents' coursework because they assumed that teacher quality can only be achieved when teachers critically

inquire into their practice. This study demonstrates a trend in teacher quality literature more generally that a researcher's a priori definition of quality ends up being supported by the research findings.

Finally, Boggess (2010) used a qualitative comparative case study method to investigate the BTR and the AUSL-UTR, two of the most frequently described programs from the UTR literature. He found that different program emphases in these programs resulted in the development of different kinds of teacher residents; that is, teacher residents' beliefs and practices were influenced by a program's theory of action so teacher quality, then, should be defined in relation to the program's theory of action.

These three studies show that there is currently a methodological and conceptual debate about how to conceptualize teacher quality from within the UTR literature. This is consistent with the conceptual and methodological debates about teacher quality that have been present within the field of teacher education research for 20 years. Not surprisingly, the UTR literature does not suggest that any single form of teacher quality analysis is sufficient to demonstrate the effectiveness of a given pathway such as an urban teacher residency. Similar to the overall findings of the nGSE literature, it is premature to say whether or not UTRs have the capacity to drive the improvement of teacher quality or teacher effectiveness. Boggess (2010) rightly points out that the increasing amount of research being conducted on UTRs should seek to investigate quality in complex ways rooted in individual program design and should use a variety of research designs to answer empirical questions about the practices used in UTR programs tied to diverse constructs in the field of urban teacher education rather than merely describe what those practices are. More research from these diverse methodological

perspectives, including critical perspectives, is necessary to interrogate new UTR program features.

***Contributions to this dissertation.*** The key finding relevant to this dissertation from the above review of the literature on urban teacher education and urban teacher residencies is that there have been few empirical studies of new models of urban teacher education with the exception of UTRs. Also, most of the literature on urban teacher education focuses on teacher learning, candidate recruitment, and candidate dispositions as independent variables that predict measures of teacher efficacy. The outcome of pupil learning, one of the core concerns in the teacher effectiveness policy world and a central part of the focus in most nGSEs, has been noticeably absent from the urban teacher education research literature (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). In addition, this literature, like the literature on teacher education more broadly (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al., 2016; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005, 2009), tends to aggregate teacher preparation programs with an urban focus (L.M. Anderson & Stillman, 2013). That is, programs that prepare teachers for urban settings tend to be treated as if they are the same even if the practices employed by different programs have grown out of very different ideological or historical traditions.

The urban teacher education literature does not acknowledge that particular programs reflect different ideas about the practice of urban teacher education (Mehta & Teles, 2014). Even the literature on urban teacher residencies, which does a better job illustrating a new model of teacher education, does not tend to analyze specific practices employed or the sociohistorical or educational contexts that gave rise to these practices, focusing instead on UTR policies, partnership structures, and intended outcomes. My

dissertation addresses this lack of research into the specifics underlying new models of urban teacher education by seeking to understand one model with a clearly articulated definition of what urban teaching should look like and examining empirically how teachers are prepared for the work of teaching in urban schools.

**Research on practice-based teacher education.** The literature on practice-based teacher education contains studies about innovations and strategies that have emerged within particular sites of teacher education that either developed or employ these strategies. In our review for the larger study of nGSEs (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016), we used the term “practice-based teacher education” as an umbrella for research on teacher education about “problems of enactment” (Kennedy, 1999), or the gap between teachers’ ideals and perspectives and the way these ideals translate into classroom behaviors, in the practice of teacher education. The studies in this category worked from the assumption that a clinically-based teacher education curriculum focused on providing the contexts within which teacher candidates learn a set of core teaching practices is the key to heightened professionalism and effectiveness in teaching.

Several conceptual studies (Hollins, 2011; Kennedy, 2016; Reid, 2011; Wilson, 2014; Zeichner, 2012) articulated this broad argument and situated this work within the “practice turn” in teacher education. Hollins (2011) conceptually linked the content of teacher education and the features of quality teaching, or strategies related to a teacher’s ability to process, reason, and take action in a classroom. Practice-based teacher education, according to Hollins, must focus first on what good practice looks like in PK-12 classrooms. Reid (2011), on the other hand, situated the practice turn historically, claiming that the current form of practice-based teacher education is part of a long

tradition of examining and discussing complex practices that have been de- and re-emphasized throughout different eras in the professional preparation of teachers. Reid argued that the rigorous study of practice must take place within an approach to teacher education that cannot solely be practice-based. Wilson's (2014) analysis of contemporary innovations in the practice of teacher preparation is consistent with Reid's argument, though she does not use the "practice turn" label. Rather Wilson refers to the rise of practice-based teacher education as part of a disruptive ideology to traditional university-based teacher education rooted in the desire to increase teacher candidates' school-based experiences. Zeichner's analysis (2012), though not sympathetic to the disruptive innovation frame Wilson applies to the practice turn, is nevertheless consistent with Reid's historical analysis. Zeichner argued that the practice turn must not limit itself to a narrow technical focus nor as the solution to the injustices inherent in the U.S. educational system, which he suggested is an idea several advocates of practice-based teacher education have begun to promote. This perspective is similar to Kennedy's (2016) argument that any practice-based approach to teacher education must embrace persistent problems of practice as open-ended questions rather than technical solutions teacher candidates can learn.

As these five conceptual studies suggest, although the idea of a practice turn in teacher education has more than one meaning, it is regarded by a number of scholars as the next stage in the development of the field. However, limiting and defining what the practice turn actually means in the field of teacher education, including questions relevant to this dissertation about where practice-based teacher education should be located and who should educate teachers, are questions left unanswered.

The other studies we grouped within the category of the “practice turn” in teacher education share the assumption that focusing on practice is the next major stage of development for the field of teacher education. Three groups of scholars have been the most prolific contributors to the emerging field of research on practice-based teaching and teacher education (Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016).

***Three dominant programs of research in practice-based teacher education.***

Deborah Ball and colleagues at the University of Michigan have carried out the most prominent program of research related to practice-based teacher education, specifically related to mathematics content preparation (Ball, 2000; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Ball & Forzani, 2009; Ball, Sleep, Boerst, & Bass, 2009; Forzani, 2014; TeachingWorks, 2015). This community of scholars defines practice as the core of professional preparation, and they concentrate on what they name high-leverage practices (e.g., leading group discussions, eliciting students’ thinking). The conceptual underpinnings for this program of research lie in three foundational pieces that are widely cited across the practice-based teacher education literature (Ball, 2000; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Ball & Forzani, 2009). According to Ball (2000), this program of research aims to solve three problems: “what teachers need to know, how they have to know it, and helping them learn to use it, by grounding the problem of teachers’ content preparation in practice” (p. 246). Ball and her colleagues’ aim to identify the core activities and practices of teaching emerged from their conclusion that “Weak teacher education inherited conservative traditions and little professional capacity for learning and change combine to inhibit reform. Our response is to sketch a comprehensive approach to teachers’ professional development” (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This program of research does not just seek simply to enhance the practice

of teacher education, but to reconstruct it using content-specific and intricate core practices, tasks, and activities.

In a case study of the teacher education program at their home institution, for example, Ball, Sleep, Boerst, and Bass (2009) found that professional instruction in their program had improved as the high leverage core practices they identified were taught to teacher candidates in systematic and intentional ways. The high leverage and core practices that this program of research has identified have become the building blocks for a new definition of what the practices in practice-based teacher education should look like (Forzani, 2014).

Another program of research, conducted by Pam Grossman and colleagues (Grossman, 2011; Grossman, Compton, et al., 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Janssen, Grossman, & Westbrook, 2015), has sought to develop a “grammar” of practice in terms of representations, decomposition/recomposition, and approximations of practice. Whereas Ball and her colleagues are more focused on the identification of specific practices, Grossman’s program of research aims to conceptualize the grammar of practice in order to understand, implement, and interrogate a collected set of distinct practices in complex ways. Within this program of research, practice is not defined statically (Grossman, Compton, et al., 2009). Rather representation (an example or demonstration of practice that allows candidates to see and understand how a practice could be enacted), decomposition (breaking a practice down into constituent elements for the purposes of teaching and learning), and approximation (opportunities to engage in a given practice that are close to the practices teacher candidates will use upon becoming teachers) are

dynamic concepts that are each necessary for a teacher candidate's successful development of an individual practice.

Grossman and McDonald (2008) and Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009) call for practice-based teacher education to promote “pedagogies of investigation” and “pedagogies of enactment,” which are curricular shifts in teacher education toward a critical examination of the practice of the profession. Janssen, Grossman, and Westbrook (2015) compared U.S. and Dutch teacher education programs attempting to implement these new pedagogies and found that the complexity of the grammar promoted by this program of research rests on a foundation of core practices, but the implementations of core practices and related skills is not sufficient to the development of high-quality teacher education programs. These findings imply that the Ball- and Grossman-led programs of research, respectively, are each needed to work toward a more robust form of practice-based teacher education in that the methods developed in the Grossman-led program of research (representation, decomposition, and approximation) could be successfully used by teacher candidates and programs to engage in the high-leverage practices Ball's program of research articulated.

The third group of researchers, working on the “Learning Teaching In, From, and For Practice” project (Dutro & Cartun, 2016; Kazemi, Franke, & Lampert, 2009; Kazemi, Ghouseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016; Lampert, 2010; Lampert et al., 2013; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; McDonald, Kazemi, Kelley-Petersen, et al., 2014), has investigated the conditions under which candidates' learn core practices in math and science content areas. This group has found that practice-based teacher education involves particular pedagogies such as cycles of rehearsal and

enactment and mediated field placements. Yet this program of research also highlights one of the endemic problems found across all three programs of research: structure, curriculum, and pedagogy all have to shift if practice-based approaches are going to reshape teacher education (McDonald, Kazemi, Kelley-Petersen, et al., 2014), but what they must shift toward is not completely clear because the definitions of practice itself remain amorphous (Lampert, 2010). Based on the assumption that more precise talk about practice is needed (Kazemi, Ghouseini, et al., 2016; Lampert, 2010), this program of research aims to carefully articulate the ways in which an increasingly complex pedagogy of practice can and does reshape the practice of teacher preparation for the benefit of teacher candidates (Lampert et al., 2013; Lampert & Graziani, 2009).

The emerging research on practice-based teacher education offers a robust set of concepts that may be useful in unpacking candidates' and teacher educators' conceptions of learning to teach and in identifying the varied pedagogies employed at nGSEs. However the major limitation of these three programs of research is the lack of inquiry into how various models of practice-based education are being interpreted and implemented outside of the home institutions of the researchers affiliated with the programs of research. Each of these programs has had an out-sized impact on the field of practice-based teacher education (Kennedy, 2016; Wilson, 2014; Zeichner, 2012) in the sense that they have created a compelling set of conceptual frameworks and definitions for teacher educators attempting to shift toward a practice-based approach. Yet as the studies I describe below show, the conceptual frameworks offered by these three programs of research have been used to ground the work of practice-based teacher education rather than to analyze or investigate the applicability of these frameworks in

different situations. In addition, research on practice-based teacher education at this time does not have a critical side that questions the foundational assumptions these three programs of research have established.

*Additional studies related to practice-based teacher education.* In addition to the three major programs of research discussed above, I identified a small number of studies about specific high leverage or core practices, their relative effectiveness in the classroom and for teacher candidates employing them, and the effects that practice-based teacher education has on teacher educators in programs that emphasize these practices. Like the prominent programs of research described above, these studies tended to accept the importance of practice-based teacher education in their framing of research problems and questions. Some complexities do emerge from these empirical studies related to practice-based teacher education. For example, in a case study of their home institution, Gardiner and Salmon (2014) found that implementing high leverage practices in a residency-style model was not sufficient to increasing teacher quality; more in-depth knowledge of the schools in which these practices were to be employed was necessary for teacher candidates to develop practice-based skills and competencies. Similarly, from a programmatic perspective, Percy's (2014) self-study of practice-based teacher education at her institution found that an emphasis on practice could not occur unless the curriculum of the teacher education program and the pedagogies of the program's teacher educators shifted to match the new emphases. Despite these more nuanced responses to the intricacies of implementing a practice-based approach, the consensus within the small but growing area of empirical studies of practice-based teacher education is that practice-based teacher education is a good thing.

Nearly all of the studies in this group used case study research designs that focused on an identified high leverage practice (Davin & Troyan, 2015; Dotger, 2015; Drake, 2016; Ely, Kennedy, Pullen, Williams, & Hirsch, 2014; Evans-Andris et al., 2014; Janssen, Westbroek, & Doyle, 2014; Kearney, 2015; Santagata & Yeh, 2014; Troyan, Davin, & Donato, 2013) or a single university or program engaging in the implementation of practice-based teacher education (Anthony, J. Hunter, & R. Hunter, 2015; BurrIDGE, Hooley, & Neal, 2016; Gardiner & Salmon, 2014; Mathewson Mitchell & Reid, 2017; Peercy, 2014; Peercy & Troyan, 2016; Vartuli, Snider, & Holley, 2016; Whitenack & Venkatsubramanian, 2016; Windschitl, Thompson, & Braaten, 2011). However there was no common unit of analysis across the studies. For instance, Davin and Troyan (2015) investigated the extent to which the implementation of practices for increasing interaction among students and raising the quality of student questioning had an effect on teacher candidates' practice. They focused on teacher candidate learning and found that teacher candidates used practices they had rehearsed prior to their field experience.

Alternatively, Evans-Andris et al. (2014) emphasized the program as the unit of analysis and described the features of and the extent to which a partnership initiative at their home institution was developed for the benefit of teacher educators, candidates, and cooperating classroom teachers. This variety of approaches reflects the differing interests of those engaged in the study of practice-based teacher education. Although candidate learning is dominant, these studies also have to do with the ability of teacher educators and programs to re-create themselves within a practice-based teacher education framework.

Because of the focus on single case studies, this literature does not lend itself to generalizations in the traditional sense about the larger population of teacher candidates or teacher education programs. Because of small sample sizes (e.g. Anthony et al. 2015; Windschitl et al., 2011) and the unique structures of single programs under investigation (e.g., Drake, 2016; Gardiner & Salmon, 2014; Peercy, 2014), questions about effectiveness and replicability of high-leverage practices remain unanswered. That being said, it is very clear that all of these studies take a generally positive view of the introduction of high leverage practices or the effect of refocusing a program toward being practice-based on teacher candidates' preparation. A limitation of some of these studies, however, is that specific practices tend to be treated as technical and isolated, which is inconsistent with the idea that practice is complex (Zeichner, 2012). Of course, the decision to use a given practice is not neutral; rather, this decision is always rooted in a set of sociohistorical and educational traditions. These studies do not tend to talk about the genesis of using a specific practice, the alignment between a particular program's missions and a particular practice, or the investigation of the consequences that emerge from the continued use of this practice. More complex research is needed to address this limitation.

***Contributions to this dissertation.*** Much of the practice-based teacher education literature is conceptual. However, the most important conclusion from the empirical research that is relevant to the design of this dissertation is that there has not yet been an external empirical investigation of a site where practice-based teacher education is used. Most of the empirical research on practice-based teacher education is conducted by practitioner researchers who work in the school of education or teacher preparation

program where this work is undertaken (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Lampert et al., 2013; McDonald, Kazemi, Kelley-Petersen, et al., 2014). In addition, there have been few in-depth, external, qualitative analyses of the ways high-leverage or core practices have been implemented by institutions, candidates, and others involved in the work of teacher preparation at practice-based schools of education. This lacuna in the practice-based teacher education literature suggests several questions about the sense faculty and candidates make of discrete practices, the ways a program's mission is potentially shaped by implementing discrete practices, and the reasons a program has for choosing to implement some discrete practices rather than others because of their stated mission or goals. This dissertation takes up many of these questions.

**Research on “No Excuses” charter schools and management organizations.**

“No Excuses” charter schools and management organizations have not been researched extensively. I located just under 40 peer-reviewed studies, research monographs, and dissertations. Six of these studies were dissertations, only three of which have had portions published in peer-reviewed journals (Kretchmar, 2014; Sondel, 2015, 2016; Torres, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). In addition, several of the studies I reviewed were peer-reviewed working papers published by educational research organizations. Despite the relative youth and size of this area of research, I found two sub-branches of research related to the “No Excuses” educational phenomena. The first is research about “No Excuses” schools, which tends to investigate the following topics: the practices most common in “No Excuses” schools, the extent to which these schools are successful, the effects “No Excuses” schools have on the educational marketplace, and the effects “No Excuses” schools have on students and teachers. The second is composed of research that

“No Excuses” schools cite to support the curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices used in these schools. The methods investigated in this body of research are central to the practices used at “No Excuses” nGSEs since the practices used in “No Excuses” schools form the core of the instructional practices taught in the teacher preparation programs these schools have established.

***Research about the practices and effectiveness of “No Excuses” schools.***

Studies about “No Excuses” schools and charter management organizations (CMOs) tend to address one or more of three themes: the extent to which “No Excuses” schools or CMOs actually increase student achievement and close the achievement gap; the practices employed at “No Excuses” schools, with a tendency to focus on individual schools; and the effects of “No Excuses” schools on the educational marketplace.

The highly-publicized conclusion that “No Excuses” schools are successful at closing the achievement gap is supported by several studies that show that students in so-called “high performing charters” have produced higher test scores than their demographically matched peers in other schools (Angrist, Dynarski, et al., 2010; Angrist, Pathak, et al., 2011; Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Pathak, & Walters, 2013; Baude, Casey, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2014; CREDO, 2013; Cheng, Hitt, Kisida, & Mill, 2015; Davis & Heller, 2015; Tuttle et al., 2013). This research is exclusively quantitative and employs student achievement data from multiple schools to draw conclusions about quality. Despite the shared assumption of these studies that there is a relationship between the work the schools do and the measures of quality being calculated, effectiveness and quality are defined slightly differently across these studies. For instance, Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, Pathak, and Walters (2010), Angrist, Pathak, and Walters (2011), the

Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2013), and Tuttle et al. (2013) each investigated the relationship between school quality and student achievement on standardized assessments and found that these schools had positive small impacts on student achievement. Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Pathak, and Walters (2013) and Davis and Heller (2015), on the other hand, each defined quality as the ability of charter schools to prepare students for college admissions and enrollment. Each of these studies also found a moderate positive impact on students' college preparation and entry based on SAT score distributions (Angrist, Cohodes, et al., 2015) or college enrollment records (Davis & Heller, 2015). Finally, Baude, Casey, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2014) used measures of charter sector turnover as a statistical proxy for the quality of the charter sector in Texas, noting the relatively lower turnover in "No Excuses"-affiliated schools implied higher quality if one also assumed the relationship between parental choice and school quality. Overall, though there is no singular definition for school quality, these effectiveness and quality studies show that there are positive scores on a wide range of quality measures as well as discernible relationships between these quality measures and student enrollment in a "No Excuses" school.

However, the idea that a school's success or quality can best be determined by analysis of standardized achievement test scores or other standardized outcome measures is a highly contested notion within educational policy and research (D. Ravitch, 2013; Rothstein, 2004). The aforementioned studies do not establish causal connections between the methods employed in charter schools and measures, such as achievement tests, that are employed as a proxy for quality. Two studies (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011) searched for relationships between the methods employed in these schools

and statistically significant achievement test score results. Based on a quasi-experimental study of the relationship between student achievement scores and the presence of a set of identified best practices within a school, they found that a set of five instructional methods, including frequent teacher feedback, “high-dosage” tutoring, increased instructional time, data-driven instruction, and high academic expectations, were predictive of standardized achievement test success but noted that these five methods were not exclusive to the “No Excuses” model (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011). There has not yet been a study that has identified a relationship between the unique practices of the “No Excuses” model, such as the instructional methods promoted by Doug Lemov (2010, 2014) or Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2010), and student achievement. Seider et al. (2016) established that “No Excuses” schools had a positive effect on outcomes outside of student learning outcomes, but this study also claimed that more research was needed to understand how and why certain practices were used to accomplish this set of outcomes.

Other studies have pointed out the methodological limitation of looking only at the relationship between instructional methods and achievement test results to determine school success when these schools are compared to schools serving demographically matched peers (DiCarlo, 2011; Levin, 2013; Miron, Urschel, & Sexton, 2011; Powers, 2015; Rothstein, 2004; Vasquez Heilig, Williams, McNeil, & Lee, 2011). These studies suggest that the prevalence of student attrition and push-out has resulted in a more selective student population in “No Excuses” schools. These critical studies have also tended to question the definitions of school effectiveness or quality used in the quantitative research and the assumptions this quantitative research has made about the

relative effectiveness of “No Excuses” schools. These critiques ultimately reveal the insufficiency of using only quantitative measures to answer questions of quality or effectiveness. This is a trend that is similar to trends in the urban teacher education pathway literature as well as in the literature on urban teacher residencies, discussed above. Therefore, conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis and comparison of achievement test scores provide important evidence that “No Excuses” schools have had an impact on student learning in urban schools, but there is not conclusive evidence at this time that the methods employed by “No Excuses” schools can be used to replicate this success at scale across urban schools in the U.S.

Despite disputed findings about the apparent success “No Excuses” schools have had at raising standardized achievement test scores, there is also a body of research that aims to uncover and explain the instructional methods that are assumed to generate the high achievement these high-performing charters attain (S.C. Carter, 2001; Merseth, 2009; Seider, 2012; Whitman, 2008). This set of four studies employed case study research design with cross-case analyses to identify the common features of “No Excuses” schools, which S.C. Carter (2001) and Whitman (2008) each defined as schools that are marked by unpredictably high student achievement. These collections of case studies have different emphases: S.C. Carter used measures of student achievement as a guide to identifying schools and then looked across the different instructional practices these schools employed; Whitman built on S.C. Carter’s research but emphasized the relationship between student learning and the controlled behavioral environments and attention to school culture these schools tended to have; Merseth (2009) looked at different charter school models in one northeastern city to articulate a

model of urban charter school practice that could be used to increase student achievement; and Seider (2012) focused on the different uses of character education in “No Excuses” and other urban charter schools in order to illustrate the importance of character education for academic achievement.

Due to these different emphases and research purposes, these four studies each articulate a different set of instructional practices important to student achievement, but all are consistent with Seider’s (2012) analysis that “No Excuses” education is defined by a strict disciplinary environment, extended time in school, and an intensive focus on traditional reading and mathematical skills. The majority of “No Excuses” schools could also be characterized as relying heavily upon teacher-led direct instruction as the most efficient means of delivering academic content to students. Aware that these students have a lot of ground to cover to narrow the achievement gap, teachers at such schools focus the bulk of their lessons on building academic skills, and the questions that they pose to students within these lessons typically have right or wrong answers. (p. 94)

Though these four studies included individual cases of schools that did not identify as “No Excuses” schools, Seider’s definition is consistent with findings about the “No Excuses” schools each of these studies investigated. However, these studies did not critique the historical or social conditions through which these practices were chosen or constructed; rather the studies tended to promote the instructional choices these schools had made as innovations that other schools looking to close the achievement gap would be wise to implement.

There has also been a smaller yet no less important group of studies that have been critical of the regulatory and behavioral methods employed in “No Excuses” schools (Ellison, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2008). The research designs and methods employed in this research are exclusively qualitative, in contrast to the effectiveness studies which are exclusively quantitative. But this more critical literature has also tended to investigate the practices of a single CMO or school in isolation and then generalize these findings to all “high performing” charters without differentiating among the wide variety of instructional practices used in such charters. The primary assumption in more critical studies is that all “No Excuses” schools employ a similar set of beliefs and practices (e.g., J. Horn, 2016), yet more in-depth qualitative research does not corroborate this assumption (Rosenberg, 2012).

The beliefs and practices present in the “No Excuses” model for urban education have been positioned by their advocates as the best levers to change the status quo of low achievement in urban education (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, 2012; Lemov, 2010, 2014). These methods also appear to be growing in popularity because of the continued relative success these schools achieve on standardized assessments (Tuttle et al., 2013) and the desire within urban education to find a scalable, successful model to close the achievement gap (Fryer, 2011; Levin, 2013; Tough, 2012; Whitman, 2008). Yet there has been relatively little inquiry into the construction and promotion of the beliefs, motivations, and practices that have been developed, tested, and implemented over time and have come to define “No Excuses” schooling as a distinct model (e.g., Miller, 2015).

Most of the work that rigorously considers the beliefs and practices of “No Excuses” schools and educators comes from a set of recently completed dissertations.

The motivating interest behind each of these dissertations was to better understand the complex perspectives of educators attached to either a single “No Excuses” school (T.R. Rose, 2013), a particular “No Excuses” CMO (Rosenberg, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012), or urban districts that have been influenced by the “No Excuses” model (Kretchmar, 2011; Sondel, 2013; Torres, 2013). These dissertations tend to employ mixed methods approaches to address the complexity of making sense of “No Excuses” schools as an innovation within urban education. These studies take student achievement results and other measures of outcomes into account alongside in-depth qualitative research into the constructs of interest in many of these dissertations.

There are four important findings relevant to this proposed dissertation about Spósito based on conclusions from these dissertations: (1) teachers who work at “No Excuses” schools do not necessarily view the work as sustainable in the long-term because of the high demands these schools place on teachers (Torres, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b); (2) teachers who work for “No Excuses” schools have complex perspectives and sometimes question the assumptions made by leaders of “No Excuses” CMOs regarding the unintended positive and negative consequences of this model (Kretchmar, 2011; Sondel, 2013, 2016); (3) “No Excuses” CMOs are intentionally designed to eliminate educational inefficiency and the lack of instructional coherence which, it is assumed, plagues urban schools (Rosenberg, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012); and (4), there is space for high levels of professionalism in “No Excuses” CMOs despite the widespread assumption within critical educational research that these schools define teaching as merely technical work (T.R. Rose, 2013). Yet at this time, several of these findings remain unpublished and come from single case studies of individual CMOs or schools.

The third area of research, including ethnographic studies by Golann (2015) and Sondel (2015), has to do with the effects “No Excuses” schools have on students and the educational marketplace. The findings in these studies were used to make generalizations about the ways “No Excuses” schools affect the practice of urban education at other schools within districts that also contain “No Excuses” schools. Golann (2015) found that the popularity of “No Excuses” schools in the educational marketplace has led to an unintended consequence. Rather than supporting students’ higher-order thinking skills, “No Excuses” schools tended to promote only the level of student thinking that can be measured on standardized academic assessments. The academic achievement results that “No Excuses” schools have tended to generate has subsequently led these and other schools to believe that eliminating higher-order thinking skills is a more successful model to reliably generate higher test scores. Sondel (2015, 2016) found that the popularity of “No Excuses” schools in the educational marketplace is due to the simplicity of the movement’s narrative about student achievement and success (that the achievement of students of Color in low-income, urban schools can be greatly increased if a school employs a specific set of instructional methods) and this simplicity has allowed this model to become a dominant force shaping other arrangements of urban education.

Outside of critical studies such as these, however, most literature about the effects of “No Excuses” schools on the educational marketplace relies on the student achievement success data mentioned above (e.g., Angrist, Dynarski, et al., 2010; CREDO, 2013; Tuttle et al., 2013). That is, advocates for the spread of the “No Excuses” model will look past other unintended consequences the spread of these schools are

having as long as these schools continue to generate some positive results on standardized student achievement tests.

As I have suggested, there is no consensus about the impact or effect “No Excuses” schools have on urban education although there is widespread agreement that the presence of these schools has led to a shift in the field of urban education. Though students at “No Excuses” schools score consistently better on standardized assessments of knowledge than would have been statistically predicted based on their racial and socioeconomic status, research about “No Excuses” schools cannot at this point demonstrate whether it is the practices used in these schools that are driving this increase in scores or something else, especially since it is widely agreed that as much as 60% of the variance in academic achievement is attributed to out-of-school factors (Goldhaber, Brewer, & D.J. Anderson, 1999; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). In addition, more research is needed that takes the complex perspective offered by the recent dissertations discussed in this literature review to make sense of quality and effectiveness questions from a variety of research methodologies. While this dissertation does not investigate the issue of charter school effectiveness (nor is it intended to do so), this study contributes to the “No Excuses” research literature in that it helps define and describe the curricular and instructional practices derived from the “No Excuses” model that have crossed over into teacher education. In addition, it investigates the perspectives teacher educators and candidates have about the effects of “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs on teacher education and urban education marketplaces.

***Research used by “No Excuses” schools to support their model.*** “No Excuses” schools have tended to rely on the examples of master teachers, or teachers who have

demonstrated an adeptness with the instructional methods favored by these schools, as the key sources of their knowledge about effective urban education rather than academic research about effective teaching (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Lemov, 2010; Mathews, 2009). Although there is a research literature that supports the general curricular approach (e.g., Hirsch, 1987) and the practices (e.g., Davis & Heller, 2016; Fryer, 2011; Whitman, 2008) of “No Excuses” schools, the most widely available and circulated texts that leaders of “No Excuses” schools point to as underpinning their instructional practices are the works of Doug Lemov (2010, 2014) and Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2010, 2012). Both Lemov and Bambrick-Santoyo are administrators at the Uncommon Schools charter management organization. They situate their perspectives on the practices that make for successful teaching and leadership as having emerged from the practices used within the Uncommon Schools network.

These instructional practices do not have an independent research base into their effectiveness. As mentioned above, only Dobbie and Fryer’s (2011) and Fryer’s (2011) studies about the relationship between the five identified high leverage practices and student achievement even attempted to examine the effectiveness of instruction at “No Excuses” schools; this program of research also did not find conclusive evidence that this set of practices is unique to this model. Rather, “No Excuses” schools have used these instructional practices because of the experiences teachers in “No Excuses” schools have of finding success with students when using these practices (Boyd, Maranto, & C. Rose, 2014).

The only independent research proponents and advocates of “No Excuses” schools rely on to support their model is the psychological research into certain

behavioral practices that have often been referred to with the phrase “the grit narrative,” which signifies research into the importance of teaching noncognitive traits (Thomas, 2014a, 2014b). Angela Duckworth’s (2013) research on grit and other noncognitive traits (e.g. curiosity, self-control, and optimism) has helped stimulate a discussion about the implicit and explicit ways these traits are taught in schools. These noncognitive traits have been heavily featured in mainstream media and educational research outlets that have subsequently helped construct and promote this narrative about the infusion of this type of character education into American K-12 school curricula (e.g., Graham, 2012; National Public Radio Staff [NPR Staff], 2012; Pappano, 2013; Smith, 2014; Tam, 2013; Tough, 2011, 2012; Williams, Klein, & Emanuelle, 2012).

The grit narrative is derived from the noncognitive hypothesis first popularly articulated in Paul Tough’s (2012) book *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. This hypothesis states that noncognitive character traits like grit, zest, and self-control have been shown in quantitative research studies to be more predictive of positive future academic outcomes than IQ or other traditional academic outcome measures. Based on analyses of psychological and biological research into the qualities and traits that make individuals cope relatively more easily with stress than others, Tough (2012) claims:

the conventional wisdom about child development over the past few decades has been misguided. We have been focusing on the wrong skills and abilities in our children, and we have been using the wrong strategies to help nurture and teach those skills. (pp. xv-xvi)

Tough also claims that the work of character education emanates from the following concern: “Which skills and traits lead to success? How do they develop in childhood? And what kind of interventions might help children do better?” (p. xvii). The narrative as developed throughout Tough’s book claims that how students engage with knowledge and deal with difficult learning environments is more essential than the content or academic skills he claims are typically emphasized in schools. This is a central premise of the grit narrative: schools have for too long focused only on cognitive skills to the detriment of the future success of students, which can only be determined by the habits of success these students have developed.

The noncognitive curriculum, then, is composed of the bundle of traits deemed to be more predictive of academic outcomes than cognitive skills. Duckworth (2013), in a TED talk about why grit should be used as a way to predict future academic success, argued that grit is reflective of an individual’s ability to stick with a specific vision of the future and to work hard to make that future a reality. Grit reflects an individualized dedication to a personal standard of excellence and is therefore inherently worthwhile to an education system trying to foster excellence. Duckworth has shown the adaptability of her grit framework to a variety of settings both within and outside of K-12 schools in several research studies. The topics of investigation related to “grit” have included the retention rates of novice teachers in under-resourced schools (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014), the graduation rates of marginalized youth in cities (Kern et al., 2013), and the completion rates of cadets at West Point (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2012). The central conclusion of these studies is that “Variance in performance that persists when situational variables are held constant suggests that individual

differences play an important role in determining whether children thrive or fail in school” (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013, p. 208). In each study, Duckworth and her colleagues have found that once you control for other sociocultural constructs not of interest in a given study by only comparing individuals with similar demographic profiles, people who have relatively more grit (as calculated on the scale her research lab has created) are better able to meet the standards of excellence they have set for themselves as well as those standards that have been set for them.

The implication of this program of research for Duckworth and her colleagues has been that teaching grit and its attendant noncognitive traits will enable teachers and students to overcome the negative effects of their sociocultural contexts. Since Duckworth’s research has demonstrated that among people who share a similar demographic profile individuals with these noncognitive traits are more likely than people without these traits to succeed, Duckworth’s Character Lab (2014) has been designed to better understand how this package of noncognitive skills can be implemented and taught to students within educational settings. The ultimate purpose of this branch of psychological research, findings from which proponents claim are still too tentative to be used for widespread measurement and evaluation (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015), is to understand how students gain access to certain noncognitive traits and derive individual success within the educational and economic system as currently structured.

Though there is emerging consensus among “No Excuses” educators, influenced by Duckworth’s research, that character-based education should be a central part of the “No Excuses” model (Tough, 2012; Seider, 2012), the perspectives and findings of Duckworth’s research have also been challenged from educational researchers who take a

more critical perspective. These critiques appear in conceptual articles and in blog posts written by educational researchers and psychologists who challenge the fundamental assumptions of the grit narrative (e.g., L. Anderson, 2014; Gow, 2014; M. Rose, 2014; Socol, 2014; Thomas, 2014a, 2014b). In general, these commentaries agree that,

Grit isn't just philosophically conservative in its premises but also politically conservative in its consequences. The more we focus on whether people have or lack persistence (or self-discipline more generally), the less likely we'll be to question larger policies and institutions. (Kohn, 2014, p. 3)

Further opposition to the grit narrative draws on an educational research tradition that shows the strong correlations between social inequality and a lack of educational attainment or opportunity (Apple, 2004; Rothstein, 2004). This tradition emphasizes the importance of highlighting not only academic and noncognitive gaps but also structural opportunity gaps (P.L. Carter & Welner, 2013).

There is also a strong international and well-researched case supporting this U.S.-based research tradition for using social policy to address structural inequalities rather than merely relying on technical educational fixes (Sahlberg, 2011). Technical educational solutions to larger social problems have not tended to generate long-term positive impacts on previously marginalized or nondominant social groups by themselves (e.g., Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, 2012). Overall, though, the commentary and research in opposition to the grit narrative is not a rejection of the individualist positive psychology that has been conducted by Duckworth and her colleagues; this critical research does not argue that there is no place for positive psychology in K-12 schools or that "grit" in and of itself is an inherently negative quality. Rather, research-based

opposition to the grit narrative reflects the idea that individualist psychological perspectives are not sufficient to solve a complex set of intractable educational and social policy problems.

Duckworth's research on grit is the only systematic program of research consistently cited by proponents of "No Excuses" educational models. The alignment of the instruction of noncognitive traits with other instructional practices in "No Excuses" schools has been called "dual-purpose instruction" (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010) and includes both the inclusion of the noncognitive curriculum influenced by Duckworth's research and the controlled behavioral practices identified by scholars such as Whitman (2008) and Seider (2012). Some research, as mentioned above, has shown the negative consequences of schools choosing to employ these rigid behavioral practices (e.g., Goodman, 2013; Sondel, 2015). The reason for their continued use alongside the noncognitive curriculum by educators in "No Excuses" schools is the assumption that these behavioral practices create the conditions under which dual-purpose instruction can be most effective for raising student achievement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Lemov, 2010).

This is a consistent trend among "No Excuses" schools. The curricular, instructional, and behavioral practices used in these schools are assessed on their ability to drive student achievement (Miller, 2015). Research that investigates these practices is used selectively because the kinds of knowledge generated in research are less valued by these educators than the knowledge generated from practice emerging from the schools that have demonstrated the ability to raise student achievement.

*Contributions to this dissertation.* Research about the “No Excuses” model of K-12 urban education has two conflicting findings. Some of the research demonstrates that these schools are effective at raising levels of achievement for students of Color living in low-income city neighborhoods. In contrast, some of the research demonstrates that the curricular and instructional choices made at “No Excuses” schools are fraught with unintended negative consequences. The findings of a given study may be partly the result of the researchers’ a priori assumptions, shaping the kinds of questions asked and the perspectives the researchers have about the “No Excuses” model itself. Studies that statistically demonstrate the effectiveness of “No Excuses” schools (e.g., Angrist, Dynarski, et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2015) also have a very different audience from studies that question whether these schools have deleterious effects on teachers and students (e.g., Kretchmar, 2014; Sondel, 2015; Torres, 2014). Very little research has been done that tries to both understand and analyze the practices used in these schools from the perspectives of the participants in this model themselves. Research is needed that takes into account how participants at “No Excuses” schools situate the various curricular, instructional, and behavioral methods being used in a given “No Excuses” school.

In general, the research on “No Excuses” schools provides this dissertation with a set of concepts that help unpack the instructional and curricular decisions administrators and teacher candidates at Sposato make. Because Sposato is affiliated with a “No Excuses” CMO, it is important to understand the ways in which “No Excuses” schools have positioned themselves within education reform as well as the research that has been done to investigate this particular model of urban education. In addition, the research into

noncognitive curricula and “the grit narrative” is central to this dissertation because character education has become a defining feature of “No Excuses” education more broadly. As dual-purpose instruction continues to be aligned to curricular and instructional methods used in these schools, which compose the primary content of Sposato coursework, it is helpful to understand how noncognitive curricula have been implemented in other places to subsequently assess the influence of dual-purpose instruction on Sposato student teaching placement sites.

This dissertation contributes to the research on “No Excuses” schools because it investigates the beliefs and practices of both administrators and teacher candidates at a “No Excuses”-affiliated teacher preparation program. This case study of Sposato also offers more evidence about how educators involved with the “No Excuses” phenomenon perceive the efficacy of this movement within urban education.

## **Conclusion**

In the preceding review, I examined three frameworks as well as research on new graduate schools of education, urban teacher education/urban teacher residencies, practice-based teacher education, and “No Excuses” charter schools. There are several themes from the research that are relevant to this dissertation. First, much of the research suggests that preservice teacher preparation has an impact on the experience of early career teachers. Across the research about urban teacher education, urban teacher residency models, and practice-based teacher education, there is some consensus that preservice preparation is important to the development of skills and practices needed in the classroom. This justifies in a broad way the emphasis of this dissertation and the larger study in which the dissertation is nested. This study was designed to unpack the

perspectives of Sposato administrators, candidates, and graduates who are participants in a particular model of preservice teacher preparation. Ideally, the insights developed in this study can be used to make sense of what different models of preservice teacher preparation can offer teacher candidates.

In addition, as Zeichner and Conklin (2005, 2009) and Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al. (2016) established in their reviews of teacher preparation research, different programs must be studied in a way that emphasizes the distinct ways these programs conduct the practice of teacher preparation. As described below, this dissertation was designed to emphasize different practices as they are experienced within the Sposato program rather than treat the common practices at Sposato as proxies for the general practice of teacher preparation at “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs broadly construed. This dissertation was designed to uncover particular perspectives in order to identify complex, nuanced theories of practice and use those theories of practice to help understand a larger phenomenon. Importantly, this study was not intended to explore whether the model of teacher education at Sposato is effective or is better or worse than other approaches to urban teacher education. Rather the purpose was to unpack what the structures and features of the Sposato model are and locate this model within one or more educational phenomena (e.g., nGSEs, “No Excuses” schools). The social movement frameworks that inform the larger study were useful to connect the findings from this dissertation case study to more general findings about urban teacher education at nGSEs. The practice-based teacher education literature also demonstrates that there are always social, historical, educational and political contexts that shape how a school or program chooses certain practices over others.

Collectively, this research emphasizes that different models of teacher preparation must be understood within the contexts from which they emerge. The findings from research on “No Excuses” schools, as described above, suggests many ideas that helped me interpret this form of urban charter education as it manifests in the perspectives of administrators, faculty, and teacher candidates involved in teacher education related to the “No Excuses” phenomenon.

Another important idea for my study based on this review of research is that it is important to examine the relationship between core assumptions and core practices employed at teacher preparation programs or in urban K-12 schools. The research on urban teacher education demonstrates that there is a relationship between the beliefs and practices of teacher candidates. One additional contribution of this dissertation is the investigation of the tight relationship between individuals’ beliefs and practices as it manifested in the work of teacher preparation at Sposato.

A third major theme that resulted from this review is the unique way nGSEs locate their teacher preparation programs outside of universities. As I pointed out above, most of the research on practice-based teacher education and urban teacher education/urban teacher residencies focuses on teacher preparation programs with connections to university-based partners. One contribution of my dissertation study is to extend this research into the Sposato model of teacher preparation, which is explicitly dissociated from university-based schools of education. This dissertation, in its examination of the interests and motivations of administrators at Sposato, unpacks in a more in-depth way the reasons for the Sposato program’s intentional dissociation from university-based traditions of teacher preparation.

Finally, as I have shown, the relatively small body of research about urban teacher residencies, new graduate schools of education, and “No Excuses” schools has been either descriptive and written by people who worked in those contexts, or it has been highly critical work conducted by people who did not have on-site access to explore these models in context. The case study described here provides an empirically-grounded analysis of the Sposato case from an emic perspective based on extensive observation, interviewing and document collection. As mentioned in Chapter One, a significant contribution of this case study, then, derives from my unique position as an external researcher who has been granted access by Sposato administrators. This study helps build and establish the nGSE research field. Although the results from this case study should not be understood as generalizable across nGSE sites, this study lays the groundwork for future cross-case analyses in the larger study of the nGSE phenomenon.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Design and Methods

This dissertation examines the beliefs, motivations, and practices of teacher educators and teacher candidates at Sposato in order to understand the theory of practice and the core activities and approaches that are involved in teacher preparation at this nGSE. The purpose of this in-depth analysis of the diverse perspectives that emerge from within the Sposato context is to learn how teacher preparation is understood and constructed from the perspective of the administrators, faculty, and candidates themselves. The ultimate goal is a broader understanding of the model of teacher education at a “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE. As explained in Chapter Two, the theoretical frameworks for this study provide this dissertation with conceptual and methodological tools to make sense of the dynamic relationships among the beliefs, motivations, and practices of the many individuals involved with the work of teacher preparation at Sposato. The most appropriate research design to achieve these purposes is case study research.

Case study allows a researcher to look at the particularities of a single case within a larger phenomenon while simultaneously creating space for the interpretation of broader themes that emerge from the collection and analysis of empirical data within the case (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). According to Yin (2014), “the distinctive need for case study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, a case study allows investigators to focus on a ‘case’ and retain a holistic and real-world perspective” (p. 4). A study of Sposato, regarded as a representative case of the nGSE phenomenon,

accomplishes just this. This case study uncovers and analyzes the understandings, core practices, and animating principles of the Sposato program as well as the experiences of teacher candidates, faculty, and administrators within the program.

According to Stake (2006), this kind of case study research also involves understanding and experiencing the “activity of the case,” that is the dynamics that emerge from within the case’s specific context. For the purposes of this case study of Sposato, the activity of the case is the practice of teacher preparation, which includes the perspectives and work of Sposato administrators, faculty, and candidates related to the recruitment, training, instruction, and socialization of teachers into the profession. This practice within teacher preparation programs cannot be accessed without engaging in in-depth conversations with teacher educators and teacher candidates or observing the central experiences of a candidate throughout the course of his or her time in the program. A qualitative case study design made the most methodological sense for this dissertation because it allowed for the investigation of the multiple dimensions of the activity of the Sposato case.

Standard qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, as explained below, were used in this case study (Erickson, 1986). Primary data sources included interviews, observations, and institutional documents and artifacts. These particular qualitative methods were essential to this case study because of the need to incorporate participants’ voice and lived experience, as well as how participants made sense of their experience, into a contextual understanding of the single case (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

In addition, as I noted in Chapter One, this case study serves as the pilot study for the previously mentioned larger study of the nGSE phenomenon, which was designed to

describe and to assess the project of teacher preparation at nGSEs. The larger study comprises three distinct yet interrelated phases. The first phase of the larger study consists of a frame analysis of publically available documents and materials from nGSE sources (e.g., websites, newspaper articles, media critiques, related digital and social media content) and 30-40 hour-long interviews with nGSE thought leaders and advocates.

The second phase consists of individual case studies of four highly visible nGSE sites which were strategically selected for variation in size, location, funders, founders, mission, history, partners, and demographics, but also to allow identification of common patterns.<sup>4</sup> Each of the three case studies following this pilot case represented in this dissertation follow the general qualitative methods outlined below. While the qualitative methods of data collection and analysis used in these individual case studies are similar, the theoretical frameworks guiding each case analysis within the larger study are different from the sociological framework employed in this case study of Sposato. As described in Chapter Two the Bourdieu frameworks directly influenced the research questions of this dissertation about the relationships between and among Sposato participants' perspectives on practice and the role of the Sposato graduate school as a community of practice. Interview protocols and observation foci used in this pilot case were refined after data collection was complete for the purposes of data collection in this second phase of the larger study.

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<sup>4</sup> As of the writing of this dissertation, two additional case study sites had been secured: the High Tech High Graduate School of Education and the Teach-Now preparation program at the Educatore School of Education.

The final phase of the larger study consists of cross-case analysis among the four cases for the purposes of developing a model or models of teacher preparation at nGSEs. Cross-case analyses were designed to allow the research team to make evidence-based assertions about the difference between the nGSE phenomenon as planned and the nGSE phenomenon as enacted across multiple sites. The social movement and knowledge-practice-justice frameworks described in Chapter Two are central to the design of this final phase.

### **Scope of the Case Study**

Yin (2014) states that a case study is in part defined by its scope, that is, “you would want to do case study research because you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case” (p. 16). The scope of a case study is one in which there is no clear boundary between the broader contemporary phenomenon of which the case is a part and the in-depth, real-world context of the specific case. This case study of Sposato is consistent with Yin’s criteria because the real-world context of teacher preparation at Sposato cannot be easily separated from the role Sposato plays as an nGSE connected to a “No Excuses” charter management organization (CMO). The work, mission, and scope of the sponsoring Match Education CMO guide the implementation of policies and the development of practice at Sposato. Similarly, the context of teacher preparation at Sposato described below influences the ongoing work of the Match Education CMO to which it is attached.

The specific context for teacher preparation at Sposato is an urban teacher residency program built into a new graduate school of education in a large city in the

Northeast U.S. This graduate school of education is connected to a larger charter management organization (Match Education) that operates four K-12 charter schools for low-income students of Color in this same Northeastern city. The teacher residency program currently admits approximately 70 teacher candidates each year; these candidates begin a two-year sequence divided into a preservice/residency year and an inservice/coaching year. Throughout both years of the teacher preparation program, candidates are working toward the completion of a master's degree that is granted by the graduate school of education in which the teacher residency program is located. At the time of this writing, Sposato administrators had sought but not yet received accreditation for this master's degree program through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which is the regional accreditor for most institutions of higher education in the region where Sposato is located. This master's degree, however, had been approved by its state board of higher education. The graduate school of education has existed since 2012; the residency program itself began in 2008. More detail about the specific contours of the Sposato model are described in Chapter Four in a discussion of the teacher preparation community of practice at Sposato.

Sposato, therefore, is a strategic research site (Merton, 1973) for studying the phenomenon of new graduate schools of education located at “No Excuses” CMOs. The goal of this graduate school of education is to “create unusually effective rookie teachers and school leaders for low-income students...The program is mapped backwards from the demands of working in the highest performing urban public schools in America” (SGSE, 2017b). Secondly, this program and school of education have also been designed to be intentionally dislocated from traditional university-based teacher education, as all

nGSEs are per my research team's definition of the nGSE phenomenon described in Chapter One. The Sposato website states that their school, "offers a pathway into teaching that is distinctly different from the two well-known pathways: traditional graduate schools of education and alternative programs like Teach for America" (SGSE, 2017b). In addition, the media attention that Sposato has received (e.g., Gastic, 2014, D. Goldstein, 2014), similar to the policy and media attention nGSEs more generally have received (Zeichner, 2016), establishes Sposato as what Yin (2014) refers to as a "common" case within the broader phenomenon "because of the lessons [the case] might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (p. 52). For the Sposato case, the social processes are the experiences and perspectives of teacher educators and candidates engaged in the work of teacher preparation; the theoretical interest for the phenomenon is the understanding of new models of teacher preparation at nGSEs.

### **Features of the Case Study**

According to Stake (2006) the features of a case study depend upon what type of case is being studied. This case study of Sposato is both what Stake has referred to as an "intrinsic" case, that is, one in which the case itself is of primary interest, and an "instrumental" case, that is, one in which the case provides insight into a phenomenon of interest. Sposato is an intrinsic case because it is located within the well-known and highly-regarded Match Education charter management organization. Its methods are distinct and the beliefs and practices of Sposato participants represent a set of relationships that are inherently interesting as an innovative and controversial form of urban teacher education. Yet Sposato is also an instrumental case because, as described

above, the Sposato GSE – along with the other cases the larger study is investigating – provides insight into the broader nGSE phenomenon. In short, this qualitative case study was designed to take advantage of both the intrinsic qualities of the Sposato model as they manifested themselves from insiders’ perspectives and the aspects of the Sposato model that connect teacher preparation at Sposato to the practice of teacher preparation at nGSEs.

Similarly, according to Yin (2014), a case study research design is further defined by three features: its ability to address the fact that the case site is distinctive and has more variables of interest than can necessarily be accessed by the collected data, its use of prior developed theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis, and its reliance on multiple sources of triangulated evidence. As described above, the overarching focus of the case study is on teacher preparation at the Sposato site. This focus could potentially limit the level of understanding that can be generated about participants’ beliefs and practices not immediately related to teacher preparation. Yet this case study, informed by the objective to understand the Sposato case as experienced in its specific context from participants’ perspectives, is designed to allow space for new constructs of interest related to but distinct from teacher preparation to emerge through the course of data collection.

Yin’s (2014) second characteristic was met through the application of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” as a methodological-analytical tool, as described in Chapter Two. As detailed below, the theoretical propositions derived from Bourdieu’s sociological theories have influenced not only the construction of interview protocols but also the coding of data and the analytical assertions made in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

To meet the final criterion that Yin (2014) establishes for case study research design, this case study was based on the collection of data from interview, direct observation, and document/archival/physical artifact sources of evidence. Yin (2014) suggests that a case study must rely on these multiple different sources of evidence, each source comprising several distinct pieces of evidence, because “no single source has a complete advantage over all the others. In fact, the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to rely on as many sources as possible” (p. 105). Table 1 provides an overview of research participants and indicates the amount and kind of each source of evidence that was collected and analyzed for the purposes of this case study. Further details about each of the primary categories of evidence (interview, observation, and document/artifact), including the method of collection and specifics on participants, follow the table.

It is important to note here that administrators at Sposato offered full participation and consent to the institutional participation of the Sposato Graduate School of Education in this case study and to participation in the larger study per the agreement described in Chapter One. Several introductory meetings with members of the program’s administration took place prior to data collection to ensure that the case study posed no major institutional risks and that leaders at Sposato understood the goals and purposes of the study. Two of these meetings included both me, as the primary researcher of this case study, and Marilyn Cochran-Smith, as the dissertation supervisor and the Principal Investigator for the larger study. Program administrators also assisted in securing the participation of faculty, adjunct faculty, and candidates during data collection. As part of the research partnership established between Sposato administrators and myself, I

consulted with program administrators about the number and kind of data sources to be collected to ensure that all of the key elements of the teacher preparation program at Sposato, from their perspective, were included in data collection.

Table 1

*Summary of Data Sources and Research Participants.*

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Summary of Evidence</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<i>Administrators:</i> Six participants, one 60-minute interview each	27 interviews
	<i>Faculty:</i> Four full-time faculty participants, one 30 minute interview each (NB - these four participants were administrators and participated in a follow-up interview specifically related to coursework)	
	Two adjunct faculty participants, one 30-60 minute interview each	
	<i>Coaches:</i> Five participants, one 30-60 minute interview each	
	<i>Teacher Candidates:</i> Ten participants (five from residency year, five from MET year), one 60-minute interview each	
<b>Direct Observations</b>	<i>Course observations:</i> SPO 100 – Community, Culture, and Context (twice) SPO 115 – Classroom Culture Building SPO 120 – Instructional Methods (twice) SPO 122 – Content Learning Lab	18 observations
	<i>Key teacher preparation experiences outside courses:</i> Group of 6 Student Teaching (four times) Coaching Sessions Practicum “Site Night”	
	<i>Additional moments:</i> Sposato orientation Sposato graduation Principal Panel Q&A Data Analysis Workshop Introduction to Summer Practicum	

<b>Documents</b>	<p><i>Internal Program Documents:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Values</li> <li>Interview and Sample Lesson Memo</li> <li>Job Hunt Memo</li> <li>Observation Memo</li> <li>“Our Agreement”</li> <li>Sposato’s Vision for Good Teaching</li> <li>Introduction to the Gateway</li> <li>Summer Coach Training Manual</li> <li>SGSE Data Dashboard</li> <li>MA Board of Higher Education State Approval</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Evaluation Rubrics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kraken</li> <li>Kraken Jr.</li> <li>Professionalism</li> <li>Feedback Implementation</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Course Guides:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPO 110 – Relationships and Student Investment</li> <li>SPO 112 – Classroom Management</li> <li>SPO 120 – Instructional Methods</li> <li>SPO 124C – Math Manifesto</li> <li>SPO 124D – Science Manifesto</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Syllabi:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPO 100 – Community, Culture, and Context</li> <li>SPO 110 – Relationships and Student Investment</li> <li>SPO 112 – Classroom Management</li> <li>SPO 120 – Instructional Methods</li> <li>SPO 122 – Subject Specific Methods</li> <li>Year 2</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Handbooks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Handbook</li> <li>Professionalism Handbook</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Publicly available documents:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sposato website (SGSE, 2017a-r)</li> <li>Media artifacts published on the Sposato website (as cited in Chapters Four-Seven)</li> </ul>	60+ documents
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**Research participants.** For this case study, full-time Sposato administrators and faculty, part-time/adjunct faculty, coaches, and teacher candidates were invited to be research participants. All of these research participants are referred to as Sposato insiders

throughout the rest of this dissertation and the phrase “insiders’ perspectives” used frequently in this dissertation relates to the perspectives shared by this collected group of research participants.

I used the term “Sposato leaders” in this dissertation to describe the following people: administrators, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and coaches. Though Sposato is part of the larger Match Education CMO, which has its own administrative structures and organization of which some Sposato administrators are a part, only those leaders who worked within the Sposato divisions of the Match Education CMO were of interest and invited to participate in this case study. All Sposato administrators were invited to participate (six of seven volunteered) and included people such as the Sposato Dean, the Director of Coaching, the Director of Training, and the Director of Partnerships. Faculty members included administrators who taught courses at Sposato as well as two adjunct faculty who taught in the program. All current Sposato coaches (approximately 30) from the 2015-2016 academic year were invited to participate; five volunteered to be research participants. A member check with the Sposato Director of Operations allowed me to verify the representativeness of these five volunteers compared to the larger set of coaches based on the grade-level and content-area taught by candidates they coached.

In addition, Sposato teacher candidates were invited to participate in this case study. At this nGSE, candidates were defined as both those completing their residency year (preservice year) and those working full time as teachers of record while completing their graduate coursework and receiving institutional coaching (inservice/MET year). All candidates still in the 2015-2016 preservice cohort (41 in total) and inservice cohort (32 in total) when data collection commenced in April 2016 were invited to participate in this

case study. A purposive sample from the 10 preservice and six inservice volunteer participants was constructed in order to attain maximum variation of candidates' perspectives. A member check with the Sposato Director of Operations allowed me to ensure the representativeness of this purposive sample based on variation of student teaching placement site, grade and/or content area taught, and gender and racial make-up within each of the two cohorts sampled.

**Interviews.** The collection of interviews was designed to gather the experiences and perspectives of the people most closely involved with teacher preparation at Sposato. As shown in Table 1, a purposive sample of 10 teacher candidates (5 from each of the preservice and inservice years), as well as a collection of administrators, coaches, faculty, and adjunct faculty participated in interviews. Twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted in total; each interview lasted approximately one hour (with the exception of the four full-time faculty follow-up interviews) and followed a semi-structured interview format.

Following Yin (2014), the length of these focused hour-long interviews was designed to ensure that candidates addressed the constructs of interest in this study. Interviews were semi-structured rather than fixed, though, to maintain a conversational tone and affording space to the interviewee to share his/her experiences in the way he/she best saw fit. The semi-structured interview protocols for administrators, faculty/coaches, and teacher candidates differ slightly (see Appendix A) but each was designed to allow the research participants to openly share their experiences and perspectives about Sposato and to allow me as the researcher to probe into the key constructs of the theoretical and

conceptual frameworks that guided initial data analysis (participants' dispositions, interests, and actions).

To create the interview protocols, I first aligned the constructs derived from the study's conceptual framework to the multiple topics and components from the research questions for this case study and the larger study for which this case was the pilot. The core topics derived from the research questions were: goals of teacher education; purposes of teacher education; core practices of teacher education; and assumptions about effective teaching, sources of knowledge, preparing teachers for underserved students, teacher evaluation, and equity/social justice. This alignment is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Summary of Alignment between Theoretical Framework and Research Question Topic*

<b>Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Area</b>	<b>Research Question Component/Topic</b>
Dispositions (Beliefs, Assumptions)	Purposes of teacher education  Assumptions about core practices of effective teaching, sources of knowledge, preparing teachers for underserved student populations, evaluating effectiveness  Beliefs about equity/justice  Background experiences/professional histories
Interests (Motivations)	Goals of teacher education  Goals of teacher education program/residency  Candidate reasons for choosing this residency  Candidate individual aspirations/professional goals

Actions (Practices: Discrete practices, core practices, etc.)	Practices of teacher education
	Core practices of effective teaching
	Descriptions of candidate selection, curriculum design/assessment, program processes/structures, program evaluation
	Descriptions of teaching, courses, providing feedback and candidate evaluation
	Candidate experiences in the program

After completing this initial alignment, I then wrote specific questions to correspond to each of the three categories as presented in the sample protocols found in Appendix A. Each of the interview questions and sub-questions was written to elicit from research participants' information regarding at least one construct from the conceptual framework and one topic/component of the research question. That being said, most of the questions across the three protocols were written in an open-ended way so participants would have the ability to discuss their interpretations and perspectives about all topics under discussion. Examples of the way the specific questions in the protocols aligned to the conceptual framework and the topics derived from the research questions are shown in Table 3. All interviews were transcribed for the purpose of coding and data analysis. Digital interview data and transcription files were de-identified and stored in a folder on a password-protected digital server.

Table 3

*Example Protocol Questions Aligned to Research Question Components*

<b>Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Area</b>	<b>Research Question Component/Topic</b>	<b>Example Questions (Protocol #)</b>
Dispositions (Beliefs, Assumptions)	Background experiences/professional histories	Choosing to be a teacher is a big commitment, which people make for lots of different reasons. Why did you choose teaching?  What's the most important thing to you about the work of teaching? (Protocol 3)
	Assumptions about core practices of effective teaching, etc.	Lots of people and groups have different ideas about what an "effective" teacher is. What would you say makes an effective teacher? (Protocol 2)
Interests (Motivations)	Goals of this teacher education program/residency	I've gotten a sense for the culture here at Sposato based on your responses. What parts of the Sposato are a good fit with your personal beliefs about teacher preparation or education in general? (Protocol 1)
	Candidate individual aspirations	Where do you hope to work once you graduate from the Sposato? Are there types of schools that you find yourself more or less attracted to based on your beliefs/educational values? (Protocol 3)
Actions (Practices: Discrete practices, core practices, etc.)	Core practices of effective teaching	What skills/practices are most important for a teacher to develop? In general/specifically in this context (students of Color/low SES)/specifically at Sposato; What attitudes/values do you hope a teacher develops during their time as a resident here? (Protocol 1)
	Descriptions of teaching, courses, providing feedback and candidate evaluation	Thinking about the individual course you teach (role you play) at Sposato, what activities/instructional strategies do you think are the most essential for the residents during this experience/course? (Protocol 2)

**Observations.** The observations for this case study included key teacher preparation moments selected in consultation with Sposato administrators. Observations were designed to represent candidates' complete experience over the course of the program. For example, a selection of both central and foundational courses from the graduate program of study were observed (e.g., SPO 100 – Community, Culture and Context; SPO 115 – Classroom Culture Building; SPO 120 – Instructional Methods). One observation of each of these central/foundational courses was conducted. In addition, I observed experiences shared by program candidates outside of courses listed in the Sposato program of study. These experiences included the Group of 6 pre-practicum experience, an introductory session to the Summer Full Practicum, coaching sessions, and student teaching sessions during the summer practicum. Observations were designed to help triangulate the perspectives elicited in the interviews to provide a more robust picture of the way(s) theories of practice were enacted at Sposato.

During each observation, I took general field notes that included both direct observations of the ongoing experience/activity (noting a timestamp every few minutes) as well as reflections, questions, or emerging themes. These two sections of the field notes were organized in separate spaces in my field note documents with reflections, questions, and emerging themes placed in brackets with independent time-stamps. In addition, I paid close attention to the following list of items in each observation: core instructional and behavioral practices used by faculty, noticeable differences in practice between the teacher candidates and the faculty/coaches, practices faculty/coaches encouraged candidates to use, questions candidates raised about practices, answers faculty gave about practices, and frequency of individual practices implemented. These

categories helped organize the reflections/questions/emerging themes section of the field notes. Since there was no standardized observation protocol being followed by these observations, given the variety and unique nature of several of the experiences observed, this note-taking framework was held constant across all observations. The primary reason for having a more open-ended field note procedure for this study's observations was to allow for issues and topics I did not anticipate prior to an observation to become part of my ongoing analyses as I became more familiar with the case's context. This more open-ended procedure for observations afforded me the space to adapt my focus as was warranted by the experiences being observed. After each observation, I engaged in a process of analytical memo-writing. Field notes and memos from observations were stored on a password-protected digital server.

**Documents, archival records, and physical artifacts.** There was a wide variety of public and institutional data related to teacher preparation at Sposato that I collected and analyzed. As mentioned in Table 1, publically available documents included all print and electronic media officially released by the program, such as: program websites, press releases related to the program, and publically disseminated institutional research reports. Institutional documents also included course syllabi, candidate/resident handbooks, mission statements, and key course assessments and rubrics. Though the Match Education CMO also has a wide variety of public documents that I reviewed, only the documents relevant to Sposato and to teacher preparation at Sposato were included in this set of data for analysis. Document collection also included media accounts of Sposato and materials relevant to the practice of teacher preparation that were produced by sources external to Sposato and its sponsoring CMO.

One key document used in data collection to help make sense of the effectiveness of teacher preparation at Sposato was the SGSE Annual Data Dashboard. This document is a summary of institutionally collected data on retention and effectiveness and other program outcomes. Some of this information was made publicly available via the Sposato website, but most of it was privileged internal information. As with the interviews and observations, the decision of which archival records I collected and analyzed was made with the consent of program leadership. Per my research agreement with Sposato administrators, though, only information directly related to my analysis was included in this dissertation or its appendices given the proprietary and sensitive nature of much this archival information.

Physical artifacts, such as posters and signage in the physical location of the residents' classrooms and the sponsoring CMO's schools, were not a major source of evidence for this study. But these physical artifacts did become important during observations to further make sense of the beliefs and motivations underlying the practices demonstrated at Sposato. I did not systematically collect physical artifacts because they were not a primary source of evidence. Rather, I made note of these physical artifacts in my observation field notes. As with interview transcriptions and observation field notes, all documents and archival records were stored digitally in a separate folder on a password-protected server.

**Timeline of data collection.** Data collection occurred from April-October of 2016, spanning the end of the 2015-2016 academic year (in which the sample of candidates were either completing their residency year or their MET year) and the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year. From April to June of 2016, I conducted

interviews with administrators to develop an initial understanding of the institutional perspective at Sposato. Simultaneously to conducting this first set of interviews, I also began collecting and analyzing documents and archival records while reaching out to teacher candidates, coaches and adjunct faculty. During this time period, I also conducted six observations, chief among them the Principal Panel Q&A, the Data Analysis Session, courses related to Instructional Methods, and one of the two Community, Culture, and Context course observations.

Once they granted their participation, I conducted interviews with teacher candidates, coaches, and faculty members from June-August of 2016. Observations conducted during these summer months included student teaching and coaching sessions. Four of the teacher candidates I interviewed volunteered to allow me to observe their Summer Full Practicum student teaching and coaching experiences during July 2016.

Final observations continued into the fall of 2016 (August-October) since I began data collection in the spring and several of the initial teacher preparation experiences and foundational courses at Sposato take place only during the fall semester. I was able to observe the graduation ceremony of the cohort of candidates who had finished their inservice/MET year in 2015-2016, the orientation of candidates who began their Sposato experience in 2016-2017, the foundational courses (e.g., SPO 115 – Classroom Culture Building) I had not been able to observe in the spring, and the Group of 6 pre-practicum/teaching simulation experience during September and October of 2016.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in a qualitative case study requires a specific set of strategies to make sense of the complexities and nuances that arise from the dynamic real-world

contexts of the case itself (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). An analytic strategy is necessary in this kind of open-ended, contextual case study to cope with the amount of data related to the constructs of interest that must be collected. The final section of this chapter details the processes and strategies I employed for data analysis to make sense of the Sposato case in its complexity.

Yin (2014) suggests that the first stage in articulating a data analysis strategy is to search for “patterns, insights or concepts that seem promising. These may emerge as you manipulate the data, for instance by juxtaposing the data from two different interviewees” (p. 135). For this case study of Sposato, my initial strategy to search for these patterns, insights, and concepts was to read the entire corpus of all evidence sources three different times in three different ways: once chronologically based on when data sources were collected, once based on type of data source, and once based on the initial thematic groupings I developed. I organized the data corpus in multiple different ways during these readings based on the emergent ideas related to the beliefs and practices of the research participants. During the data collection period and the first stage of analysis, I also wrote analytic memos (Charmaz, 2004) to start making connections between the study’s research questions and the interpretations I was forming in my initial analyses. These memos became an important source I consulted and added to during each of the three readings of the data corpus. In particular, the notes in my analytic memos were essential to the third reading of the data corpus, as the thematic groupings used in this reading came in part from analytic memos.

During this search through the case’s data corpus, I employed a strategy for data analysis Yin (2014) refers to as beginning with theoretical propositions (p. 136).

According to Yin, this strategy should be followed when “The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, reviews of the literature, and new hypotheses or propositions” (p. 136). The communities and theories of practice framework (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), in particular, this theory’s explanation of the ways beliefs and practices intersect within a complex bounded social space, directly influenced the creation of the research questions and the interview and observation protocols described above.

Therefore, I worked from my reading through of the data corpus to conduct preliminary coding of each of the data sources (interviews, observations, documents/artifacts) based on the three primary categories derived from this framework: dispositions, interests, and actions. Throughout this preliminary stage of coding, which occurred alongside the first two readings of the data corpus described above, I noted specific dispositions, interests, and actions that appeared with relative frequency (e.g., the centrality of the achievement gap, defining teacher effectiveness in relation to student learning, the importance of teacher moves in the classroom). This preliminary round of coding, similar to what Yin (2014) refers to as “pattern matching,” helped me to compare the empirical patterns I was noting to the predicted patterns of relationships between beliefs and practices noted in Bourdieu’s account of theories of practice underlying community actions. This preliminary coding also influenced the writing of assertions and subassertions and eventual line-by-line coding I describe below.

The theory of practice framework was useful for this initial pattern matching because it aligned with my first research question and influenced the construction of interview protocols and observation foci. However, according to Ayers, Kavanaugh, and

Knafli (2003) and Stake (2006), the work of conducting a case study must also be open to themes and patterns that emerge from the process of data collection as well as plausible disconfirming explanations which challenge the theoretical propositions that guided the case study's analytic strategy (see also, Yin, 2014). Therefore, the analyses after the first two readings of the data corpus and the preliminary stage of coding were informed by methods commonly used in qualitative analyses, including methods appropriate to constructivist grounded theory such as iterative coding and memo writing, in order to make sense of emergent themes and patterns within the data not initially brought to light by the theory of practice framework (Charmaz, 2000; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Although this was not a grounded theory study, some of the analysis methods common to grounded theory helped me analyze the data I collected in a manner that was authentic and intrinsic to the case itself to "provide a useful conceptual rendering and ordering of the data that explains the studied phenomenon" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 511). These continued analyses helped me to form a more nuanced "conceptual infrastructure" (Stake, 2006) of the individual case in its setting.

This open iterative process was informed by Erickson's (1986) approach to qualitative data analysis and reporting for research on teaching. Erickson (1986) suggests that the purpose of qualitative research reporting is to "persuade the audience that an adequate evidentiary warrant exists for the assertions made, that patterns of generalization within the set are indeed as the researcher claims they are" (p. 149). To ensure this adequate evidentiary warrant, after the first two readings of the data corpus were complete, I composed a set of assertions and sub-assertions based on my analytic memos, preliminary pattern coding, and notes from the first two readings. Each assertion

was made up of several subassertions, which themselves relied on multiple data points from the data corpus (e.g., observation vignettes, interview comments, site document excerpts).

This set of assertions and sub-assertions was organized into three large categories based on the three most central, overarching assertions: (1) the Sposato model was marked by a distinct set of beliefs, motivations, and practices that captured the Sposato theory of practice [Theory of Practice]; (2) Sposato leaders intended their program to be a “revolutionary proof point” in the field of teacher preparation to show that a different way of preparing teachers to be effective was possible [Revolutionary Approach]; and (3) Sposato leaders intended the program’s graduates primarily to serve in “No Excuses” charter schools to help close the achievement gap [Context-specific preparation]. Ultimately, these assertions and subassertions were refined after the line-by-line coding described below had been completed and after I had examined the data corpus for disconfirming evidence and atypical patterns that emerged (Erickson, 1986; Stake, 2006).

These three assertion-based categories became the central organizing structures for the third, thematic reading of the data corpus as well as the primary coding I conducted with the data corpus once data were uploaded into ATLAS.ti, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis program. Data segments were sorted and organized into ATLAS.ti based on whether they fit best under the “theory of practice,” “revolutionary approach,” or “context-specific” code/assertion category. The secondary and tertiary coding I conducted was subsequently informed by the systematic coding perspective offered by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Data at this stage had been sorted into what Miles et al. (2014) refer to as “segments of data” (p. 86) based on primary coding

and the three central assertions I used to categorize the data corpus. I then took these segments of data and developed pattern codes, or “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emerging theme, configuration, or explanation...a sort of meta-code” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). This process of pattern coding allowed me to take the three broad assertion-based categories and use them to look for causes, explanations, relationships, and theoretical constructs for why these assertions (and their attendant subassertions) made sense within the data corpus.

During this iterative coding process, I read through the documents, observations, and interviews within each category (in that order) while keeping a single list of potential codes for each assertion-based category. Within each category, I revised that list by cross-referencing analytic memos and looking for discrepancies or moments of consistency between the code list and the subassertions I had previously written for that category during the first and second readings. Once the third reading within each category was finished, I looked across and revised the code lists from each category in relation to the codes in other categories. Once a fully revised list of codes was created, I engaged in the final tertiary coding of data segments (discrete interview comments, observation vignettes, and document segments). The major difference between secondary and tertiary coding was that tertiary coding represented a more refined and clearly organized version of the secondary coding reflecting the code revision process listed above. A full list of the final codes used in each category is included in Table 4.

Table 4

*Summary of Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Codes*

<b>Primary Code</b>	<b>Secondary Code</b>	<b>Tertiary Code</b>
Theory of Practice	Beliefs	Achievement gap/accountability The first year can be taught Definitions of teacher effectiveness Gap closing can be taught
	Motivations	Name-study-measure moves Backwards map experiences Practice before belief Practice their pedagogy Find the right people
	Practices	Moves Context-specificity Individualization Prescriptiveness Monitoring/assessing
	Candidates' beliefs, motivations, and practices	
	Internal coherence	Reasons for internal coherence Teachers as blank slates Evaluating candidates Creating effective rookie teachers DIS-healthy exits DIS-silencing of viewpoints DIS-questions candidates raise
Revolutionary Approach	Justification for revolutionary approach	Importance of innovation Practice-based approach Why revolution is necessary
	Method behind the revolutionary approach	Moves – what they are Moves – how they're learned Moves – automaticity Good teaching is good teaching Cycles of practice and feedback Content-rich learning Implementation of feedback, student learning Management precedes instruction Received view of curriculum
	No unrealized theory	Sanctioned exemplars External evaluation Residents' cycles of practice and feedback

		DIS – limits of good teaching is good teaching DIS – questions about revolutionary approach
Context-Specific Preparation	Why No Excuses schools	Candidate desire to work in this context Equity Social justice Ed reform movement Context-specificity beliefs
	Successful No Excuses teaching	Relationship building Habits of successful NE teachers Emotional constancy Students’ need for professionalism Culturally affirming teaching
	Limitations to context-specificity	Big picture – achieving what is possible The problem is not the problem Gap closing is never finished Sustainability/retention

Only at this point in the data analysis was I was able to confirm my analytical assertions and subassertations, since as stated in Miles et al. (2014), assertions are “declarative statement[s] of summative synthesis, supported by confirming evidence from the data and revised when disconfirming evidence or discrepant cases require modification of the assertion” (p. 99). Once secondary and tertiary line-by-line coding was complete, I was able to take my revised assertions and subassertions and construct this dissertation’s arguments. The assertion and subassertions about the Sposato theory of practice were used to build the arguments of Chapter Four; the assertion and subassertions about the Sposato “revolutionary approach” were used to build the arguments of Chapter Five; and the assertion and subassertions about the context-specific goals of the Sposato preparation model were used to build the arguments of Chapter Six. Overall, the subassertions and assertions that led to the chapter-specific arguments subsequently led to the three main arguments I described in Chapter One.

As has been described in this chapter, a case study research design allowed me the ability to access the nuanced perspectives of a broad range of Sposato leaders and candidates in order to unpack how they worked to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” As is demonstrated in the next three chapters, it was only through a qualitative analysis of the beliefs, practices, and core commitments of these teacher preparation insiders at Sposato that I was able to unpack the Sposato approach and raise questions about it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Sposato Theory of Practice and the Pursuit of Internal Coherence**

The Sposato Graduate School of Education was designed to conduct the work of teacher preparation in a way that was different from what Sposato leaders perceived to be the norm in university or other programs. As discussed in Chapter One, the major structural difference between Sposato, as a new graduate school of education (nGSE), and many other schools of education was the location of the Sposato master's and licensure programs within the Match Education Charter Management Organization (CMO) instead of within a traditional institution of higher education or a university. Despite this dramatic relocation of teacher education, to this point there has been no systematic study of Sposato methods of teacher preparation or the beliefs and practices of Sposato insiders.

In this chapter, I argue that in order to understand the inner workings of the Sposato model of teacher preparation, it is necessary to uncover its underlying "theory of practice." As I described in Chapter Two, a theory of practice is an analytic heuristic derived from the critical cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) which Bourdieu argued would allow an outsider to a community to articulate and make sense of the beliefs and practices displayed by insiders in that community. Given the goal of this case study to understand the Sposato Graduate School of Education from an emic or insider perspective, I employ Bourdieu's "theory of practice" framework in this chapter to identify the core beliefs and practices present in the work of teacher preparation at Sposato. As Bourdieu suggests (1977), a theory of practice can be discovered through analysis of three central aspects lying under community insiders' experiences and

perspectives: dispositions, which are the beliefs held by members of the community; interests, which are the things members of the community are motivated to do; and actions, which are the practices and behaviors in which community members engage. In this chapter, I articulate the multiple dispositions, interests, and actions I found to be present within the Sposato community as a way to unpack the dynamics of the Sposato model of teacher preparation.

Following my articulation of the central aspects of the Sposato theory of practice itself, I also argue in this chapter that this theory of practice was intentionally and explicitly implemented to allow Sposato faculty, staff, and candidates to work toward the shared goals described in Chapters Five and Six. As shown below, one of the key findings of this case study was that a single dominant theory of practice existed at Sposato rather than the multiple theories of practice that might be expected given the multiple different social groups in a teacher preparation program including full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, preservice candidates, and graduates. I show in this chapter that the dominant theory of practice at Sposato reflects what Bourdieu (1977, 1990) refers to as the “habitus” of the community. Sposato administrators, faculty, and staff worked hard to achieve internal program coherence, or the intentional alignment of program methods and experiences to the program’s stated mission and goals, in order to clarify and make consistent the work of teacher preparation at Sposato guided by the habitus.

However, as several candidates and staff persons at Sposato admitted, this internal coherence came at the cost of the exclusion from the program of those who disagreed with the theory of practice as well as the unintentional silencing of teacher candidates who felt the program was not designed to meet their needs. The last section of this

chapter demonstrates that those who did not fit with the Sposato approach, either in their own or others' viewpoints, were excluded from the Sposato mission of preparing "jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers" ready to close achievement gaps in "No Excuses" schools. This chapter suggests that achieving strict, unified internal coherence allowed the Sposato teacher preparation program to construct and police its habitus, which then allowed the program to implement its curriculum and its broader vision of the purpose of teacher preparation more efficiently. But this achievement came at the cost of eliminating the tensions among program insiders and thus limiting the program's ability to reach its ultimate mission of preparing a wide range of teacher candidates to be successful, effective teachers in "No Excuses" schools.

To build these arguments, I describe the teacher preparation community at Sposato in terms of the key experiences, moments, and milestones undertaken by teacher candidates who were working toward initial licensure and a master's degree at the Sposato GSE. This description reveals the boundedness of the Sposato GSE community's beliefs and practices.

I then articulate the Sposato theory of practice itself. I describe the central beliefs, motivations, and practices that represent the Sposato model of teacher preparation based on my analyses of program curricular and promotional materials, interviews with administrators and faculty, and observations of program experiences and courses. I demonstrate the interrelated and mutually reinforcing nature of these beliefs, motivations, and practices and the ways in which key experiences in the program reflect several of these central concepts simultaneously. I include in this section a description of Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) concept of habitus as it relates to theories of practice. To make

this point, I highlight the “Group of 6” pre-practicum experience, which teacher candidates underwent during their residency year, as a key example of these interrelationships.

Finally, I consider the internal coherence that allowed Sposato administrators to maintain a dominant theory of practice and unpack how Sposato faculty and staff interpreted this. I close the chapter with a discussion of the consequences and costs of achieving internal coherence, focusing specifically on teacher candidate experiences.

### **The Sposato Graduate School of Education as a Community of Practice**

As discussed in Chapter Two, this study treats the case of the Sposato Graduate School of Education as a bounded community of practice. According to Bourdieu (1990), a community of practice or social field is a constructed community of individuals within a definable social space who share an understanding of what that social space is. For the purposes of this study, the definable social space within the community of practice at Sposato was the Sposato teacher preparation program, which is the central activity of the Sposato Graduate School of Education. The following brief description of Sposato teacher candidate experience illustrates the aspects of teacher preparation that constituted this bounded social space within the Sposato community.

The Sposato Graduate School of Education is an initial licensure and degree-granting teacher preparation program designed, developed, and administered by staff members within the Match Education CMO in Boston. Sposato admits approximately 70 candidates each year into a cohort-based teacher preparation program and divides candidates’ experience into two distinct yet related year-long experiences: the preservice/residency year, which I refer to throughout this dissertation as the residency

year, and the inservice/MET year, which I refer to as the MET year. During the course of these two years, candidates simultaneously work for initial licensure in Massachusetts, which includes taking the state-mandated MTEL licensure tests and completing the state-mandated portfolio-based Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) by the end of the residency year, as well as taking coursework resulting in the Masters of Effective Teaching (MET), a degree that Sposato is authorized to grant by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (SGSE, 2017c). In order to be admitted into the program, “Aspiring teachers apply to a qualifying residency program in Boston and for admission to the Sposato Graduate School of Education; during their first year enrolled at Sposato, they also work full-time at a Boston-area school” (SGSE, 2017b). Candidates’ two-year experience begins in the fall after being accepted into both a qualifying residency and the MET degree program. A diagram of the major experiences across the residency and MET years is included in Figure 2, which shows a break-down of the teacher preparation experiences candidates undergo during their two years in the program.

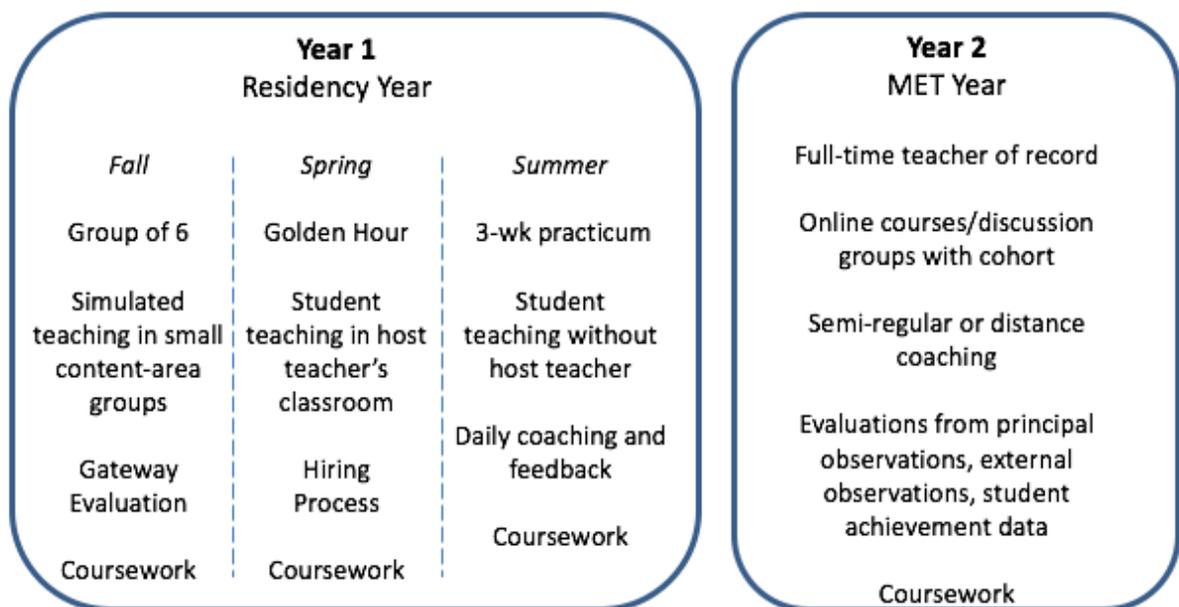


Figure 2. The Sposato candidate experience.

As stated on the Sposato website, the residency year is “an intensive yearlong training program. This training is hyper-prescriptive and detailed regarding the nuances of great teaching. Our year of training allows for extensive practice and coaching, to the point where subtle teaching moves become automatic” (SGSE, 2017b). The key classroom-based experience of the first year is the qualifying residency, in which candidates have a full-time position as either a tutor or an assistant teacher in a “No Excuses” school. Since the inception of the MET degree and the expansion of the Sposato model outside of the Match Education CMO, all qualifying residencies have been located in Boston-area “No Excuses” charter and “turnaround” schools such as those operated by KIPP and Unlocking Potential, with whom Sposato has partnered.

During the fall semester of the residency year, candidates spend their time in their assigned qualifying residency school working in host teachers’ classrooms engaged in tutoring, assistant teaching, and conducting observations of host teachers’ practice. Alongside this classroom time, candidates are also enrolled in a pre-practicum experience during the fall semester called “Group of 6,” in which residents meet in groups of six residents with one or two coaches every Saturday for eight Saturdays. These are day-long simulated teaching experiences in which each resident teaches a six-minute lesson to the other five teachers in their group, all of whom work in the same content area and student age range. The focus of “Group of 6” is on having candidates work toward what Sposato calls “automaticity of practice” related to the basic presence, management, and instructional moves at Sposato. These are described in more detail later in this chapter, but in brief: presence moves relate to a teacher’s ability to command authority in a

classroom; management moves relate to a teacher's ability to create a structured classroom environment; and instructional moves relate to a teacher's ability to deliver adequate instructional experiences to students. At the end of the fall semester, residents must pass the "Gateway," an assessment of brief lessons taught in a simulated teaching experience to determine whether they have made enough progress to continue into the spring semester.

During the spring semester of the residency year, candidates continue to work full-time in their qualifying residency schools. But unlike the fall semester when their classroom role was more informal, during the spring candidates participate in what Sposato refers to as the "Golden Hour." The "Golden Hour" is a takeover of teaching time within a host teacher's classroom for one-hour instructional periods at least twice a week with an instructional coach and the host teacher (who are often the same person) still present in the classroom. The focus of student teaching in the Golden Hour is on the continued development of presence, management, and instructional moves. Beginning in March of this second semester, candidates also prepare for the job-search and hiring process. Sposato helps to broker the job-search process since the second year of the program relies on candidates having secured full-time jobs as first-year teachers.

If a candidate successfully completes the fall and spring semesters of the residency year and has been hired by a school for the MET year, he or she may then move into the summer full-practicum teaching experience. During the summer practicum, candidates teach a three-week summer school session at a Boston-area "No Excuses" charter school with which Sposato has partnered. Candidates do not have a host teacher in the classroom during this full practicum; rather they take full responsibility for the

implementation of the summer school curriculum set by the school in which they work. Candidates also receive daily coaching; coaches observe at least a 10-minute instructional segment each day of the three-week session and conduct a daily debrief with the candidate. The focus of this full practicum is on the holistic integration of the presence, management, and instructional moves described later in this chapter into candidates' daily practice, as well as ensuring that residents are prepared to begin teaching in their first year of full-time inservice work.

During the MET year, candidates work as full-time teachers of record in the high-achieving, high-poverty urban schools for which they have been hired. Most of these placements are also in "No Excuses"-aligned charter or turnaround schools. The focus of this MET year is on the practice and analysis of teaching. Candidates receive semi-regular in-person or distance coaching, depending on their teaching placements, and they complete six 6-8 week modules designed to help candidates better analyze student learning and the relationship between their teaching and student learning. These modules are guided by Sposato full-time faculty and staff and are composed of teams of teachers from a candidate's cohort.

Throughout both the residency and MET years, Sposato faculty, staff, and coaches provide course-based instruction to candidates aligned to the classroom-based experiences in which candidates practice the content presented in the courses. The MET curriculum is structured sequentially based on the Sposato faculty's understanding of what a candidate needs to learn to be successful at each successive stage of the program. This sequence, described in more detail in Chapter Five, has a distinct practical focus for each year. As the Sposato website states, coursework in the residency year is intended to

teach candidates how to be effective teachers and includes “classes on classroom management, building relationships with students and parents, instructional methods, subject-specific methods (i.e. How to Teach Math or How to Teach English), and working with data. Classes include concrete direction on these topics” (SGSE, 2017f). Coursework in the MET year relates to the six rotations completed by candidates mentioned above as they engage in their work as inservice teachers. Coursework in the residency year occurs each Tuesday and Thursday evening from October through June; coursework during the MET year occurs online. All courses are required and are assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. A full list of courses is included in Appendix B.

Although satisfactory completion of all coursework is necessary to earn the MET by the end of the inservice/MET year, assessment at Sposato is ultimately based on a teacher’s ability to positively impact student learning. The rationale for this kind of assessment based on student learning is stated in these terms:

Teachers must succeed with the actual children they teach, during their actual full-time teaching experience (i.e., not just as a ‘student teacher’). We measure classroom success of our master’s candidates via neutral outside observers, student achievement gains (where we can measure them), student surveys, and principal evaluations. (SGSE, 2017c)

Multiple measures, including evaluations of candidates using external evaluation rubrics, which are elaborated in Chapter Five, are used to determine whether or not candidates are more effective than the non-Sposato first-year teachers in the schools where they teach. If candidates score above the average score of non-Sposato new teachers, the Sposato teachers are awarded the MET degree. As explored in more depth in Chapter Five, the

Sposato definition of what a “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teacher” looks like and does to be effective is represented by the evaluations leading up to the MET degree. The awarding of the MET degree marks the end of the MET year as well as the end of a candidate’s experience at Sposato.

### **Articulating the Sposato Theory of Practice in Detail**

The mission of the Sposato Graduate School of Education, as stated on the front page of its website, is “to prepare unusually effective novice teachers for schools serving low-income populations, and to develop, validate and disseminate innovative approaches to teacher preparation” (SGSE, 2017a). This mission was discussed frequently and appeared consistently in internal materials created and used by Sposato staff members for training and induction. For example, the “Core Values” document given to candidates at the beginning of the residency year, stated the mission this way: “Our teacher education is detailed, prescriptive, and precise because we believe that’s the only way to answer our big question: How do you prepare unusually effective rookie teachers for schools that serve low income students?” (Core Values, p. 3). Similarly, the handbook given to part-time summer coaches read: “The mission of the CSGSE [Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education] is to create ‘jaw-droppingly good’ first-year teachers. The best first year teacher you’ve ever seen, ever” (Summer Coaching Manual, p. 4). Administrators, too, agreed using consistent language that the creation of “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” was the central mission of the Sposato teacher preparation model. For example, when asked to describe the Sposato mission in her own words, one administrator said, “I would say, to prepare really – this might even be too close to the mission – to prepare really effective first-year teachers for high-need, highly-structured

schools” (Interview #3, administrator). The idea that the teacher preparation program enacted this mission was central to all of the work conducted at Sposato.

But in order to fully understand the ways in which programming was organized within the Sposato community of practice to enact this mission, it is necessary to understand from Sposato insiders’ perspectives what they believed was important in teacher preparation and how they engaged in the Sposato model. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bourdieu (1985) suggested that the work of a community of practice is governed by the collected assumptions, actions, and decisions of those members. This section articulates the Sposato theory of practice, using the three categories of dispositions (beliefs), interests (motivations), and actions (practices) suggested by Bourdieu (1977) in order to explain how Sposato insiders set about their work of creating “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” In this section, I detail the three core beliefs, four primary motivations, and five key practices, which I identified as comprising the Sposato theory of practice. These items are listed in Figure 3, which contains columns for each of the categories taken from the Bourdieu framework (dispositions, interests, and actions). Within each column the three beliefs, four motivations, and five practices I found to constitute the Sposato theory of practice are then listed. The three sub-sections of this chapter that follow Figure 3 contain more detailed information about each of the items listed in the columns in the order in which they appear in Figure 3.

DISPOSITIONS/ BELIEFS	INTERESTS/ MOTIVATIONS	ACTIONS/ PRACTICES
1) The most pressing educational issue is the achievement gap between more and less privileged students.  2) Teacher effectiveness is defined by a teacher's ability to positively impact student learning and can be determined through an analysis of the discrete skills and practices of teachers which lead instrumentally to student learning improvements.  3) Despite previous failures, teacher preparation can be organized to teach teachers how to be effective. This means that how to be an effective first-year teacher and how to close achievement gaps are skills that can be taught in teacher preparation programs.	1) All program experiences should be backwards-mapped from a specified definition of what an effective rookie teacher looks like.  2) Predictable and replicable methods used by effective teachers should be named, studied, and measured in order to be taught to teacher candidates.  3) The induction of teacher candidates should focus on their practices rather than their beliefs.  4) The way candidates are taught in the program should approximate the way candidates are taught to teach their students	1) Use prescriptive, transmission-based teaching methods  2) Implement a moves-based curriculum  3) Emphasize context- and classroom-specific practicum experiences  4) Individualize candidate practice and feedback  5) Monitor, assess, and evaluate candidate progress frequently

Figure 3. The Sposato theory of practice.

**Dispositions: Three core beliefs held by Sposato insiders.** Bourdieu (1977) suggests that dispositions are the ideological perspectives and assumptions that allow individuals within a community to justify their actions. The three core beliefs I found among faculty, staff, and candidates at Sposato were all related to how they made sense of their ongoing work and how they defined the purpose of teaching and learning in America's schools. These three core beliefs were: (1) the most pressing educational issue is the achievement gap between more and less privileged students; (2) teacher

effectiveness is defined by a teacher's ability to positively impact student learning and can be determined through an analysis of the discrete skills and practices of teachers which lead to student learning improvements; and (3) despite previous failures, teacher preparation programs can be organized to teach teachers how to be effective because knowing how to be an effective first-year teacher and knowing how to close achievement gaps are skills that can be taught.

The first belief, which took precedence over the others, was that the most pressing educational issue this country should be addressing is the persistent achievement gap between more and less privileged students. The Sposato website stated that the program's motivating philosophy was "to close the achievement gap in America" (SGSE, 2017b). Likewise at the Sposato candidate orientation, one administrator began the session by saying, "The work that we're doing matters. You all are helping to close the achievement gap," and "This work is uniquely aligned to close the achievement gap" (Observation #12, Sposato Orientation). The reason for this claim was the idea, as formulated in the Sposato Core Values document, that "Teaching, and, by extension teacher education can change the world. It can help end cycles of poverty, reverse centuries of inequity, and change the culture of power in the United States" (Core Values, p. 3). Due to this belief, the achievement gap framed all other problems Sposato leaders attempted to address through their program.

Interestingly, although Sposato leaders admitted the achievement gap had multiple determining causes, they claimed that enhanced teacher quality was the most significant way they could effect change toward the goal of closing the gap. As one administrator noted,

I think that lingering racism and classism in the United States have deprived low income kids and kids of Color from [high-quality education] and in fact have contributed to the achievement gap, which is complex, but I think schools are best positioned to meaningfully address. (Interview #22, administrator)

This quotation indicates the general feeling stated among Sposato staff members that even though the educational achievement gap was a complex and seemingly intractable problem, raising teacher quality was a necessary step in the right direction. For them, the emphasis on raising teacher quality isolated a single determining factor of the achievement gap in order to eliminate that factor.

One Sposato administrator, who had herself attended Teachers College, Columbia University for teacher preparation, talked about her frustration with what she perceived to be the pervasive message at Teachers College that unless poverty was eradicated, education could not really fix much. She said:

I think – that was also part of my frustration [at] Columbia: ‘We can’t do anything for kids and poverty until our society fixes poverty.’ It’s like, well, then nobody can do anything. It’s just this circular thing of like, so no one can do anything until there’s these giant changes that seem very unlikely to happen given our political situation. (Interview #18, administrator)

At Sposato, the achievement gap was neither dismissed nor treated lightly. Rather all Sposato activities reflected the desire to raise teacher quality as the best available vehicle for closing achievement gaps.

Along these lines, another Sposato administrator stated that teacher quality at Sposato asked the questions, “How much higher can [student] learning be? How much

more achievement can students reach if [teacher quality] was a constant?" (Interview #6, administrator). This administrator spoke to the belief that there was a direct, essentially causal relationship between teacher quality and student learning; leaders believed their program was assumed to determine the best way to enhance this relationship. Therefore, at Sposato achievement gaps were defined in terms of student learning and the work of closing achievement gaps had to do with enhancing teacher quality in order to boost student learning.

As the above quotations make clear, at Sposato, closing the achievement gap was not just something arbitrarily chosen because it was in fashion or topical. This first belief, that the achievement gap was the most urgent problem that must be addressed to raise the quality of education in the U.S., was ingrained in the full-time team members who articulated and promoted the Sposato theory of practice. This belief was also the closest thing within the Sposato theory of practice to leaders' explanation for why they believed the work of teacher preparation at Sposato mattered in the first place. Jal Mehta (2013a) has suggested that identifying the achievement gap as the key problem facing America's schools is a common focus in the contemporary urban education reform movement, indicating the connection between Sposato leaders and this movement explored in more detail in Chapter Five. The fact that this belief was the most central of the three core beliefs in the Sposato theory of practice also meant that Sposato definitions of equity and justice, which are elaborated in Chapter Six, were framed in terms of the achievement gap.

Based on the assumption that improving teaching was central to closing achievement gaps, the second core belief in the Sposato theory of practice was this:

teacher effectiveness is defined by a teacher's ability to have a positive impact on student learning. This was connected to the assumption that certain discrete skills and teaching practices had a direct impact on the improvement of student learning. This assumption is consistent to what Hess & McShane (2014) have called "Teacher Quality 2.0". As stated by one Sposato administrator: "Well, to put it simply, an effective teacher gets students to learn. The learning is the outcome of good teaching" (Interview #6, administrator). This definition of effectiveness – i.e., that teaching is best measured by student learning – was as ingrained into the Sposato model as the belief about the need to close achievement gaps.

The Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness, though, unlike many of the definitions of teacher effectiveness to which it was aligned (see for example, Gastic, 2014; Goldhaber, Laverly, et al., 2015), went beyond merely identifying a relationship between teacher performance and student learning. This second core belief at Sposato was that teacher preparation programs could articulate how to be effective and that programs could teach candidates how to be effective by focusing on the "nitty-gritty" of teacher practice. The Sposato "Core Values" document, which was distributed to all teacher candidates, conceptualized this focus concisely: "Your three Sposato values are: (1) Love Technique, (2) Embrace Practice, (3) Pursue Excellence." (Core Values document, p. 2). Technique and practice were defined as the practical things a teacher does in daily practice to be effective; excellence was the standard to which effective teachers were expected to hold themselves. The "Core Values" document further connected technique, practice, and excellence back to the concerns that motivated the Sposato belief about the achievement gap:

Our theory of social change involves learning a ton of very specific teacher moves. That technical focus can, at times, seem disconnected from real students and the struggles of educational inequity. But they aren't—they're where it all starts. We want you to think of yourselves as craftsmen with a purpose. Skilled artisans who know how to get the job done. If you can learn to love this technical process by seeing it as connected to a broader social purpose, we know from experience that you'll find yourself getting much, much more out of your time in Sposato. (Core Values, pp. 6-7)

As discussed in more detail in the next two sections, the Sposato love of technique was the reason Sposato leaders were interested in identifying and naming specific teacher moves in the first place. This core belief also provided justification for the Sposato practice of using prescriptive teaching methods to implement a moves-based teacher preparation curriculum.

This second core belief about the importance of effective teaching and the importance of technique, practice, and excellence led leaders to only emphasize what was practicable and actionable based on this definition of teacher effectiveness. This was due to the assumed instrumental connection between teacher quality and students' academic achievement and led to the further consequence that Sposato leaders excluded from their curriculum content unrelated to their definition of teacher effectiveness. As discussed in Chapter Five, this belief led to the creation of a moves-based epistemology of teacher effectiveness, which was central to all aspects of the practice-based curriculum and pedagogy implemented at Sposato. Unlike broader, less technical definitions of teacher quality, such as those put forward by Kretchmar and Zeichner (2016) in their work on

“Teacher Prep 3.0” discussed in Chapter Two, Sposato leaders believed in the importance of making their definition of teacher effectiveness as specific and concrete a concept as possible.

The final core belief within the Sposato theory of practice related to Sposato leaders’ self-justification of their program as a new graduate school of education (nGSE). Sposato leaders believed that despite the fact that teacher preparation programs had generally failed to produce effective teachers, it was possible to teach candidates to be effective and it was possible to organize preparation programs to do so.

This belief carried with it the idea that a teacher preparation program could in fact teach candidates with no prior teaching experience how to be effective first-year, “rookie” teachers and how to close achievement gaps. This belief was clearly expressed by a top-level administrator at Sposato who said, “I do think teacher preparation certainly for preservice teachers should be organized around preparing teachers to experience a certain kind of efficacy in their first jobs” (Interview #22, administrator). “Rookie” effectiveness was defined at Sposato as a teacher’s ability to immediately enter a classroom and positively impact student learning, a view that connected notions of what a first-year teacher should be held responsible for to the two previously described core beliefs about the achievement gap and teacher effectiveness. The Sposato model was designed to get candidates to this level of effectiveness because, as stated in a handbook written for adjunct faculty members,

As research has shown, first year teachers are often ineffective in the classroom, resulting in lower levels of student learning and high levels of teacher frustration. Most teachers describe their first year as extremely challenging and even painful.

We think this year of struggle and failure is unnecessary, and our program is designed to create first year teachers who rock. (Summer Coaching Manual, p. 4)

Sposato faculty believed that the knowledge that enabled first-year teachers to be effective was known and that this knowledge could be taught. According to Sposato insiders, the reason for widespread failure in the field of teacher preparation was that this knowledge simply was not explicitly taught to teacher candidates.

As discussed in more detail in the description of Sposato leaders' justification for why their approach to teacher preparation was needed in Chapter Five, Sposato leaders were dissatisfied with teacher preparation at traditional schools of education. Sposato leaders believed, "The rigor of the preparation year should match the rigor [of the] first year experience. We offer a different kind of experience [from university-based schools of education], one that is more closely aligned with the intensity and rigor of teaching in a low-income school" (SGSE, 2017b). Figure 4, a reproduction of an image from the Sposato website, illustrates this distinction that Sposato made between itself and the "traditional" education school. This image also highlights the focus at Sposato on teaching the skills, habits, and practices teachers needed in order to be effective first-year teachers who were ready to close achievement gaps.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SCHOOL APPROACH	SPOSATO APPROACH
Coursework focuses on a range of pedagogical areas.	Program is direct and prescriptive in its teaching of specific pedagogical "moves" and habits.
Most of the time in courses is spent thinking about teaching.	Coursework involves high dosages of simulated teaching practice and feedback that is facilitated by expert coaches.
Students receive several coaching sessions over the course of their student teaching.	Students receive individualized feedback after every day they student teach.
Faculty is primarily composed of researchers.	Faculty composed entirely of practitioners (i.e. experienced classroom teachers and school leaders).
Assessment is based primarily on performance in coursework.	Assessment is based upon coursework as well as teaching performance.
Preparation is aimed at a wide variety of student populations across many types of schools.	Preparation is focused on serving low-income students in high-performing college-preparatory public schools.
Most people who start the program finish with a degree and a teaching license.	Only about two thirds of people who start with Sposato complete the program.
Graduate students finish their degree then get contacted by the alumni office for donations.	Sposato continues to provide ongoing coaching to its students during their first year of full-time teaching.
The traditional graduate school have optional career counseling, job fairs, and students are free to apply to jobs wherever they would like.	Sposato serves as a broker to support placement in our wide network of partner schools. 100% of students are placed as first-year teachers.

Figure 4. "How we're different."

As can be seen from Figure 4, the assumption that the field of urban teacher preparation lacked effective programs willing to teach candidates how to be effective motivated Sposato faculty to ensure their program would not be a waste of time for candidates. For example, one administrator reflected on her own teacher preparation experience as a Teach for America corps member and graduate:

I left Arizona pretty disenchanted with Teach for America as a teacher prep program. [Through Teach for America], I did an Arizona State master's in Education, left kind of being like, 'Well, that was a big waste of time. I have a

degree, but that didn't do much for me.' I learned a whole lot more from my experience in the classroom than from anything else. (Interview #3, administrator)

This administrator indicated that it was only when she began to work as a teacher in a school with other effective teachers that she felt she learned how to be effective.

However, like most other Sposato insiders, this teacher believed her own experience did not have to be the case for others and that the skills and habits of effective teachers could and should be taught during preservice preparation.

The third core belief – that it is possible to teach candidates how to be effective for their first year – is not unique to the Sposato theory of practice or model of teacher preparation. As will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Five, the general shift in teacher education toward more practice-based models of teacher preparation was motivated by a desire to identify practices that are essential for effective teachers and teach them to preservice teachers before they become teachers of record (Forzani, 2014). Unlike some other practice-based teacher education programs however, when seen alongside the other two core beliefs mentioned above related to definitions of the achievement gap and teacher effectiveness, this third core belief suggests that Sposato leaders believed effective first-year teachers were those who could enact a fairly narrow, discrete set of strategies in order to close achievement gaps. This belief in the possibility of teaching candidates to be effective gap closing teachers in their first year also led Sposato leaders and candidates to assume that the knowledge of how to be effective could be easily learned within a single preservice year, as detailed in the description of the epistemological stance taken by Sposato insiders in Chapter Five. The result was that

Sposato faculty and staff limited the teacher preparation curriculum in an effort to ensure that this content was delivered throughout candidates' experience.

**Interests: Sposato insiders' motivation to make the model work.** As I have argued above, the three core beliefs undergirding the work of teacher preparation at Sposato were made explicit by Sposato insiders: the achievement gap exists and must be closed; teacher effectiveness can be determined by identifying practices that enhance student learning; and teacher preparation should be about teaching candidates to be effective so that they can close achievement gaps. Given these beliefs, Sposato insiders were motivated to act in certain ways. Bourdieu (1977) referred to motivations as interests and argued that an individual's interests tended to be consistent with where that individual positioned him or herself with respect to the core dispositions of the community. Given the widespread acceptance of the three beliefs within the Sposato theory of practice, there was a high level of agreement about the shared work that Sposato insiders should conduct.

In my analysis of the Sposato theory of practice, I uncovered four primary motivations: (1) all program experiences should be backwards-mapped from a specified definition of what an effective new teacher looks like; (2) predictable and replicable methods used by effective teachers should be named, studied, and measured so that they can be taught to teacher candidates; (3) the induction of teacher candidates should focus on practices rather than beliefs; and (4) the way candidates are taught in the program should be consistent with the way effective teachers teach their students. These four motivating interests reinforced the three beliefs discussed above and also set limits on the teacher preparation practices deemed acceptable.

The first motivating interest shared by Sposato leaders was the desire to create program experiences backwards-mapped from the Sposato definition of effective rookie teaching. Sposato faculty were clear that their program must prepare teachers to be ready to effectively teach by the end of the residency year. The relatively short 12-month time frame of the residency year provided faculty members with the impetus to design a teacher preparation curriculum, which would allow candidates to work incrementally toward that shared definition of first-year effectiveness. As one administrator stated,

In our case, if you look at the Sposato calendar for the fall, or really for any part of the year, the logic that drives it is not “Let’s have these courses at sort of regular intervals” but “Let’s have them in a way where they are sort of most appropriately mapped backwards from what people are doing in their practicum.

(Interview #22, administrator)

Assumptions about what candidates needed to learn at any given point during the residency year in order to become effective informed the curriculum. The idea behind this motivation was that no candidate would enter the MET year unprepared to be effective, as defined by Sposato administrators.

Because of this motivation to backwards-map candidate experiences, Sposato faculty explicitly highlighted for candidates the similarities between the rigors of being a full-time graduate student and teacher resident and the rigors of being a first-year teacher. As stated in the Professionalism Handbook distributed to candidates early in their residency year,

We are training you (aka teaching you) to do a job that has a lot in common with the job you’re already doing. The job you are doing this year serves as good

practice for the job you'll do next year. Good practice. Not perfect practice. Our job is to treat your current job as a pretty good proxy for next year, tell you where/how next year will be different, give you feedback on your current job (as best proxy for next year), and help you make changes now that will serve you well next year. (Professionalism Handbook, p. 1)

Based on this perspective, which was common among Sposato faculty and staff, candidates were informed at the outset of the program about how hard it is to be a first-year teacher and what it takes to be effective during the first year of teaching. Therefore, faculty and staff had explicitly called attention to stressful work environments experienced by candidates during their preservice/residency year so that candidates could begin to develop the emotional maturity they would need during the MET year.

The second motivating interest underlying the teacher preparation model at Sposato was the desire to name, study, and measure the replicable, discrete teaching skills that predicted teacher effectiveness. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Sposato was most known among nGSEs for its concept of “teacher moves” defined in the following way: “At Sposato, we think about teaching as a series of different kinds of moves. Moves are teacher actions – things the teacher SAYS or DOES” (Summer Coach Training Manual, p. 20). Sposato faculty and administrators divided teacher moves into three categories: (1) presence moves, such as what Sposato called “neutral authority” or “excited engagement,” which were behaviors that helped a teacher command authority and respect from students; (2) management moves, such as what Sposato called “narrate the positive,” “proximity,” “John, sit down,” and “stop and stare,” which were behaviors that helped a teacher create a positive classroom culture and discipline students who

violated or resisted classroom norms/rules; and (3) instructional moves, such as what Sposato called “stop and jot” and “turn and talk,” which were behaviors related to how to implement curriculum, transmit knowledge to students, and give students feedback. A list of these moves is included in Appendix C. Sposato leaders were motivated to define and name these categories of moves in order to establish a common language and to create for candidates a unified, shared experience that taught them how to be effective rookie teachers.

Sposato faculty and staff did not assume the list of moves they taught was complete or exhaustive. Rather they were also interested in ongoing consideration of whether or not these moves were in fact the “right” moves to teach candidates. As established above, Sposato leaders assumed that the knowledge and skills that make a teacher effective could be taught, and they worked diligently to be as precise about the moves they taught to candidates as possible. But their shared motivation to name, study, and measure the habits of effective teaching was also related to a desire to make sure their precise definition of teacher effectiveness was an accurate representation of effective teaching. Thus Sposato candidates were evaluated multiple times during the MET year in order to determine whether or not they were effective. But these evaluations also allowed faculty to examine whether or not the knowledge and skills they directly taught candidates actually led to the production of effective teachers.

Candidate performance during the MET year was the most immediate test case of whether or not the specific moves taught to Sposato candidates were in fact predictive of teacher effectiveness. During candidate orientation, an administrator directly addressed the Sposato candidates about this topic:

The control group [for the MET degree] is first-year teachers [in general] and then there's you: how do we compare this to the control group? Three things we collect – one is we talk to your principals; three random times throughout the year that an outside evaluator comes in and you'll know what rubric they're observing against, that happens three times; and then at the end of the year we give you student surveys. We then take all the data, put it into this crazy, fancy algorithm, and you want to exceed the control group. So we get scores for the other rookie teachers at your school to form the comparison group. (Observation #12, Orientation)

It was assumed that candidates had learned the behaviors that would help them be effective. But in order to verify this assumption, Sposato leaders used evaluative processes described in more depth in Chapter Five to determine whether or not candidates had in fact become relatively more effective than teachers who had not specifically been taught these methods and behaviors (i.e., first-year teachers in the schools where Sposato candidates worked in their MET year who had not attended Sposato). As this quotation indicates, the Sposato faculty were motivated to name, study, and measure moves in order to determine whether or not the confidence they had in candidates' effectiveness because of the behaviors they had been taught was misplaced.

This second motivating interest to name, study, and measure the skills of effective teaching meant Sposato leaders allowed for the possibility that their definition of effectiveness was not perfect. At Sposato, the core definition of effectiveness (a teacher who has a positive impact on student learning) never changed. However, if particular moves were found not to predict effective teaching, these moves were no longer taught in the Sposato curriculum. This also meant that all moves were continuously assessed to be

sure that they were related to student learning. If they were not, they were no longer taught in the program. As I show in Chapter Five, the “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness that was adopted at Sposato meant that over time some skills and habits of teacher learning were rejected.

The third motivating interest shared by Sposato insiders was an emphasis on candidates’ practice rather than their beliefs. The primary reason for this motivation was articulated in the “Core Values” document distributed to candidates:

Lots of teacher education programs and professional development offerings try to change your beliefs before your actions. For example, they show you all kinds of evidence and arguments that "all students can learn at high levels" with the assumption that once you're thoroughly convinced of that idea, you'll start to make your curriculum more rigorous, have higher standards for students with learning disabilities, expect that all students can participate in class, etc, etc. But it's been our experience that the opposite is usually true. It's hard to change someone's mind with words alone. We've found that usually a teacher needs first to change her actions to fit the belief, see the results that new pattern of behavior yields, and only then will the beliefs be truly internalized. (Core Values, p. 1)

The Sposato model of teacher preparation was extremely practice-heavy because Sposato faculty and staff shared the assumption that the only way to ensure that candidates were familiar with how to teach a certain way was to have them practice teaching that way.

The key teacher preparation practices at Sposato – a moves-based curriculum and the use of prescriptive methods to teach that curriculum – stemmed from this motivation

to emphasize candidates' practice over candidates' beliefs and to ensure that candidates received the "right" knowledge. For example, an administrator said,

I think that there's an opportunity with somebody that's brand new to the profession or before they get into the profession to build really healthy habits or skills. Or to put it another way, I think that bad habits take time to undo. I think the advantage we have in our program is to, working with people who have not spent a lot of time in the classroom, who are, who've got a certain sense of openness to whatever it is we're teaching them, where they don't ever acquire bad habits that need to be unlearned. (Interview #22, administrator)

The Sposato program was designed to serve an instrumental end: bringing people into the program who were willing to be inducted into a particular model of teacher effectiveness.

Ultimately, this third motivating interest meant that faculty chose to spend less time on candidates' beliefs because of the amount of time they felt they needed to spend emphasizing practice. The implication of this choice was that candidates at times did not see the bigger picture of what the rationale was for the implementation of certain moves or why the work they were doing at Sposato mattered. The fact that faculty focused on candidates' practices, following from the beliefs they shared about what it took to teach someone how to be effective, meant that themes such as social justice, which were important to faculty and staff, were often sublimated at Sposato (this theme is addressed in much more detail in Chapter Six).

The final motivating interest shared by Sposato leaders was to ensure that the way they taught candidates mirrored the way they wanted candidates to teach students. Because of the perspective described in detail in Chapter Five that "good teaching is good

teaching” no matter the context, Sposato faculty chose to be practitioners of their own pedagogy. For example, one administrator said straightforwardly, “So I think – I guess first and foremost, we just consider ourselves teachers. So all of the stuff that we are telling them to do, we try to do for them” (Interview #26, administrator). This idea meant that Sposato coursework for candidates followed the same patterns of instruction that Sposato faculty taught teacher candidates to use with their students. In particular there was a focus on what Sposato faculty called “Cycles of Practice and Feedback:” candidates were presented information (which they referred to as “set-up”); candidates were then given activities and time to process that information in some way (which they referred to as “practice”); and finally, candidates were expected to demonstrate or report back to faculty what they had learned in order to be given feedback about their learning from faculty (which they referred to as “feedback”). Faculty modeled this pedagogy in Sposato coursework to provide candidates with a positive example of what effective teaching looked like.

By the same token, just as Sposato faculty assessed teacher candidates’ moves to determine whether or not the candidates were effective, so too did Sposato team members hold their own teaching methods up to this kind of scrutiny, particularly when new information about teacher preparation methods became available. As one administrator put it, based on the internal assessments and measurements they conducted,

We have been changing, changing, changing and I think we are all looking forward to the year next year. We are like, we are definitely still like – we are not stagnant, but we are probably changing the least that we have ever done because we are at a place where the model is really working. We have got a good baseline

for a lot of the curriculum. So it's less about the fireballs and a lot more about the:  
how can we just make this better and better particularly for rookie teachers.

(Interview #3, administrator)

This motivation forced Sposato faculty and staff to evaluate their effectiveness in an ongoing way and felt it was their duty to do so if they expected teachers to continually focus on improving their teaching practice. For example, the Sposato "Core Values" document stated, "It's how we continue to get better at teacher education. There's a reason we ask you to rate us on every single thing we do each weekend (that includes rating the snacks we serve)" (Core Values, p. 8). How faculty taught at Sposato had to be as reflective of the needs of the adult learners in their program as the teaching expected of candidates was to student learning. However, this motivation resulted in Sposato faculty limiting the acceptable teaching methods that could be used to teach their adult learners, since the learning they cared most about was whether or not candidates learned how to be effective. Just as the acceptable set of moves was reduced to the teacher skills and behaviors that could be seen to have an explicit relationship to student learning, so too were the methods used to teach candidates at Sposato limited to those that most efficiently taught candidates how to be effective rookie teachers.

**Actions: Key teacher preparation practices at Sposato.** The final piece of the Sposato theory of practice is the set of actions related to teacher preparation used in the program. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that individuals within communities of practice engage in certain actions, or what I am calling practices, in order to fulfill their interests; however those actions are limited in scope by the dispositions and beliefs that governed those actions. I found that at Sposato there were five key teacher preparation practices

that were shaped by the beliefs and motivating interests of program leaders and faculty: (1) using prescriptive, transmission-based teaching methods; (2) implementing a moves-based curriculum; (3) emphasizing context- and classroom-specific experiences; (4) individualizing candidate practice and feedback; and (5) monitoring, assessing, and evaluating candidate progress.

The first practice was the use of prescriptive, direct teaching methods to transmit to teacher candidates the knowledge of effective teaching, or as stated on their website, “[The] program is direct and prescriptive in its teaching of specific pedagogical ‘moves’ and habits” (SGSE, 2017b; see also Figure 4 above). This direct transmission-oriented model of instruction emerged from the assumption that most graduate schools of education fail to tell first-year or preservice teachers how to do the things they will be expected to do in the classroom, thus exacerbating first-year difficulties. For example, one administrator reflected on her own traditional school of education preparation program. She said,

I really felt like you need to give people like, “This is what you say and this is what you do in these type of situations. Let’s practice.” Or like, “Hey, remember when that kid said this thing? Here is what you could have said in response in order to diffuse the situation, instead of saying this thing. So what are other situations where you could say that same kind of thing?” (Interview #18, administrator)

This quotation, which reflected the typical perspective Sposato faculty and staff had about the value of prescriptiveness, also reflected the shared assumption that new teacher

candidates did not have the requisite knowledge or decision-making capability to address on-the-ground situations on their own because they had never been in the classroom.

From this perspective, it was assumed the use of very prescriptive methods would simplify the complex knowledge of how to be effective and instill that knowledge in candidates in the most efficient and effective ways possible. As stated in the agreement contract all candidates were asked to sign by March of their preservice year:

We believe teaching is unbelievably complex work, and as your career progresses, your unique style of teaching will emerge. But much more than in traditional graduate schools, we are aiming to provide you with concrete guidance that will allow you to hit the ground running in your first year of teaching. So, the tone and feedback in the program is usually direct rather than suggestive. That doesn't mean we are trying to exert authority for its own sake. It means that, just like a violin teacher, we'll say "Okay now do X" instead of "Hmmm....well, you could try X, or Y, or Z...." (Agreement, p. 1)

For administrators and faculty at Sposato, prescriptiveness was necessary to ensure teacher candidates developed what Sposato called “automaticity” in their use of basic teacher moves. The logic here was that Sposato faculty and staff knew what it took to be effective because they had experienced, studied, and named the habits and skills involved.

Accordingly, Sposato faculty and staff believed that they had a responsibility to pass this knowledge along because, as one administrator noted, “I think bigger ed schools are – I experienced it, right? They couldn’t say like, here is – they were hesitant to say, here is how to do this best. And as a result, there didn’t seem to be ‘here is how to do it’

at all” (Interview #26, administrator). If, as asserted by Sposato faculty, the knowledge of how to be effective was in fact known, then it would be irresponsible for teacher educators not to be as transparent as possible in the delivery of that knowledge to candidates.

The second practice at Sposato was the implementation of what I am referring to as a moves-based curriculum. As mentioned above, “moves” was Sposato shorthand for a teacher’s day-to-day professional behaviors. In Chapter Five, I detail the Sposato moves-based curriculum in terms of what moves candidates were taught, the way candidates were taught these moves prescriptively and in highly structured sequences, and the implications of this moves-based approach in light of recent innovations in practice-based teacher education. In short, the reason faculty implemented a moves-based curriculum was to allow candidates to practice moves and develop automaticity with moves before they became teachers of record, since the moves candidates were taught were assumed to generate effective learning environments for students.

The prescriptive pedagogy and moves-based curriculum described above comprised the “what” of the Sposato teacher preparation curriculum. Yet as central to *what* candidates were taught at Sposato was *where* candidates were taught. The third essential practice in the Sposato model of teacher preparation had to do with the location in which candidates were expected to develop proficiency in using moves: context-specific student teaching and practicum placements. From the first day of the residency year, Sposato teacher candidates worked as tutors or teaching assistants in classrooms at the Match charter schools or other Boston-area “No Excuses” schools. Sposato leaders thought that all practicum and coursework experiences should be rooted in candidates’

experiences with actual classrooms in order to avoid the situation of knowledge presented as purely theoretical. As one administrator said,

I mean, inducting new teachers, training new teachers, I think has to be somehow school-based or very integrated school-to-training program. You need to know what is going on in those classrooms, you need to be talking to the mentor teachers or the coaches or whoever it is. (Interview #18, administrator)

For Sposato faculty and staff, teaching the candidates particular moves only worked if this was tied to the immediate experience of classroom teaching. All aspects of the Sposato model reflected this school-based focus. One administrator commented on changes that had been made to the program so that it would be more aligned with this principle: “So now, the experience is much more authentic to the school: it’s much more school-based. So our management structure of our residents and our communication with school-based staff has reflected that” (Interview #26, administrator). This quotation shows the way in which the Sposato model of teacher preparation was intentionally aligned to candidates’ classroom experiences.

The fourth essential practice at Sposato was the individualized model of candidate practice and feedback. Since Sposato faculty concentrated on the development of candidates’ practice, faculty individually monitored the small, incremental changes in practice they assumed would lead to more fundamental changes in a teacher’s perspective on how best to teach. The place for this individualized guidance regarding practice was what Sposato called “at-bats,” which referred to moments of teaching that took place during the “Group of 6” pre-practicum simulations that happened in the fall semester of the residency year, the “Golden Hour” student teaching blocks that happened in the

spring semester of the residency year, and the summer full practicum experience. Faculty and coaches individualized feedback after observations of these various classroom or simulated teaching experiences so that each candidate's particular deficiencies were addressed as they occurred. One administrator described this method of providing feedback in the following way:

Ideally, you have a coach that sees as many, if not every at-bat or practice that you have. So that you can get feedback on it. I think there is – when we go back to personal experience, not being coached: there was a huge learning curve on reflection and trying to figure out like, why was that horrible? I don't even know where to start. Whereas if you have someone in the room that can kind of say like, okay, here are the things that – here are the student-facing problems, here are the issues, but this is what we are going to work on to try and address that. It takes a little bit of that burden off and lets them really focus on how to get better one step at a time instead of trying to do the whole thing at once. (Interview #3, administrators)

Sposato hired adjunct faculty and coaches and also trained cooperating classroom teachers as coaches in order to conduct individualized practice and feedback with teacher candidates. Coaches were empowered to provide individualized instruction to candidates because, as stated in the Sposato summer coaching handbook distributed to part-time coaches, “We also believe there is no more powerful lever to change a teacher's practice than a coach – someone who will meet a teacher where they are, and work relentlessly to take them where they need to go” (Summer Coaching Manual, p. 10). It was assumed Sposato coaches knew more intimately the needs individual candidates had so could

therefore better address the practical mistakes candidates made on a day-to-day basis. As an essential practice of teacher preparation at Sposato, individualization of candidate practice and feedback could not happen absent this coaching dynamic.

I should briefly point out here, related to this discussion of coaching at Sposato, that sports metaphors were heavily used to define key methods and practice at Sposato. For example, the use of the term “at-bats” to describe moments where candidates were able to practice the use of moves in simulated or actual student teaching experiences. The reason for the use of these sports metaphors at Sposato was because of leaders’ desire to emphasize that the moves necessary to learn to become an effective first-year teacher were discrete, learnable, and coachable behaviors not dissimilar from the skills someone might practice when first learning how to play a certain sport.

The last core practice at Sposato was the constant monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of both candidates and the program itself. As mentioned above, monitoring candidates’ progress toward becoming effective rookie teachers took on a moral seriousness at Sposato because of the perceived urgency about closing the achievement gap. Without frequent candidate assessment using program-created rubrics to evaluate whether or not candidates had effective teachers, Sposato would not have been able to say that it was successfully preparing teachers to be effective in classrooms.

Yet it should be noted that the practice of monitoring, assessing, and evaluating candidate and program progress also paralleled faculty and staff’s motivation to become practitioners of their own pedagogy. From a program effectiveness perspective, Sposato faculty and administrators wanted to be sure that the choices they made about the

program were justified. A top-level Sposato administrator reflected on this in his discussion of this constant data collection:

We collect a lot of data: so we survey our trainees literally every week, we send outside evaluators in to watch them both during the preservice year as well as their first inservice year, we talk to their principals a lot. So I think, I guess what I'd say is we try to collect a lot of data, and then align our practice with trends we're seeing in the data. (Interview #22, administrator)

According to this administrator, the collected data were necessary to help Sposato administrators assess the effectiveness of their teacher preparation model and to see what changes needed to be made. Consistent, frequent monitoring allowed Sposato to test itself and its own effectiveness. This practice at Sposato was predicated on the assumption that education programs should have continuous program improvement in mind. This perspective, popularly articulated in Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu's (2015) book *Learning to Improve*, positions the goal of improvement science as turning schools and programs into learning organizations that use multiple high-quality evidence sources to more directly ground programming in ongoing continuous improvement. At Sposato, which viewed itself as a learning organization, frequent internal and external assessments were deemed necessary for continuous improvement at accomplishing the work of producing "jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers."

Overall, these five essential practices of teacher preparation represented the curriculum of teacher preparation, or what in Chapter Five I demonstrate was Sposato leaders' articulation of a "revolutionary approach" to teacher preparation. What is important to note here, though, is the way in which the three core beliefs about the

achievement gap, teacher effectiveness, and the ability of a teacher preparation program to teach someone how to be effective constrained the practices the faculty deemed acceptable to accomplish their mission. Since Sposato leaders believed that there was an urgent need to prepare candidates to learn essential practical knowledge that would allow them to start closing achievement gaps, they also assumed that it would be inefficient to use any teacher preparation practices not related to this mission. These five practices, taken together, were designed to help Sposato leaders fulfill only their four motivating interests. Other teacher preparation practices could hypothetically have met these interests; for instance, a more inquiry-based approach to practice-based teacher preparation such as that being pursued by Grossman and her colleagues described in Chapter Two (e.g., Grossman, 2011). But the five practices listed in this section were the practices that Sposato administrators, faculty, and staff used because they had confidence that these practices would allow them to work toward the goals they set for themselves constrained by their three core beliefs.

**Habitus: The dynamic interrelationship of dispositions, interests, and actions.** As demonstrated in the previous three sections, the Sposato theory of practice was comprised of key beliefs, motivations, and practices that played out in the work of teacher preparation in a very tight relationship. For example, the prescriptive pedagogy and moves-based approach to teacher education could not have existed at Sposato without the faculty being interested in closely backwards-mapping all teacher preparation experiences to the needs of a first-year teacher or Sposato leaders being grounded in the belief that teacher effectiveness was defined by the discrete skills a teacher enacts to enhance student learning. According to Bourdieu (1977), teasing out such theories of

practice within bounded communities can produce an understanding of the overarching legitimating discourses of that community, or what Bourdieu called “habitus.”

As described in Chapter Two, Bourdieu suggested that “habitus” fundamentally represents the implicit social rules governing interactions among individuals within a given community. Therefore, habitus as a representation of the internal logic of a community’s dispositions, interests, and actions creates the means by which individuals within that community are enculturated. This process of enculturation, governed by the habitus, limits community insiders’ understanding of what individual beliefs and practices are possible or acceptable in the community. The clearest example of the way habitus was enacted at Sposato, leading to the enculturation of Sposato teacher candidates and others, was the “Group of 6” pre-practicum teaching simulation experience.

***“Group of 6” as an example of the Sposato habitus enacted.*** What Sposato administrators and faculty called “Group of 6,” as mentioned above, was the fall semester pre-practicum experience required of all teacher candidates. During this pre-practicum, residents engaged in simulated teaching experiences designed to introduce them to teacher moves and to give them opportunities to practice these moves. The Sposato website described the “Group of 6” experience in the following way:

A group of residents take turns teaching short lessons to one another, with a coach watching. As one resident teaches, the others act as students. They answer questions (sometimes correctly, sometimes not), try to pay attention (but sometimes fail), sometimes misbehave intentionally, and do other things that “real students” tend to do. The coach (and peers) then gives very specific feedback.

(SGSE, 2017f)

As demonstrated in this excerpt, “Group of 6” was designed to introduce teacher candidates to the Sposato definition of effective teaching and the style of feedback they would receive throughout the program through classroom simulations that allowed them opportunities to practice the moves being taught in the program. Similarly, as demonstrated here, “Group of 6” allowed Sposato leaders to reinforce the program’s priorities and central teacher preparation methods (for instance, prescriptive feedback, individualized coaching, and a moves-based curriculum) during candidates’ initial months of teacher preparation.

The following two paragraphs contain descriptions and paraphrases from my observation notes of the first “Group of 6” session of the 2016-2017 academic year, for which each teacher candidate prepared a lesson taught in six-minute chunks during four successive rounds throughout the day. The following vignette highlights how “Group of 6” functioned as a key moment of enculturation, and therefore an example of the Sposato habitus being enacted. Specifically, this vignette describes one particular middle school science teacher candidate’s experience across multiple “Group of 6” rounds during this single day and how her coaches assessed her simulated teaching.

*The focus of the first Group of 6 of this academic year was on presence moves and behaviors that would establish the Sposato definition of professionalism. Though each candidate had prepared a lesson related to their specific content area, coaches were only giving feedback to them based on the four presence moves and any other deficiencies with professionalism-related behaviors they noticed. Coaches were instructed by administrators to provide at least one ‘takeaway,’ or precise/discrete piece of feedback, in the first round and to re-*

*emphasize that takeaway in subsequent rounds if it had not been addressed adequately by candidates. Based on the nature of the feedback from coaches, candidates within a given round this day were told to either re-teach the chosen six minutes of their lesson in each of the four rounds or encouraged to teach different six-minute segments from the planned lesson.*

*In the first round, one secondary science candidate taught six-minutes of her planned lesson in the simulation and was given a takeaway by her coach at the end of this six minutes to ‘slow down by about 20-30% all of your direct instruction.’ This takeaway was connected to the professionalism/presence behavior noted on the Sposato feedback implementation rubric: ‘Project leadership by slowing way down. Pause at the end of sentences. Emphasize important words so it’s easier to follow what you’re saying.’ Still within the first round, the candidate was asked by the coach to practice giving directions within one portion of that six-minute lesson several more times because the coach ‘Want[s] to give you the chance to process that now so you can add that to your muscle memory.’*

*In the second round, the coach asked the candidate to articulate the takeaway from round one before she taught her same six-minute portion of the lesson. As she began the lesson and did not show marked enough improvement in slowing down, the coach interrupted the lesson, demonstrated the speed at which she wanted directions to be given, and then had the candidate practice that set of directions several more times before proceeding to re-teach the six minutes. At one point, the coach gave a specific direction of how to chunk the sentences*

*within the directions in the lesson because, 'That was a long sentence. Will they [your students] know where they are?' At the end of this candidate's second round, the coach told her, 'Those pauses were so good, I was so much more able to follow along. I will signal you next time [in round three],' indicating that the candidate should expect a signal from the coach if the move had not yet become automatic in the candidate's practice.*

*The candidate's need to work on this move and the coach's feedback continued in round three since the resident was by then saying one portion of directions quickly, pausing, and then speaking quickly through the rest of the directions. The coaches, however, wanted her to maintain a steady pace throughout in order for her to achieve proficiency with this behavior. Once the resident accomplished enough proficiency with this move in round three, again working through the same six-minute portions of her planned lesson she had taught in rounds one and two, her coach praised her and said, 'Remember, that the point of this big takeaway is for you to project leadership while doing that.' The behavior was given a name ('projecting leadership'), focused on as a discrete practice connected to what effective teachers do in classrooms, practiced with extensive individual feedback, and rated/evaluated throughout the course of the multiple rounds.*

*The Group of 6 experience described above was consistent across all ten Sposato candidates I observed during the multiple rounds of this Group of 6 day. Other moves focused on during this day included fixing resident posture (specifically, one candidate whose coaches thought slouched too much during his*

*simulations) and adjusting candidate tone of voice (specifically, one candidate who was told by her coach not to use ‘upspeak’ when giving directions).*

There are three important points to be made from this “Group of 6” vignette. First, all faculty and coaches instructed candidates the same way and all candidates improved in the implementation of the moves they were told to practice from the beginning to the end of the day. Second, faculty and staff’s interest in emphasizing candidates’ practice instead of their beliefs was so ingrained in the “Group of 6” experience that all conversations focused only on discrete teacher behavior and the skills candidates needed to practice during their simulations. There was no coaching or conversation at all about curricular or instructional issues during this day. Finally, everything within the “Group of 6” experience was intentionally designed to prepare candidates to become effective. As this excerpt shows, the “Group of 6” simulation was organized to break down candidates’ practice into the most discrete behaviors possible (e.g., pace, posture, tone) in order to provide them with necessary feedback. This feedback was then connected back to certain assumptions about why such discrete behaviors would allow candidates to become effective teachers (for instance, instructing candidates that “projecting leadership” was a necessary skill).

The “Group of 6” simulation was a very clear example of how the Sposato habitus was intentionally made explicit for teacher candidates. “Group of 6” served both to directly instruct candidates about what it took to be an effective teacher in the Sposato model of teacher preparation as well as to reinforce for faculty and staff the effectiveness of their model of teacher preparation.

## **The Potential Benefits and Costs of Achieving Internal Coherence**

Bourdieu's sociological frameworks, developed out of empirical research into French educational systems and cultural rituals among the Kabyle in Algeria, anticipated that even when the governing structures of a habitus could be identified within a community of practice, dissenting groups or classes who resisted that habitus could also be identified. These dissenting groups tended to be those within a community of practice who have relatively less social power than the dominant persons or classes: for example, as detailed in Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) educational research, students attending schools. When I began data collection at Sposato, I anticipated finding pockets of dissent and places where certain individuals or groups at Sposato resisted the dominant theory of practice, even though, following from Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) description of symbolic violence, I anticipated that resistance to the Sposato habitus would be framed in terms of the internal logic of the Sposato habitus itself. For instance, I anticipated that part-time staff might define teacher effectiveness or teacher quality differently from Sposato administrators since they were not full-time employees of either Sposato or the Match CMO but rather they worked for charters that might potentially emphasize different aspects of what makes for an effective first-year teacher.

However, over a period of nine months spent working with and learning from Sposato insiders, I found that there was remarkable consistency among faculty, staff, and candidates with regard to their dispositions, interests, and actions. I found no major instances of dissent or enduring concern that questioned the validity of the fundamental assumptions built into the theory of practice described above. This suggests that there was no significant transgression against the Sposato habitus. And I found that this

remarkable consistency was the result of the work Sposato leaders had done to create and reinforce internal program coherence, a term popular in the teacher preparation literature to describe what a program must do to align program beliefs and practices (see for example Sleeter, 2008).

According to Tatto (1996), internal program coherence for a teacher preparation program is defined “in terms of shared understandings among faculty and in the manner in which opportunities to learn have been arranged (organizationally, logistically) to achieve a common goal” (cited in Hammerness, 2006, p. 1242). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) predicted that such strong, clearly expressed agreement about the purpose of a community’s work would lead to the habitus being experienced by individuals in that community as a “power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force” (p. 4). Informed by these ideas, I show that internal coherence at Sposato reified the core beliefs, primary motivations, and essential practices of the Sposato habitus resulting in these beliefs, motivations, and practices being held in common across all groups of insiders without question or reservation. Though there was no malicious intent behind leaders’ successful attempts to achieve internal coherence at Sposato, I analyze in this section the consequences that resulted from achieving this internal coherence.

**Achieving internal coherence.** In order to create the “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” that Sposato leaders assumed were needed in America’s classrooms, I found that leaders worked explicitly to achieve internal coherence horizontally across programming and vertically from administrators down to teacher candidates. The reasons Sposato administrators desired internal coherence was that they thought achieving it

would allow them to demonstrate that their model worked and to continue to promote the moral urgency of their goal to help close the achievement gap. The horizontal dimension of internal coherence I describe below was assumed to allow leaders to do this by designing coherent program experiences and structures, from the beginning of candidates' residency year to the awarding of the MET degree at the end of candidates' MET year, so that candidates would actually become "jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers." Similarly, the vertical dimension of internal coherence I describe below was assumed to allow leaders to induct staff and candidates into a culture of teacher preparation that valued teacher effectiveness, which leaders subsequently assumed would help to reinforce the centrality of the Sposato core beliefs.

What I am calling the horizontal dimension of internal coherence included the structuring of qualifying residencies, practicum experiences, academic coursework, and candidate mentoring so that each experience would be marked by the consistent implementation of the five key practices described above. This dimension is similar to what Hammerness (2006) has called structural coherence, in terms of its focus on program structures and candidate experiences, but is distinct from this concept because this horizontal dimension of internal coherence in my articulation of the term relates much more to the intentionally spiraled, chronological experiences designed for candidates at Sposato. The words of one administrator who was responsible for training coaches and adjunct faculty emphasized what I mean by this horizontal dimension of internal coherence:

We [the full time team] have the most integrated knowledge. Our part time staff cannot – I mean, they all have full time jobs and so they can't be as integrated, so

I have to – I mean, part of my job is figuring out what is the most important stuff. Prioritizing what they need to know really well and what is okay if they are not as integrated on and then helping them over time to learn more or just to troubleshoot for their specific resident – like, “Oh, they are a little bit unusual, they need this other set of strategies that I didn’t focus on as much in training.” So that is a challenge for my job and I think – but I think because they are at Match or UP, they are generally aligned already, the strategies they would come up with on their own, are generally very similar, even if they call it something different. I think that that selection of that coach or the mentor teacher or the host teacher is really crucial. (Interview #18, administrator)

During their time at Sposato, candidates were exposed to a wide range of experiences with various arrangements of full-time and part-time faculty and staff, as well as several student teaching experiences where full-time staff were not present at all. Therefore, as shown in this quotation, achieving this horizontal dimension of internal coherence allowed Sposato leaders to ensure that nothing in candidates’ experience would conflict with the way they wanted the integrated knowledge of how to be an effective rookie teacher in a “No Excuses” school to be delivered to candidates.

Training coaches and adjunct faculty in the Sposato theory of practice further ensured the quality of these consistent experiences across a candidates’ progression through the program. The summer coach training manual included language similar to the quotation from the administrator above regarding the use of the same integrated knowledge about effective teaching:

There are still some undoubtedly some (sic) areas of difference between what you do in your classroom – your Instructional Vision – and what we teach to our residents – our Instructional Vision. And there are certainly many differences in vocabulary. In order to make the coaching experience as seamless and as valuable to our residents as possible, we are going to ask you to learn more about Sposato’s Instructional Vision, and – where it’s different than your own – to adopt it for your coaching. (Summer Coaching Training Manual, p. 15)

As the above quote suggests, Sposato leaders had invested time and effort in building a prescriptive model for preparing teacher candidates based on its explicit, intentional terminology and methods.

Yet sometimes full-time staff found that in a given partnership school effective teachers were doing something different from what was prescribed in the Sposato theory of practice. When that happened, one of two things would happen: Sposato leaders would engage in conversations with candidates to discuss why that method differed from their expectation, or leaders learned from that teacher a new technique that they would ultimately incorporate into the Sposato curriculum. One administrator described how Sposato leaders worked to incorporate such new knowledge about effective teaching into their pre-existing delivery model:

I’m sort of a liaison between those organizations and Sposato Graduate School, making sure that the practices that we have our students learn, are aligned to the practices of the organization and that we are not stepping on their toes and that whatever they are asking their student teachers to do, or their fellows to do, is

somewhat aligned to what we are asking them to do if not finding a middle ground. (Interview #6, administrator)

This administrator indicated that faculty and staff were willing to change the ways they discussed effective teaching in order to make sure that candidates' experiences reflected a shared image of teacher effectiveness. As an enactment of the Sposato habitus, this emphasis on ensuring all candidate experiences looked and sounded alike demonstrated the extent to which Sposato leaders intended all program experiences across candidates' time in the program to be consistently delivered.

This horizontal dimension of coherence, then, allowed Sposato leaders to ensure that all aspects of candidate preparation would be infused with the beliefs, motivations, and practices underlying the Sposato model. The part-time coaching staff and adjunct faculty hired at Sposato, many of whom shared the equity and justice commitments of Sposato administrators and full-time faculty as described in Chapter Six, were primarily brought into the Sposato habitus through these horizontally coherent mechanisms.

In addition to the horizontal dimension of internal coherence, internal coherence at Sposato was also characterized by a vertical dimension. By this vertical dimension of internal coherence, I mean Sposato leaders stressed the importance of a certain level of ideological alignment from top-level administrators down to preservice teacher candidates. This vertical dimension of internal coherence is similar to what Hammerness (2006) referred to as conceptual coherence, in that it focuses on the alignment of core concepts defining how teacher preparation should proceed in a given program, but it differs in that the vertical dimension of internal coherence I articulate is much narrower and more focused on the beliefs shared by all teacher preparation insiders at Sposato.

The Sposato Core Values document written by administrators and distributed to candidates, highlighted the ideological alignment central to achieving this vertical dimension of internal coherence: “You’re going to hear a lot about [our core values] over the next couple of years. That’s because we believe that they’re central to everything that you’re going to do in the program” (Core Values, p. 2). The beliefs held by administrators about what made for an effective first-year teacher and about how to teach somebody to be effective prior to their first year were not just for the faculty, staff, or coaches. Candidates, too, were expected to hold these beliefs, which was a further reason the Sposato model emphasized practice before beliefs. It was assumed candidates would come to hold these beliefs over time, even if they did not begin with them, if they engaged in practices aligned to the three core beliefs of the Sposato theory of practice. In other words, the Sposato beliefs would eventually follow from enacting the Sposato practices.

One administrator described the way this kind of ideological alignment even occurred at the point of program admission:

Part of what we’re scanning for [during the admissions process] is philosophical fit both with the work that happens at Match as well as the work that happens at Sposato. So this means alignment with these highly driven, very deliberately constructed communities. So philosophical alignment with that and philosophical alignment with the kind of prescriptive, direct coaching that we provide at Sposato. And some obvious sort of predisposition to grow in response to feedback. (Interview #22, administrator)

As seen here, all candidates were expected at the point of program entry to have a set of perspectives that would not only allow them to be successful in the program but would also predispose them toward the distinctness of the Sposato delivery model.

How Sposato achieved this vertical dimension of internal coherence was a matter of finding the right people and inducting or socializing those people into the Sposato habitus. The right kind of candidate at Sposato, according to Sposato curricular documents and descriptions of “ideal” candidates by Sposato faculty, was somebody who did not have preconceived notions about what teacher preparation should look like. In a recent report written about the Sposato model, the “ideal candidate” was described in the following way:

Because the program’s goals are so clear, MTR seeks candidates who are philosophically aligned with its mission: to prepare teachers to work in urban public schools that take a no excuses approach to schooling—an approach in which instruction tends to be teacher centered, where student behavior is closely monitored, and where all students take a college preparatory curriculum and are expected to put in longer days, longer school years, and huge amounts of effective effort. Interestingly, this means that most MTR residents are not graduates of nor have they had any exposure to traditional schools of education. While someone with an education school background does not automatically present a ‘red flag’ for admission, explains MTR Chief Operating Officer, Scott McCue, admissions staff might desire to ‘dig in’ to that person’s comfort level with no excuses-style schools, which are not necessarily well aligned with the more progressive brand of pedagogy often taught in schools of education. (Candal, 2011, p. 5)

Candidate selection began with people who were willing to engage in the Sposato model on the terms set within the Sposato habitus. Within the Sposato habitus, with its emphasis on teaching discrete teaching moves in a very prescriptive way, lack of prior experience with education was a virtue. Sposato leaders and faculty believed that if candidates were open to implementing their model, it would allow them to become effective more quickly.

In contrast, it was assumed that certain preconceived notions (like the need for a more student-centered rather than teacher-centered pedagogy, and other ideas emphasized in schools of education at universities) would hinder candidates' willingness to implement feedback to perfect the Sposato approach. As one resident at the end of her residency year said, "I kind of came in as a blank slate as far as my background in education. So I wasn't – I didn't come in with expectations on what curriculum planning would look like or behavior management" (Interview #12, candidate). The value of the "blank slate" came up again in an administrator interview, as the administrator reflected on her own past as a "No Excuses" school principal looking for the right faculty profile:

I loved the capacity that these 23-year olds had. The drive, how hungry they were to just learn how to do something a little bit better. The – it was so much fun and they really kind of – they wanted to be told what to do. I think there is a big difference between working with veteran teachers who have tons of ideas and they want to be kind of pushed how to make their ideas work better. But I just love kind of the blank slate of these guys. They just – and they were so output driven. (Interview #26, administrator)

Early career or preservice teachers who were “blank slates” and had the drive to work toward closing the achievement gap were, from the perspective of Sposato faculty, ready to be told what to do and how to do it.

After the right candidates were selected, candidates were brought further into the Sposato habitus through specific induction processes. By induction, I am not referring here to the processes of teacher socialization into the work habits of a school or classroom during their first years in the profession (Achinstein and Ogawa, 2011; Britzman, 1990; Lortie, 1970). Rather, I refer to the methods Sposato leaders thought were necessary to ensure this vertical dimension of internal coherence in their program.

As described above, candidates at Sposato were enrolled in a teacher preparation program with a curriculum and a set of practicum experiences that were intentionally backwards-mapped from the outcome of learning how to be an effective new teacher. It is worth highlighting, though, that several of the specific induction processes used to achieve this vertical dimension of internal coherence at Sposato happened outside of these courses and student teaching practica. For example, Sposato leaders wrote and distributed memos on how candidates should act when conducting observations during their residency year (School Visits Memo), how candidates should pursue employment while looking for a job for the MET year (Job Hunt Memo), and what candidates needed to do to prepare for job interviews (Interview and Sample Lesson Memo). There was also a professionalism handbook that laid out exactly how Sposato administrators expected candidates to carry themselves in a workplace environment (Professionalism Handbook). The following passage from the Interview and Sample Lesson Memo illustrates how

Sposato leaders structured this specific, prescriptive induction by offering guidance about how to answer questions candidates might receive at job interviews:

What is your buy-in to No Excuses teaching? For most schools, the answer should be: “totally.” (If your answer should be anything else, your advisor will prep you for it). Throw in an example or two about what No Excuses looks like to you and how you execute No Excuses teaching. How you pushed a kid. Or held a kid to a high standard. Why No Excuses teaching is so important for kids who are academically behind. (Interview and Sample Lesson Memo, p. 5)

As this excerpt shows, induction involved leaders telling candidates explicitly how they should conduct themselves in the early stages of their professional careers.

These examples demonstrate that Sposato faculty spent time not only finding the right candidates and teaching them how to be effective, but also molding them into the Sposato image of what an effective new teacher is. These induction processes were deemed necessary by Sposato faculty because leaders recognized that in order to truly achieve the vertical dimension of internal coherence among candidates, Sposato leaders had to make sure that all candidate experiences also reflected the core ideological assumptions and values promoted in the Sposato theory of practice.

The achievement of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of internal coherence was highly valued and very intentional. As Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, and Ronfeldt (2008) demonstrated in their pathways study of New York teacher preparation programs, constructing coherence can allow for more consistent teacher candidate learning in a preparation program, an impact that has the potential to redound to student learning. Yet as Hammerness (2006) points out, an emphasis on constructing and

achieving coherence raises the question of “whether the process of becoming a fully coherent program could lead to the exclusion of important opportunities for students to come to terms with alternative perspectives about teaching and learning for themselves” (p. 1262). This is a key idea. In their attempt to run an effective teacher preparation program and to implement methods consistent with the habitus of the Sposato community, Sposato faculty and leaders did not engage in inquiry about or questioning of the Sposato core beliefs or interests. Rather the unified nature of the Sposato theory of practice, which was achieved through remarkable internal coherence, led to Sposato insiders’ accepting the implicit social rules governing the practice of teacher preparation at Sposato.

**The consequences of achieving internal coherence.** It would seem that the Sposato habitus was completely dominant mainly because Sposato leaders were able to achieve internal coherence. This allowed near perfect programmatic alignment and resulted in all insiders being on board with the beliefs, motivations, and practices underlying the Sposato teacher preparation model. It is important to point out that Sposato did not intend the habitus of this community to be a mechanism of thought control. One administrator emphasized,

It’s not something where we say, we’re not the mind police, like, “You have to believe all of this 100%.” What we say to them is, you have to buy in enough to be willing to try this stuff because we’re assessing you on whether, at least in the Gateway, we’re assessing you on whether you’re executing it. So I think that what happens is if people philosophically, strongly disagree, they end up opting themselves out without a ton of prompting from us simply because we’ve set up

the assessment in a way that we're asking you to try the things we've set out. And so if you don't want to be assessed on those things because you don't want to do them, you're probably going to say something. (Interview #17, administrator/faculty)

As this quote suggests, Sposato leaders desired internal coherence but did not want this internal coherence to force anyone to participate in their model unwillingly or to control people's thought processes. However, the "healthy exit" mechanism at Sposato described below actually did function as a way to allow people who did not agree with the Sposato model to leave rather than keep them in and allow a structured space for dissent.

The "healthy exit" mechanism at Sposato was intended to allow candidates who did not agree with the Sposato model to leave without any cost or penalty. The procedure worked this way: by the time candidates began the MET year job-search process (in early March of the residency year), they were asked to sign an agreement contract that stated their commitment to the following principles:

#### Your Pledge

- I am 100% committed to doing the work required by the Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education.
- I will teach in a high poverty school for the 2 years immediately following the completion of the residency year.
- I understand that after I have secured and accepted a teaching job that I am responsible for the tuition outlined in this contract.

- I understand that I must protect the intellectual property of the Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education and must not share printed or digital resources without the explicit and written consent of CSGSE.
- I will embrace ongoing support provided by CSGSE in my first year of full-time teaching. I realize that this ongoing support and the year-two program helps CSGSE to fulfill their promises to employers that CGSE alumni will be unusually effective.
- I understand there are coursework and performance requirements in order to pass the residency year and earn the M.E.T degree. (Our Agreement, p. 6)

This pledge had within it the commitment to be “100% committed” to the kind of teacher preparation offered by Sposato. The agreement contract excerpted above went on to include a longer list of reasons a candidate might make the decision to make a “healthy exit:”

Our program is not the right fit for everyone. There are many other good approaches to teaching. And many other good approaches to training. At some point during the program, you might realize:

- You don’t want to be a teacher.
- You want to teach, but don’t want to teach in a No Excuses (or other high-functioning high-poverty) type school, and therefore our program isn’t right for you.
- You don’t really buy our methods, or you think we’re well-intentioned but not particularly useful to you.

- Even though you like CSGSE, you feel stretched on time and want to focus on other priorities. (Our Agreement, p. 3)

These excerpts from the agreement candidates signed indicated that Sposato leaders were aware the program was not perfect and did not fit every type of candidate. Residents who were not ready or willing to sign this commitment could instead choose to leave the program. This was not a hidden or exceptional part of the Sposato program. To the contrary, each year about one third of the entering teacher candidate cohort did not continue into the MET year and some portion of those who discontinued the program were “healthy exits.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet by using this “healthy exit” mechanism to help achieve internal program coherence, Sposato leaders did in a certain sense function as a kind of “thought police,” even though this ran counter to the intentions of Sposato administrators. Although it was perhaps an unintended consequence, the “healthy exit” mechanism had the function of eliminating questions or concerns that teacher candidates exiting from the program may have raised that would have allowed faculty and staff to interrogate the potential negative unintended consequences of their model in a more systematic way.

As shown above, the beliefs, motivations, and practices at the core of the Sposato model were self-reinforcing to the point that they did not allow consideration of different approaches. Sposato faculty and staff admitted that there were other forms of effectiveness outside of their model. For example, at orientation candidates were told, “[There will be] a point where we’re going to ask you to say, ‘Now I’m all in’ because I

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<sup>5</sup> According to the SGSE Data Dashboard, in 2013-2014, 31 of 75 candidates exited from the program (25 healthy exits, 6 failures); in 2014-2015, 31 of 78 candidates exited from the program (20 healthy exits, 11 failures); in 2015-2016, 36 of 75 candidates exited from the program (31 healthy exits, 5 failures).

know what Sposato is all about and I want to spend the next two years of my life doing this” (Observation #12, Sposato Orientation). By off-ramping those who did not agree with the Sposato approach, administrators could say that all the candidates who consented to their model were on the path to becoming effective new teachers. This perspective does not assume that teachers not prepared the Sposato way were ineffective. But this perspective does suggest that because of the tight interrelationship among beliefs, motivations, and practice within the Sposato community, Sposato insiders were led to subsequently believe that their model was the most effective, coherent model of teacher preparation that could be used to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.”

The “healthy exit” mechanism, then, demonstrates that internal coherence did not merely allow Sposato leaders to efficiently and effectively deliver their model to candidates who agreed with it. It also functioned as the mechanism by which this model was protected from external critique. The construction of internal coherence at Sposato was the way through which the habitus of the Sposato community was universalized to brook no dissent. And as demonstrated by B.A. Smith (2015) in his analysis of his own experience at Match, the effect of this lack of dissent was the reproduction of ideologies, explored in more depth in Chapter Six, which were limited in their ability to transform structural, systemic social inequalities.

Another consequence of the very tight internal coherence at Sposato was that certain candidate groups within the Sposato community felt unintentionally silenced. Given that Sposato prepared teachers to work in low-income communities of Color, one administrator stated clearly the desire of Sposato administrators to bring candidates of

Color into the Sposato program: “There needs to be a sincere, active effort [at Sposato] to recruit students of Color” (Interview #6, administrator). But despite this desire, there was near universal agreement among the administrators I interviewed that they were not doing enough work to adequately retain candidates of Color in the preparation program once they were admitted. For example, one administrator noted in her interview,

We see higher attrition rates with people of Color in our program that is really troubling and problematic for us and we – every year we play around with kind of like – how do we create supports? How do we close content gaps? The people – we always end up at this point in the year with a higher number of people of Color who are at risk of not meeting the standards for our program. (Interview #26, administrator)

Sposato claimed to want more teachers of Color to succeed in their program, and indeed they admitted a higher number of teachers of Color than the average university-based school of education (e.g., approximately 25% of teachers in the admitted cohort in 2016-2017 were teachers of Color compared to 15-20% nationwide). But because faculty noted that attrition rates for teachers of Color were higher than the rate for white teachers at Sposato, it is reasonable to raise questions about whether or not the way the program was run unintentionally silenced the voices of these teachers of Color.

One female candidate of Color who was finishing up her residency year described her experience the following way:

Okay, so the program is catered to people straight out of college. It’s definitely catered to people like that, unless people find it on their own. I did have somebody that was a person of Color that also had children, but he was so

flustered and so – it’s a lot – where he couldn’t handle it and he didn’t have the support. We were each other’s support system and just literally a week prior, I was like, ‘I’m quitting, I can’t do this. This is ridiculous.’ He was like, ‘No.’ He reeled me back in but I couldn’t reel him back in at the time. I definitely think it’s catered to people straight out of college – anybody out of college – but there is a portion of me that makes me feel like it’s the same thing of – you have White privileged people that – I’m not saying they are necessarily seeking, but they are the majority and it leaves me feeling isolated. (Interview #4, candidate)

This teacher candidate, who had signed the agreement and was preparing for her MET year, noted that the way Sposato worked as a program catered to young, academically successful, middle- to upper-middle class, White teacher candidates who were the majority of the annual cohort pool. The model of preparation itself, in her perspective, was based on meeting their needs and what it took to teach people who fit that profile how to become effective teachers in schools primarily serving students of Color in low-income schools. She described how her survival in the program contrasted with the similar experience of a male teacher of Color from similar circumstances who did not continue beyond the job-search phase of the residency year.

This perspective was further corroborated by a candidate completing her MET year who did not identify as a person of Color, but who shared the experience of people in her cohort who did:

*Candidate:* My sense would be it was an inadvertent silence, because I remember my friend did bring it up. And they ended up having a few more professional development sessions that incorporated people of Color’s experience and my

friend actually – they gave her the opportunity to lead a couple of them, which is really cool. Yeah, that was actually given through Match. But.

*Interviewer:* So the program was willing to adapt itself given the feedback that the residents were giving you?

*Candidate:* Yeah, to some degree. That actually might have been mostly the school gave her the opportunity to lead it. Because the program itself, the higher-ups seemed like a little resistant at first to add in anything else, but maybe it was because it didn't have that much time to do that. But they asked for our feedback and they wanted to hear what we thought about it. (Interview #16, candidate)

According to this candidate, some candidates of Color struggled more to achieve proficiency in the Sposato training model than other candidates. Although this failure was recognized by Sposato administrators, not much was done to redress this issue.

The faculty and staff at Sposato did not intend to make the experience in the program more difficult for teachers of Color, however their emphasis on keeping the program rigorous and internally coherent meant that there was not much space within the program to adapt to the differential needs of candidates who were unlike the “ideal candidate” in background, material resources, and education. As the candidate of Color mentioned above noted:

You have to understand, it's like: yes, this is a rigorous program, so people may need a break. If they don't get a break, then you are going to lose people. They are going to reach their breaking point, they are going to have anxiety attacks, they are going to have all of these things – I have been there. There are times I go in

the bathroom and I'm crying. Like, 'That's it, I'm giving up. Nope, not doing this anymore.' Then I take a look at my son and I'm like: [sigh] being a parent is a selfless job, let me get back in there. So, yeah, I would reconsider that, especially mental health. Because this is a lot. It's a lot. You have to take that into consideration. Like, genuinely caring – I'm not saying that they don't care, but showing that you kind of care. (Interview #4, candidate)

This resident, who was an ardent supporter of the Sposato model and chose to continue to work toward the MET degree, articulated the frustration that anybody who struggled with the unchanging, coherent Sposato model or did not feel the model could be sufficiently adapted to their needs, was forced to cope with the Sposato model as is or forced to leave the program.

Through their efforts to ensure that candidates would have an internally coherent experience in their brief time at Sposato, and focused on their belief that there was an urgent need to close the achievement gap by producing effective teachers, Sposato faculty and staff created a model that fundamentally could not meet the socioemotional or learning needs of all candidates, despite their best efforts. This unintentional silencing of candidates' needs and perspectives was very much present in the way candidates made sense of the Sposato model of teacher preparation. Yet this silencing also did not lead candidates who stayed within the Sposato community to resist the methods of teacher preparation used at Sposato. They framed this silencing as an unfortunate absence and something over which the Sposato faculty had no immediate control. And in fairness to the faculty and staff at Sposato, the problem of how to better address the needs of candidates of Color is endemic in the field of urban teacher education. Programs, even

when they succeed in recruiting higher numbers of candidates of Color, do not systematically draw on their experiences or help them succeed, leading to higher attrition rates for these candidates (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al., 2016).

That being said, the ultimate consequence of the unintentional silencing that was part of achieving internal coherence at Sposato was that faculty were not pressured to fundamentally question the negative impacts of their preparation model for candidates of Color. The habitus at Sposato revolved around the belief that the methods used by faculty to teach candidates were the right methods for urban teaching. Operating within this social field, faculty could only conceive of finding ways to make these methods work better for everyone rather than considering whether and how they could/should change the methods that candidates indicated were causing the problems in the first place.

## **Conclusion**

As stated above, the literature on effective teacher preparation programs positions internal coherence as a key facet of effective program design (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Hammerness, 2006, 2013; Sleeter, 2008; Tatto, 1996). Leaders of the Sposato program valued internal coherence for this reason. But in a bounded community of practice like Sposato, marked by a tightly unified theory of practice and a constantly reproduced dominant habitus, internal coherence was actually the means of that reproduction. That is, internal coherence allowed Sposato to effectively and efficiently implement their model of teacher preparation, which as shown in Chapter Five allowed them to produce what they considered “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” per their definition and as demonstrated in Chapter Six allowed insiders to work toward their equity and social justice goals. But this internal coherence had the consequence of

reifying a narrow definition of what it takes to be an effective teacher and excluding from this definition candidates who disagreed with the Sposato model. The Sposato habitus was fully realized because this was both the intent and function of Sposato leaders' desire to achieve internally coherent program design. The consequence of this, as explored in more depth in the next two chapters, was that the Sposato model of teacher preparation was only really well suited for those faculty and candidates who were aligned with the dispositions, interests, and actions governing the Sposato habitus in the first place.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **The Epistemology of Teacher Effectiveness and the Sposato “Revolutionary Approach” to Teacher Preparation Curriculum**

As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, administrators, faculty, and staff at the Sposato Graduate School of Education worked from a remarkably coherent theory of practice in order to create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” The internal coherence of the Sposato model also allowed Sposato leaders to achieve two broad goals that were just as important. This chapter and the next deal specifically with these two goals: (1) to demonstrate that there was a new and better way of conducting the preservice preparation of teachers that consistently produced effective new teachers; and (2) to prepare effective teachers for success in “No Excuses” schools.

In this chapter, I focus on whether and to what extent the Sposato approach was what administrators referred to as a “revolutionary proof point” in the preparation of preservice teachers. Along these lines, I argue that Sposato leaders were largely successful in demonstrating that it was indeed possible to develop a new, more efficient, and more effective way of preparing teacher candidates to be unusually effective first-year teachers, as defined by the Sposato program. I also show that this “revolutionary approach” was most clearly represented by the practice-based teacher preparation curriculum implemented in the program. It is widely agreed among teacher preparation researchers that effective teacher preparation curricula explicitly reinforce practices that help candidates in a program reach certain specified learning goals (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Since the teacher candidate learning goal that was most valued at Sposato was learning how to enhance

student achievement and close the achievement gap, I show in this chapter both why Sposato leaders thought a more effective teacher preparation curriculum than the “traditional” approach was necessary and how Sposato leaders designed and implemented this approach to ensure candidates did in fact learn how to be effective first-year teachers, as they defined this. I demonstrate that the Sposato approach primarily involved the direct instruction of candidates using a “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” instructional model as well as teaching them “presence,” “management,” and “instructional” moves, which were briefly introduced in Chapter Four. I also show that Sposato was able to support the claim that their approach successfully created “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” because of the particular evaluation system that was used to assess candidate and program effectiveness. The Sposato teacher candidate assessment system was consistent with the Sposato operating definition of effectiveness and with its premises about what first year teachers should be able to do.

This chapter also argues that the justification, articulation, and evaluation of this “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation curriculum rested upon what I call a “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness. I demonstrate that this epistemological stance was based on a technical, instrumental definition of teacher learning that focused singularly on the teacher practices that were assumed to lead to student achievement gains. In addition, this chapter shows that the “revolutionary approach” to curriculum at Sposato built on this epistemological stance promoted a narrow view of teaching and teacher learning. This was done intentionally in order to simplify the difficult work of teaching for beginners as they entered a demanding profession as well as to clarify for candidates the knowledge that would matter most to

their anticipated work in “No Excuses” schools. I show in this chapter that ultimately, the price for designing and enacting a curriculum with a singular emphasis on the technical demands of the first year of teaching was the absence of space in the Sposato curriculum for discussions of the complexity of teaching across the professional lifespan.

To build these arguments, I first describe how Sposato leaders justified the need for a “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation, which was explicit in promotional materials and public documents about Sposato prominently displayed on the program’s website. I then use program curricular materials (syllabi, course guides, handbooks, rubrics) as well as interview and observation data to articulate what the “revolutionary approach” to the teacher preparation curriculum at Sposato was on its own terms, connecting this approach to the Sposato theory of practice described in Chapter Four. I show that Sposato faculty worked from the perspective that “good teaching is good teaching” no matter the context in order to most efficiently get candidates to engage in the teacher practices Sposato leaders assumed all effective teachers used. I connect the Sposato approach to the curricular and instructional perspectives of the “No Excuses” urban educational reform environment (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, 2012; Lemov, 2010, 2014; Miller, 2015). I also contrast the Sposato approach to some other well-known practice-based teacher education approaches as described in Chapter Two to highlight that the Sposato approach to practice was technical as opposed to complicated or complex (Cochran-Smith, 2015) as some other practice-based approaches are.

Next, I show that the Sposato approach included Sposato leaders’ frequent use of internal and external evaluation tools. These tools were designed to help Sposato leaders and faculty determine whether or not teacher candidates were effective. In addition, the

processes of evaluation used at Sposato helped program insiders back up their claims that Sposato was an effective teacher preparation program.

Finally, I use the literature on teacher learning and the relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice (see for example, Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2009), to make sense of the “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness at Sposato. I show the ways in which this epistemology fundamentally represented a linear, process-product view of the relationship between teacher practice and student learning (Floden, 2001) and a “knowledge-in-practice” conception of teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). I then demonstrate the ways this epistemology led Sposato faculty to limit and narrow their curricular focus and the consequences of these limitations.

### **Why a “Revolutionary Approach” to Teacher Preparation?**

The reasons for the development of a “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation at Sposato stemmed from administrators' core beliefs that current “traditional” approaches to teacher preparation were inadequate and that a better way was in fact possible. As noted in Chapter Four, the Sposato model was not viewed by insiders simply as a more effective or rigorous form of teacher preparation. Rather, as one administrator noted, they wanted revolution, not evolution:

I wish change happened faster, and I wish there was a lot more kind of revolution than evolution and I think a lot of times the role – I think the evolutionary kind of part that I'm participating in, is just training this very small group of people to be as effective as possible so that they are each affecting 100 plus kids next year who will hopefully – their trajectory has changed. I think what feels as more

revolutionary and fuels my revolutionary spirit a little more, I think is the disruptive nature of our graduate school. (Interview #26, administrator)

For the administrators, staff, and candidates affiliated with Sposato, a “revolutionary” method of teacher preparation was the hallmark of the Sposato work. Sposato insiders viewed their program as a disruption of the status quo of teacher preparation made possible because Sposato had the freedom to enact an internally coherent model of teacher preparation outside the university-based setting. As articulated by another administrator, their program had implications for practice well beyond their own setting:

[Sposato] serv[es] as a proof point for the notion that teacher training programs can make a difference in the quality of the teacher, in the quality of a first-year teacher, and thereby make an impact on the lives of the children who are getting taught by that first-year teacher. (Interview #22, administrator).

Yet for Sposato insiders, it was not enough simply to state *that* Sposato was a “revolutionary proof point.” Leaders also justified why they believed disruption and innovation were necessary in teacher preparation in the first place.

Sposato insiders articulated three critiques of the current state of teacher preparation that justified their more innovative approach. They can be summarized as follows: (1) there are problems in the American educational system that teacher preparation has the power to solve but has not yet solved; (2) teacher preparation has the capacity to generate useful knowledge about both the practice of teaching and teacher preparation but has not yet done so; and (3) teacher candidates in traditional programs have not been given the practice-based experiences that enable them to be effective in the classroom. Sposato insiders articulated these critiques through the public image they

crafted for the Sposato approach primarily in media artifacts that were intentionally and publicly shared on their website. The following section draws on these representations of the Sposato public image in order to make sense of the way that Sposato was positioned as a solution to the three problem areas related to ineffective teacher preparation leaders had identified.

First, the Sposato public image was aligned to prevailing assumptions in the United States about the link between teacher quality and teacher preparation. As noted in Chapters One and Two, a widespread assumption exists among education reformers that poor quality teacher education programs are a central cause of low teacher quality (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press; Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016; Hess & McShane, 2014). This assumption is coupled with the idea that if a different method of teacher education could consistently generate higher teacher quality and if that method were implemented at scale, most failures in the U.S. education system would be eliminated (Gastic, 2014). For example, the Sposato website includes an article that argues that such revolutionary new graduate schools of education are needed: “This way, reformers hope, they can finally improve education on a large scale. Until now, the job of the teacher has been comparatively neglected, with all the focus on structural changes” (The Economist, 2015, p. 9). Another item on the Sposato website was an op-ed written by Jal Mehta from the Harvard Graduate School of Education that stated, “Our teachers are underperforming, regardless of how they were trained” (Mehta, 2013b, p. 2). Media artifacts such as these helped Sposato leaders make the case that teacher preparation in the United States has generally failed and that new programs are necessary to effect the scale of change called for by education reformers.

Sposato positioned itself as a solution to this first problem of endemic teacher education failure by arguing that unlike most teacher preparation programs, Sposato was designed to focus on teacher effectiveness, that is, teachers' direct impact on student learning. This central feature of the Sposato model was emphasized repeatedly. The current and former Sposato Deans, in an op-ed posted on the Sposato website, argued that accountability for student learning should be at the core of any definition of teacher effectiveness and that any innovation in teacher preparation must similarly begin with this focus on accountability for student learning (McCue & Gutlerner, 2016). The Sposato deans argued that policymakers should be open to innovations in teacher preparation as a way to help address the current state of low teacher education quality, but they did not mean that all comers should be allowed to offer teacher preparation. Rather they argued:

Not every person with an idea for how to train teachers should be permitted to set up a new teacher academy. But more programs that challenge existing conventions about how teachers should be educated and prepared for the classroom is a welcome and needed innovation — as long as they are required to meet high standards for accreditation and accountability. (McCue and Gutlerner, 2016, p. 2).

As this excerpt shows, the assumption was the kind of revolutionary programs that should be incentivized were those that were accountable for student learning and would produce new knowledge needed to make the connection between teacher quality and student learning more explicit. Sposato, as described in more detail below, portrayed itself as one such program, willing to implement and test new ideas about how teacher preparation

could be made to lead directly to student achievement through innovative curricular design.

Second, Sposato leaders also argued that their model of teacher preparation could provide better knowledge about effective teaching practice for working teachers. The Sposato “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation was designed to address a situation in which, as stated in the Mehta op-ed cited on the Sposato website, “Undergraduate education programs and graduate schools of education have long been faulted for being too disconnected from the realities of practice” (Mehta, 2013b, p. 5). Along these lines, the Match Education charter management organization (CMO) and Sposato co-founder, Michael Goldstein, wrote an article in *Education Next* that stated his frustration with schools of education that produced what he claimed was knowledge teachers did not find useful. In his mind, researchers in education schools should be in the business of generating useful knowledge, or in his words: “If we’re going to get researchers to dance with the teachers, it makes sense to focus on topics that teachers care about” (Goldstein, 2012, p. 3). The assumption among Sposato founders and leaders was that innovation in the methods and curriculum of teacher preparation was justifiable as long as that innovation provided useful information about teaching, which was craved by working teachers.

According to Goldstein and Sposato faculty, much of the knowledge that already existed about effective teaching was known because of the work the Match Education K-12 schools had already done to create and disseminate this knowledge. Along these lines, the Match Education CMO described itself as “an engine of innovation in education” (Match Education, 2014, p. 2). Sposato leaders assumed that this kind of innovation

engine was needed in teacher preparation and urban education reform because of the assumption that teachers did not have ready access to usable knowledge about moves or practices that “work.” These assumptions were also summarized in Goldstein’s article in *Education Next*:

Without a massive uptick in our knowledge of teacher moves, we’ll continue on the current reform path. That path is a limited replication of No Excuses schools that rely on a very unusual labor pool (young, often work 60+ hours per week, often from top universities); the creation of many more charters that, on average, aren’t different in performance from district schools; districts adopting “lite” versions of No Excuses models while pruning small numbers of very low performing teachers; and some amount of shift to online learning. Peering into that future, I don’t see how we’ll generate a breakthrough. (Goldstein, 2012, p. 3)

Schools like the Match K-12 schools, which as Goldstein said followed the “No Excuses” model, were organized in part around the desire to discover what makes for effective teaching in educational environments serving students of Color living in high-poverty neighborhoods (Miller, 2015).

This desire was consistent with the Sposato belief that knowledge of how to close achievement gaps does exist and can be taught. One of Goldstein’s innovations upon co-founding Sposato was to take the knowledge of effective teaching being generated among effective teachers who had a demonstrated record of enhancing student achievement at Match and other “No Excuses”-affiliated schools and find a way to use it in teacher preparation. Goldstein and others compiled this knowledge of effective teaching by observing effective teachers, breaking down what these teachers did in classrooms, and

articulating the common behaviors or traits. This is a process similar to the methods Doug Lemov (2010, 2014) used to compose his taxonomy of successful teaching practices and the methods used by the KIPP network's cofounders when first establishing what KIPP teachers would be expected to do (Mathews, 2009). Goldstein's key innovation, though, was to take this knowledge and to disseminate it to preservice teachers in the Match Education CMO training programs.

Finally, through careful crafting of its public image, Sposato founders and leaders established that their program, which was closely connected to the Boston "No Excuses" movement, was uniquely positioned to provide teacher candidates with practice-based spaces to learn how to be effective. Sposato administrators argued, along with many others inside and outside traditional teacher education (Ball, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; NCATE, 2010), that teacher candidates' clinical practice had to a great extent been ignored by teacher preparation programs. An article written by Thomas Kane in *Education Next* and cited on the Sposato website made the argument this way:

Even if many teacher preparation programs are not providing it effectively, we *know* that clinical training matters. How do we know this? Hundreds of studies using value-added methods have found that teachers improve in effectiveness during their first few years of teaching. Indeed, the magnitude of that growth has been strikingly consistent across a number of sites and research methodologies: the average teacher's effectiveness improves between .05 and .08 student-level standard deviations between their first and third years of teaching. (Kane, 2014, p. 2, emphases in the original)

Similarly, in another document on the Sposato website about the failures of teacher preparation to include enough clinical practice, Ben Velderman of *Education Action Group News* stated, “As a result of their limited hands-on training, most of these beginning teachers will stumble and fumble their way through their first years on the job” (Velderman, 2013, p. 2). It was unquestioned across the media artifacts highlighted on the Sposato website that teacher preparation in the United States had not focused on the right kind of practice-based approaches and that this functioned to the detriment of teacher candidate learning.

The Sposato program, in contrast to other programs, was designed to emphasize practice-based instruction as a course correction from non-practice based trends in the field of teacher preparation. An article about the origin of the Sposato approach to teacher preparation written by Jay Mathews of *The Washington Post* described Sposato co-founder Goldstein’s desire to have the Sposato program structured around “deliberate practice”, which meant a discrete, specific, and technical focus on teacher moves:

People trained in very complex skills, such ice skaters, chess players, violinists, quarterbacks or surgeons, often do something called deliberate practice. ‘A kid who practices 10 hours playing sloppy pick up basketball with his friends might develop less than a kid who has a focused two hours of practice with measurable, highly specific, small chunk feedback,’ Goldstein told me in a long email.

‘Similarly, a rookie teacher who simply student teaches or acts as an assistant teacher might simply be repeating the WRONG moves. Deliberate practice means (1) specific & technique-oriented, (2) high-repetition, and (3) paired with

immediate feedback which includes telling the novice what to do.’ (Mathews, 2010, p. 1)

Goldstein’s goal for Sposato was to create a place where the right practice-based knowledge could be delivered to teacher candidates in effective and replicable ways via high-quality clinical experiences.

By and large Sposato insiders justified the creation of a “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation because they viewed themselves as willing to innovate in a field where innovation was necessary. The program’s stated mission, was “to prepare unusually effective novice teachers for schools serving low-income populations, and to develop, validate and disseminate innovative approaches to teacher preparation” (SGSE, 2017a). This statement makes it clear that the justification for the program was not only to enhance the effectiveness of new teachers but also to disseminate knowledge in order to influence the larger field of teacher preparation. This was the rationale for why Sposato faculty and staff thought they should intentionally create and enact a practice-based curriculum, the cornerstone of their “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation.

### **The Practice-Based Curriculum: What Candidates Were Taught and How**

According to the literature on effective teacher preparation programs (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), one major aspect of effective programs is “a strong core curriculum that is highly connected to actual teaching practice” (Hammerness, 2013, p. 400). This curriculum, or what Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) referred to as the “content of teacher education,” must take account of

what is taught and how it is connected, including the extent to which candidates are helped to acquire a cognitive map of teaching that allows them to see relationships among the domains of teaching knowledge and connect useful theory to practices that support student learning. (p. 394)

As described in Chapter Four, teacher preparation at Sposato was designed to make sure candidates learned the “right” knowledge that would lead them to become “jaw-droppingly effective” per the Sposato definition of that term.

The domains of knowledge to be learned by Sposato candidates were only those considered to be directly related to student learning since the goal at Sposato was for there to be “No Unrealized Theory” (SPO 112 syllabus, p. 1) in their attempt to create “jaw droppingly effective rookie teachers.” All aspects of the curriculum were designed to have applicability to candidates’ practice. Therefore, the “revolutionary” practice-based curriculum at Sposato was intentionally narrowed in order for leaders to prioritize only the instrumental knowledge assumed necessary to help candidates immediately impact student learning. In this section, I analyze the two content areas that comprised this intentionally narrowed curriculum: (1) knowledge about how to design effective and efficient instructional environments using a “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach; and (2) the moves candidates needed to be effective beginning teachers. I also articulate the knowledge sources upon which this curriculum was based and the connections of this curriculum to the Sposato definition of effective teaching.

**“Cycles of practice and feedback:” What effective instruction looks like.** At Sposato, it was assumed that a teachers’ implementation of an efficient instructional method was necessary for a teacher to be effective. According to the course guide

provided to candidates for the instructional methods course they took during their first year,

There are three foundational ideas about instructional methods that underscore this entire course and all of your work [at Sposato]. They're non-negotiables that we will rarely refer to because they're so inherent to everything we do. Moreover, we believe that they're shared by EVERY successful first-year teacher, No Excuses or otherwise: 1. My job is to increase student learning in the most efficient way possible; 2. My job is no longer to say smart things. It is to get my students to say smart things; 3. My job is to provide my students opportunities to practice new thinking tasks and then give them feedback on how well they execute them. (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 6)

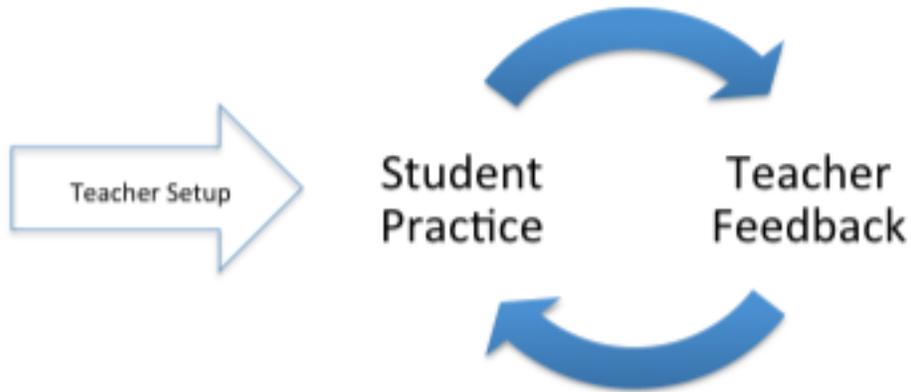
The most important part of this passage is the assumption that the kind of effective instruction called for at Sposato was universal, or as stated matter-of-factly by one faculty member: "good teaching is good teaching. I can go into any classroom, K-12, any subject, and I should be able to see similar things happening even if the content is totally different" (Interview #2, administrator/faculty). At Sposato, teacher candidates were not just expected to become effective; they were expected to learn the one best instructional method that "worked" in any context.

The foundational principle for this "one best" method was what Sposato leaders referred to as "Cycles of Practice and Feedback." An excerpt from the "Sposato's Vision for Good Teaching" memo distributed to candidates during their preservice year, articulated this principle in depth:

Good Teaching = Setting up cycles of practice and feedback. That's it. Good teachers plan tasks (often written work or discussions) that allow students to practice good thinking at the right level. They set up that practice efficiently using explanation, modeling, framing, or directions. Then, good teachers give as much feedback as humanly possible to as many students as humanly possible on that practice. (Sposato's Vision for Good Teaching, p. 1)

As articulated in this document, the "Cycles of Practice and Feedback" approach was presented as the single best way to offer instruction because this method was designed to help teachers introduce new content, allow students to learn that content, and provide teachers space to assess student learning in the most efficient way possible.

Figure 5 is a reproduction of how Sposato leaders illustrated this instructional method for candidates and includes a visual representation of the relationship among the three components of this cycle: (1) teacher setup, or the things a teacher has to do to introduce new content to students; (2) student practice, or the part of a lesson in which students are learning new content and completing guided practice toward a cognitive objective; and (3) teacher feedback, or the processes a teacher uses to inform students about their progress toward reaching specific cognitive objectives. As demonstrated in Figure 5, Sposato leaders assumed this method was cyclical rather than linear, meaning the feedback at the end of one cycle led to the set-up of the next cycle.



*Figure 5.* A visual representation of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach.

According to one Sposato administrator, faculty members together had come to the realization that their individual definitions of effective teaching were all related to this “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach:

So we started with thinking about a really simple, what was really common about five years ago, like an “I-we-you” model, and we, so our instructional methods was kind of based around the key components inside any of those individual pieces: so what are the principles of explanation and modeling in terms of clear instruction, aligned instruction, anticipating misconceptions, when you introduce those. Where we’ve kind of moved to is we actually discovered that that was too confining and too limiting to what we believed about best practice, which was centered and what we’re moving toward, is that everything in your class is about setting students up to practice and giving them feedback on that practice.

(Interview #25, administrator/faculty)

Because the Sposato curriculum was intended to prepare effective teachers within a 12-month period, leaders decided that candidates needed a clear, discrete understanding of what effective instruction was. Since these leaders shared the broad view that “Cycles of

Practice and Feedback” best represented what they all knew to be effective instruction based on their experiences in classrooms, they decided to make this the centerpiece of the Sposato approach to teacher education. “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” was considered a specific enough framework because it could be taught as a series of moves, as described in the next section, but also a broad enough framework that it could be applicable in all instructional content areas. This specific yet broad notion of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach illustrates the fact that Sposato insiders assumed that the principles of effective instruction were universal.

The “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach also concretely defined a teacher’s role as establishing rigorous and efficient learning environments for students. In terms of rigor, Sposato leaders equated rigor with the curricular frameworks embedded in the Common Core State Standards, or as one faculty member said during a session of the instructional methods course taken by candidates in their preservice year: “We are teaching in the Common Core era. [These standards] are different from what you had in school: they are harder. That is what our country needs” (Observation #15, SPO 120 – session 1).

Yet it is important to point out that Sposato candidates were not expected to be curriculum creators. Rather, it was explicitly assumed that the “No Excuses” schools hiring Sposato candidates already had rigorous, Common Core-aligned curricula upon which teachers could draw. As stated in a document given to secondary math teacher candidates consistent with other Sposato curricular materials, “When you start teaching in the fall, the content of what you’ll be teaching will be driven largely by your school and the math department. They define what math needs to be taught in any given year in any

given course” (SPO 124C Course Guide, p. 2). This meant that the Sposato instructional methods course was explicitly not intended to teach candidates *what* to teach. Rather it was intended to teach candidates *how* to teach using the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach, designed to prepare Sposato candidates to implement rigorous curricular structures in teacher-centered classrooms.

Therefore, the emphasis on rigor at Sposato was teaching candidates how to make sure students actually learned rigorous content being delivered to them since candidates were not necessarily expected to decide what content students should be learning. Sposato candidates were taught that “in a legit lesson...your kids need to be doing the cognitive heavy lifting—and they need to be doing it in as much of the lesson as possible” (SPO 112 Course Guide, p. 4). So Sposato candidates were also taught that in order to have rigorous lessons, they would need to emphasize the student practice and teacher feedback stages of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach described above. Doing so would allow them to provide their students ample opportunity to learn the cognitively challenging, Common Core-aligned content candidates would be expected to deliver to them.

Despite this apparent focus on students as thinkers, Sposato candidates were taught to make the instructional environment teacher-centered in order to ensure that rigorous content was effectively delivered. The effective delivery of rigorous content was assumed to be the only way to “catch students up” and close the achievement gap. According to the guide for the course on instructional methods taken by all candidates during their preservice year:

We think that the questions of what should be learned, and how, are so incredibly complicated that they need the strategic mind of an adult to organize the learning experiences for kids. Even when those experiences call on kids to ‘discover’ and ‘create,’ they need guidance and boundaries to make sure they learn the right things. (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 12)

This excerpt highlights the assumption that it was the responsibility of the teacher to make sure that student learning had in fact happened, consistent with the definition of teacher effectiveness described in Chapter Four. One of the primary reasons that the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” instructional approach was taught at Sposato was because Sposato leaders assumed that this method would give candidates adequate control over the instructional process in classrooms so that rigorous, Common Core-aligned content characteristic of “No Excuses”-style schools would be effectively delivered. The teacher-centered emphasis of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach was chosen willingly despite Sposato leaders admitting the existence of more student-centered, less controlling instructional approaches, because this instructional approach was known by Sposato leaders to allow teachers to create the right kind of rigorous lesson structures.

Sposato teachers were not only expected to deliver rigorous lessons; they were also expected to deliver these lessons efficiently so that a sufficient amount of rigorous content could be delivered over the course of an academic year. It was essential that teachers made classrooms efficient because, as stated in the course guide for the instructional methods course candidates took in their preservice year,

The time cost to the teacher of this lesson planning is big. Have you noticed how stretched for time teachers are? Their time is always zero-sum, so every hour of lesson planning comes at the expense of something else. So it's quite likely that when an hour of lesson planning replaces an hour of relationship-building, 'total learning' might go down. Furthermore, students may actually learn less with a more complex lesson setup. If you spend a ton of time building shapes out of marshmallows and toothpicks, students may remember more about best practices for working with marshmallows. (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 7)

For Sposato leaders, the "Cycles of Practice and Feedback" approach to instruction achieved this kind of efficiency since it reduced lesson planning time for teachers by creating streamlined and predictable lesson structures. Candidates were taught that the predictability of this instructional approach would afford them more time as teachers to focus on the student practice and teacher feedback sections of lessons because less time would have to be devoted to teacher setup if each lesson followed a similar pattern building on previous lessons' practice and feedback cycles. And just as candidates were taught that the student practice/teacher feedback aspects of this instructional approach would allow them to emphasize student learning of rigorous content, they were also taught that this "Cycles of Practice and Feedback" approach would be the most streamlined way to create time for student practice and teacher feedback. The exclusive teaching of this streamlined approach meant that Sposato candidates were not taught other kinds of more time-intensive instructional approaches that had less explicit cognitive learning outcomes, such as open-ended inquiries into large, enduring questions. But again, this style of instructional planning and execution was deemed desirable

because it would allow for the efficient delivery of rigorous content assumed necessary to help enhance students' academic experiences.

Candidates were taught the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach so that they would become effective curriculum implementers, deliverers of rigorous content to students, and efficient instructional designers who created space for students to learn the rigorous content being delivered to them. The ultimate purpose of teaching this one best instructional method was to create effective teachers ready to close achievement gaps for which there was, as discussed in Chapter Four, great urgency.

The urgent sense Sposato leaders had about the need to teach candidates to use effective and efficient instructional methods aligns nearly perfectly to the instructional vision of the “No Excuses”-style schools with which Sposato was affiliated. The “No Excuses” approach to instruction is marked by data-driven methods, or as stated in a textbook written by one of the managing directors of a large “No Excuses” CMO in the Northeast, the philosophy “that schools should constantly focus on one simple question: are our students learning? Using data-based methods, these schools break from the traditional emphasis on what teachers ostensibly taught in favor of a clear-eyed, fact-based focus on what students actually learned” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, p. xxv). As can be seen in this definition, the assumed relationship between teacher actions and student learning is as present in this “No Excuses” perspective as it is in the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness.

This data-driven approach states that instructional actions should be used to implement rigorous curricula, which are assumed to be neutral and derived from an apparently common sense understanding of what “academic rigor” means. Working from

these assumptions, “No Excuses” schools have tended to assert that the only teacher actions that matter are the ones that yield results, or as stated in Doug Lemov’s highly cited book *Teach Like a Champion* (2010), “What’s good is what works” (p. 5).

Therefore, these schools tend to promote an instructional vision that specifies techniques designed to order, manage, and control academic environments. The Sposato approach to “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” is one such instructional technique that establishes a teacher-centered classroom and allows a teacher to verify whether or not student learning has taken place.

As can be seen in the alignment of the Sposato approach to the “No Excuses” data-driven perspective, the Sposato teacher preparation curriculum was designed to provide candidates with a framework for effective instruction that focused entirely on whether instruction generated student learning gains. There is an implicit assumption here that the only purpose of instruction is to deliver content. But the consequence of this assumption, as argued in Oser and Baeriswyl’s (2001) and Cappella, Aber, and Kim’s (2016) reviews of instructional theories and their implications for classrooms, is that teachers who view instruction in this narrowed way tend to exclude other, noncognitive learning goals from their day-to-day instruction in favor of a more narrowed set of cognitive/academic learning goals.

As stated in Chapter Two, many “No Excuses” educators have come to value non-cognitive curricula because of the assumption that an emphasis on noncognitive curricula will create a more caring and socioemotionally safe learning environment for the minoritized students being served by these schools. But the narrowing effect of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach to instruction taught in the Sposato

curriculum suggests noncognitive work was assumed to be secondary in the academic environment of candidates' classrooms to this preferred efficient instructional approach. This also suggests that candidates at Sposato were taught that academic goals related to closing achievement gaps were assumed to take priority over noncognitive goals candidates may have set for their classrooms, further indicating the narrowing the purposes that leaders expected candidates' classrooms to serve.

The second implicit assumption of this instructional perspective is that the content to be delivered using the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” instructional approach had been agreed upon by all and/or was value-neutral. As I have noted, Sposato leaders universally supported the implementation of Common Core-aligned curricula. But the consequence of this assumption is that teachers were prevented from learning how to be curriculum negotiators or creators, skills necessary to prepare teachers for the inherently political climate of the curriculum work that happens in schools (Apple, 2004, 2006; Craig & Ross, 2008; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). The fact that the Sposato “revolutionary approach” was designed to teach candidates to be curriculum implementers without teaching curriculum negotiation skills suggests that the candidates graduating from Sposato were only prepared for environments like those in “No Excuses”-affiliated schools where a full-time staff person's role was dedicated to this kind of curriculum decision-making and negotiation.

The way these consequences affected the experience of candidates in the program are provided in more detail at the end of this chapter. Despite these consequences, though, Sposato faculty and administrators believed that teaching one specific instructional vision was justified because it enabled teacher candidates to run efficient

classrooms in their first year of teaching. How they expected teachers to enact this instructional vision relates to the second major part of the Sposato curriculum: the moves Sposato faculty taught candidates to do.

**Moves: How a teacher enacts effective instruction.** As described in Chapter Four, the Sposato model of teacher preparation was well-known for its emphasis on prescriptively teaching candidates “teacher moves,” or behaviors categorized in Sposato’s terms of presence, management, and instructional categories. According to Sposato faculty, all effective teachers used these moves even if not all effective teachers employed all of the same moves all of the time. But since the objective of the Sposato curriculum was to teach candidates how to be effective, Sposato leaders made sure that the curriculum included a prescribed set of moves for candidates to learn, or as one administrator noted:

I think we need to make room for people to be different kinds of teachers but I think there’s also some strategies that are pretty universal or can be made pretty universal, or that it’s useful for people to know them when they’re first starting out. So what I want to try to do is find the middle ground between totally abstract ideas such as culture and extremely concrete, specific things such as how to narrate the positive. (Interview #17, faculty)

Sposato leaders chose a fairly fixed set of moves because of their assumption that these moves best represented the things a rookie teacher would have to do in the classroom in order to be effective (a list of which is included in Appendix C).

Moves, across the presence, management, and instruction categories, were designed to provide candidates with a baseline level of skills that would allow them to

keep control over and adequately create classroom environments in which student learning could be enhanced. For instance, in terms of the Sposato category of moves related to “presence,” candidates were taught that the types of “presence” that enabled teachers to manage effectively were: Excited Engagement, Quiet Engagement, Neutral Authority, and Serious Authority (SPO 112 Course Guide, pp. 41). Candidates were also provided instructions about the physical and vocal cues that would allow them to shift between these four types of presence. Similarly, so that candidates could learn how to establish positive classroom management cultures, they were taught the moves involved in the “Behavior Management Cycle” move: “Step 1 – Give a clear direction/expectation; Scan the room; Step 2 – Positively Narrate students following direction/expectation; Scan the room; Step 3 – Correct students not following direction/expectation; Scan the room” (SPO 112 Course Guide, p. 44). Finally, the instructional moves taught to candidates all related back to the three phases of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” instructional approach described in the previous section so that candidates would be able to use moves to create the efficient and rigorous classroom environments Sposato leaders expected them to create. Across all categories, and as mentioned in Chapter Four, each move was intentionally named so that Sposato insiders could use shorthand when discussing how that move should be applied in classroom practice.

Though the list of moves did not change significantly from one year to the next, Sposato leaders were interested in making sure their definition of teacher effectiveness was as precise as possible, which meant that the moves they taught to candidates had to be predictive of teacher effectiveness. The question of which moves to include in the Sposato curriculum, then, was based in the experience Sposato leaders had observing and

studying the practice of teachers they deemed to be effective. The current and former deans of Sposato were quoted in an article in *The Economist* describing this approach to determining which moves should be taught:

‘We have thought a lot about how to teach 22-year-olds,’ says Scott McCue, who runs Sposato. He and his colleagues have crunched good teaching into a ‘taxonomy’ of things to do and say. ‘Of the 5,000 or so things that go into amazing teaching,’ says Orin Gutlerner, Sposato’s founding director, ‘We want to make sure you can do the most important 250.’ (The Economist, 2016, p. 5)

Just as Sposato co-founder Goldstein observed effective teachers in Match schools to generate the knowledge of effective teaching, the source of knowledge for the moves Sposato leaders taught to candidates was the teaching and administrative experience of program faculty and administrators in “No Excuses” schools. As described by another administrator in an interview,

I think it’s a combination of our experience in schools, as a group, our experience in observing at Match, our experience now with many, many new teachers, and what their most common struggles are and what we’ve seen create the most change the fastest. (Interview #17, administrator/faculty).

Sposato leaders assumed that the moves they saw and experienced being used in effective schools and classrooms should be the moves taught in the Sposato curriculum. Sposato administrators would not teach a move to candidates if that move was not commonly used by effective teachers in partner “No Excuses” schools or if that move was not aligned with the Sposato definition of effective teaching.

For Sposato faculty, explicitly teaching candidates these moves was necessary for candidates to create environments that would allow their students to learn more. As stated in the course guide for the classroom management course taken by Sposato candidates in their preservice year:

Some teacher trainers say that what you should do ‘depends on the exact situation,’ or ‘depends on the student’s personality,’ or ‘depends on your relationship with the student,’ or ‘depends on your personality.’ Everything depends. This is part of the ‘teaching is an art’ phenomenon. People who believe teaching is an art have a hard time breaking down what a teacher should actually do. They teach only principles, not specific moves that can become automatic. We believe, however, that there are 6 beliefs, 4 types of presence, and a collection of discrete proactive, reactive and rebuilding moves that work over many different situations and in many different contexts with many different kinds of kids. The reason we flesh it all out is because this stuff isn’t all intuitive. That is, your instincts on how to manage, control, and discipline are likely going to be just a little bit wrong. But ‘a little bit wrong’ means the difference between a 3 out of 10 [ineffective] class and a 9 out of 10 [effective] class. (SPO 112 Course Guide, p.

5)

The moves listed in Appendix C represented the best approximation the Sposato leadership provided of the discrete behaviors an effective new teacher could learn to ensure their classrooms were effective. Since Sposato leaders asserted that the moves they taught enabled teacher candidates to be effective, the curriculum was also designed

to allow teacher candidates to practice these moves frequently with ample feedback before they became teachers of record.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the goal of having a prescriptive and individualized moves-based approach to teaching practice in the Sposato curriculum was to ensure that candidates could perform moves automatically and instantaneously, or in Sposato language, with “automaticity.” Candidates who could employ moves with automaticity were deemed by Sposato leaders to have reached a baseline level of teacher effectiveness, such that they would be able to enter a classroom and not allow regression in student learning. Reaching this basic level of competency in the use of moves indicated to faculty that candidates were making progress toward ultimately becoming effective rookies. One administrator and faculty member spoke at length about why automaticity with the basic moves should be expected from teacher candidates and how that idea shaped curricular decisions at Sposato:

I think what we've realized over the last couple of years, we can really help build automaticity on the management and hopefully the culture building, and those are the pieces that, if you don't have, like you can have a not-so-great lesson plan but if you have those pieces, kids are still going to learn. You can sacrifice rigor and kids will still be able to take something out of the class. But if you can't manage and build a safe learning environment for kids, no matter how awesome your lessons are, it doesn't matter. If you don't have a safe working environment, kids aren't going to learn. So kind of thinking about priorities, and saying, yeah, number one – these are the things we want them to become automatic in.

(Interview #2, administrator/faculty)

Working toward automaticity was inherent in the Sposato curriculum because of the linear nature of the Sposato view of good teaching. Since an effective teacher had to be able to manage a classroom and establish positive instructional environments in order for any student learning to occur, Sposato leaders felt compelled to ensure that presence, management, and instruction moves were taught early and frequently enough in the program so that automaticity with moves across these three categories would be achieved by candidates by the time the inservice/MET year began.

The way moves were taught and reinforced in candidates' practicum experiences across the preservice years maintained the prescriptive, discrete, and individualized focus that was central to the Sposato theory of practice. The following vignette is based on an observation of a typical coaching session between a coach and candidate during that candidate's summer full practicum. In this vignette, a combination of management and instructional moves were taught to this candidate and reinforced in discrete, technical ways.

*The coach and resident met one hour after the observed lesson (the coach had observed 10-15 minutes of the resident's lesson). After a brief discussion of the instructional focus of the lesson, the coach moved into the "takeaway" for the day's coaching session: the resident's moves related to positive, nonverbal correction of behavior during student independent work time to allow for verbal instructional feedback. The specific moves the coach wanted the candidate to practice were using nonverbal cues/hand signals to correct student misbehavior (e.g., reactive management moves such as a stare or tap on the shoulder) while using verbal feedback moves for student academic work (e.g., offering a specific*

*positive or corrective comment about students' academic work during the teacher feedback section of the lesson).*

*The coach mentioned that she noticed a gap between the resident's expectations/vision for independent student practice time and how students acted during this time, necessitating a need for some kind of behavioral correction. But the coach also emphasized that this correction of student misbehavior should not come at the cost of academic feedback and that academic feedback to students could/should be more personalized and vocal than what the candidate had done during the lesson. She then offered the day's takeaway: Correct students' behavior on the carpet positively but nonverbally so all verbal feedback to students is instructional.*

*The coach demonstrated what this move should look like. The candidate sat on the carpet simulating a student. The coach spent three minutes modelling the move she expected of the candidate. While the candidate simulated student behaviors, the coach mimed different kinds of nonverbal cues that could be given to those different student behaviors/misbehaviors. The coach also highlighted in her demonstration what she wanted the candidates' verbal academic praise to look like and said to the candidate, 'I mean, posture is important but it's not the be-all and end-all of life.'*

*The resident then practiced the strategy the coach had just modeled for her working toward balancing verbal instructional feedback and nonverbal management moves. All in all, the resident practiced the moves five different times with the coach acting as a student, but behaving differently each time: time one –*

*the coach/student was not ready to do work; time two – the coach's/student's posture was not meeting classroom expectations but was ready to do work; time three – the coach's posture was not meeting expectations and her answers were wrong, necessitating instructional and behavioral correction; time four – the coach misbehaved and did not engage in any academic work; time five – the coach acted like a student who met all expectations. Each time, the resident attempted to only give verbal feedback about the coach's/student's instructional output; all behavioral corrections were given nonverbally. After each attempt, the coach gave feedback about the resident's success with the combination of management and instructional moves. (Observation #9, Summer Practicum Coaching Session)*

As can be seen in this vignette, even during this relatively late stage of the candidates' experience during the final Summer Full Practicum – a period after the point when this candidate had already received a job placement for the inservice year – moves were taught discretely and with technical precision. Feedback on the lesson was about what the candidate did and said to establish a certain “look and feel” in the classroom. Both coach and candidate connected this feedback back to the student learning objective that had been stated at the beginning of the lesson, but the emphasis of the post-lesson coaching session was on how to perfect the presence, management, and instructional moves used in that lesson. For Sposato insiders, this kind of technical precision in coaching candidates was necessary so that candidates could eventually demonstrate automaticity in the skills and behaviors used by effective teachers.

According to Sposato leaders, teaching this set of moves in this precise and prescribed way was the core of their practice-based approach to teacher preparation. For Sposato insiders, what made their take on practice-based teacher preparation “revolutionary” was this willingness to articulate a set of technical and discrete moves and to explicitly teach those to candidates. This stance on moves is not wholly unique to the Sposato curriculum. Similar to the alignment between the Sposato “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” and the “No Excuses” approach to data-driven instruction, the moves-based approach at Sposato can be seen as a conceptual counterpart to Doug Lemov’s (2010, 2014) taxonomy of teaching practices. In his books *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010) and *Teach Like a Champion 2.0* (Lemov, 2014), Lemov summarizes a list of techniques intended to help a teacher control and manage a classroom because “focusing on honing and improving specific techniques is the fastest route to success, sometimes even if that practice comes at the expense of philosophy or strategy” (Lemov, 2010, p. 4). Like Lemov’s taxonomy, the list of moves taught at Sposato was intended to help candidates better control, set-up, and run structured learning environments in classrooms. The similarity between the Lemov and Sposato approaches was primarily the shared assumption that teaching behavior was paramount and that it must be broken down into discrete elements in order to be learned by candidates.

To a great extent, this vision of effective teaching can be considered a technical view, which according to Cochran-Smith (2015) is defined by “specific management techniques, understood as explicit, highly uniform, predictable sequences of teacher behaviors” that “de-emphasize the intellectual and relational aspects of teaching.” Cochran-Smith contrasts this technical view of teaching with what she refers to as

complicated views of teaching, such as those represented by many contemporary practice-based teacher educators (e.g., Ball, 2000; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011; Lampert, 2010), who have used the rigorous study of practice to articulate clearer and more predictable relationships between teacher practice and student learning. Unlike the Sposato approach, however, working from a complicated view of teaching does not emphasize single, discrete techniques in isolation. Cochran-Smith also contrasts the technical approach to teaching with more complex views of teaching, which fundamentally question assumed linear relationships between teacher behaviors and student learning. More complex views of teaching have been called for by many educators, including Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) who suggest a generative tension between knowledge and practice. More complex views of teaching can also be seen in Kennedy's (2016) analysis of teacher preparation curricula which highlight the endemic problems of the profession and Schneider's (2016) framework for unpacking professional dilemmas in teacher preparation coursework.

It is important to note that at Sposato, a technical view of teaching was not considered problematic or limited. Rather the Sposato curriculum, designed to prepare candidates to be effective, represented a view of the knowledge Sposato leaders thought was needed for candidates to become effective in the first year of teaching. As described in more detail below, the Sposato faculty did *not* assume that the only knowledge a teacher would ever need was contained in the set of moves they taught their candidates. For instance, even though Sposato candidates were not taught how to do some things valued in other teacher preparation programs – such as how to inquire into one's own practice for the purpose of broadening student learning outcomes (Cochran-Smith &

Lytle, 2009) or how to create curricula rooted in values-oriented themes rather than received notions of what knowledge counts (Meier, 2004) – the exclusion of these alternative teaching methods and styles from the Sposato curriculum did not mean that these concepts were deemed unnecessary to the work of teaching by Sposato leaders.

However, Sposato leaders did believe candidates would not become “jaw-droppingly effective rookies” unless they had learned the initial set of moves taught in the Sposato curriculum. This meant that just as the instructional vision built into the Sposato curriculum was deliberately narrowed in order to achieve efficiency and rigor, so too was the moves-based approach intentionally technical so that teacher candidates could learn behaviors used by other effective teachers to become effective themselves.

One consequence of the intentional narrowing of the curriculum at Sposato – consistent across the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” and moves-based parts of this curriculum – was that candidates were prepared only to be technicians and only to use a certain set of moves. Though the potential to learn other moves was possible once candidates graduated, the prescribed nature of the Sposato curriculum meant that candidates at Sposato only were taught to do this one set of things, even though they learned how to do this one set of things really well as evidenced by the culture of evaluation at Sposato.

### **Evaluation at Sposato: How Sposato Leaders Verified Effectiveness**

As demonstrated in the previous sections, Sposato faculty and staff created a teacher preparation curriculum premised on the assumption that what it takes to be an effective teacher can be prescriptively taught since this skillset was knowable and teachable. Subsequently, the foundational knowledge sources about teacher moves

described above were worked into the Sposato curriculum (i.e., the skills used by effective teachers in “No Excuses”-style schools that partnered with Sposato). However, Sposato leaders did not assume that simply because they taught certain skills that candidates would necessarily learn or enact them in their classrooms. Therefore Sposato leaders frequently assessed and evaluated candidates’ progress in order to determine whether or not and to what extent candidates were becoming effective as well as whether or not and to what extent the Sposato approach to teacher preparation was as effective and “revolutionary” as they claimed it to be. The following section focuses on the content and the structures of the Sposato evaluation and assessment systems.

Although this section focuses on the Sposato approach to evaluation, it is important to note that this dissertation is not an evaluation of whether or not Sposato was an effective preparation program. Throughout this dissertation, I make the claim that Sposato effectively instantiated its own internal definition of program effectiveness and that the program had several of the commonly agreed-upon traits of effective teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hammerness, 2006, 2013). However this study makes no judgments about rightness or wrongness of the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness nor does it apply any frameworks or metrics from outside to make claims about effectiveness. Along similar lines, this study does not make claims about whether the evaluation tools used at Sposato were appropriate measures of teacher effectiveness or whether the claims Sposato leaders made about the effectiveness of their graduates or program were psychometrically valid or reliable. Rather, this section analyzes how Sposato insiders’ definitions of teacher effectiveness guided the construction and use of their evaluative tools and the ways evaluation and assessment

were marshalled to support leaders' claims that Sposato represented a "revolutionary proof point" in the field of teacher preparation. In the final section of this chapter, I raise several questions about the implications of the Sposato model, but I do not make judgments about it.

**Evaluating candidate effectiveness.** In order for Sposato faculty to verify that their approach really did produce "jaw-droppingly effective rookies," Sposato leaders employed a set of proprietary evaluative rubrics at multiple times during candidates' preservice and inservice year consistent with their definition of teacher effectiveness.

Some of these rubrics had to do with whether or not candidates were becoming the "right" kind of teacher based on the assumption that good teachers were not just effective classroom managers and instructional designers but also exhibited certain affective traits like "timeliness" and having a "growth mindset," ideas that were highly valued by Sposato and "No Excuses" schools. For example, a professionalism rubric used to rate how well Sposato candidates had developed certain skills assumed necessary for professional teachers included such domains as "Responsibility: Personal and professional organization and communication" and "Team-Oriented actions: Creating positive culture, roll-with-it-ness, collaboration, and resolving differences of opinions" (Professionalism Rubric, pp. 1-2). Similarly, Sposato coaches and faculty created a rubric to assess a candidate's ability to implement feedback, which broke down the extent to which feedback from coaches and faculty was implemented faithfully and consistently ranging from a "no implementation" rating to a "mastery of implementation" rating (Feedback Implementation Rubric, p.1). Since there were no explicit courses in "Professionalism" or "Feedback Implementation" in quite the same way there were

courses in classroom management and instructional methods, these rubrics, which were used often during candidates' residency/preservice year to track their progress, served as the primary means through which coaches and administrators evaluated candidates in affective domains like professionalism and quality of feedback implementation.

However, the two most important areas involved in evaluation of candidates' continued progress toward the completion of the MET degree were: (1) the extent to which candidates used specified teaching moves regularly, appropriately, and automatically in their teaching practice, or what Sposato leaders called "teacher-facing problems;" and (2) the extent to which candidates were effective at enhancing student learning opportunities and creating learning-focused classroom environments, or what Sposato leaders called "student-facing problems." The reason these two areas mattered most in terms of how candidates were evaluated was because of the internal logic of the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness as described in Chapter Four defining a direct relationship between teacher moves and student learning. Candidates' use of moves and progress toward addressing "teacher-facing problems" was evaluated by coaches and faculty during their preservice/residency year on a rubric Sposato insiders referred to by the nickname the "Kraken Jr." Candidates' ability to enhance student learning opportunities and address "student-facing problems" was evaluated by external evaluators during their inservice/MET year using a rubric insiders referred to by the nickname "The Kraken." In short, the "Kraken Jr." focused on moves while "The Kraken" concentrated on student learning. I should point out here that the term "Kraken," an allusion to a mythological sea monster, was introduced by Sposato leaders into program parlance to emphasize the significance and scope of these evaluative rubrics.

The “Kraken Jr.” rubric broke down several different teacher skills into domains based on the alignment of these skills to the three categories of moves: presence, management, and instruction. Each domain within these categories was posed as a question or questions about a teaching skill that could be identified by an evaluator using the rubric. For example: in the “presence” domain, the rubric listed the four presence moves and asked, “Does [the candidate’s] presence help him or her to communicate effectively, engage students, and project authority?” (The Kraken Jr. Rubric, p. 1). In the “proactive management” domain, the rubric listed the proactive management moves and asked, “Would students be clear on what to do [in the classroom]? Would students feel motivated and accountable for being on-task based on the teacher’s proactive management?” (The Kraken Jr. Rubric, p. 1). In the “student practice-instruction” domain, the rubric referenced the instructional practice moves and asked, “To what extent are ALL students getting to practice the right tasks in the right amounts in order to master the Target Task?” (The Kraken Jr. Rubric, p. 2). Though written as “yes or no” questions, the rubric allowed for candidates to be rated in one of four categories: below expectations, approaching expectations, meeting expectations, exceeds expectations. Candidates’ evaluations were based on the extent to which they demonstrated automaticity with the teacher moves needed to master the skills listed in each domain during observed student teaching experiences. This rubric was used as an evaluative tool for the various fieldwork experiences spread over the first year of the program—the “Group of 6” pre-practicum experience, the “Golden Hour” student teaching experience, and the “Summer Full Practicum” experience.

“The Kraken,” which as mentioned was an external evaluation rubric completed by evaluators who were not candidates’ coaches or faculty members, was used during candidates’ inservice year as a high-stakes assessment. This rubric was designed to have evaluators focus on the nature and quality of student learning environments instead of the skills a teacher could be seen doing in the classroom. “The Kraken” rubric was divided into two main categories that were assumed to capture key aspects of student learning environments and used as proxies for the authentic student learning Sposato leaders intended their candidates to be able to produce: (1) overall behavioral climate, which the rubric stated was determined by the “degree to which [the evaluator] observed high student effort and low student misbehavior” (External Evaluation Rubric, p. 1); and (2) overall mastery of target task, which the rubric stated was determined by analyzing the “degree to which the majority of students appeared to master the academic objective of the class” (External Evaluation Rubric, p. 1). These two categories were further subdivided into specific domains related to how students responded to the culture of the classroom (for example, “Time on task”) and to how students engaged with the lesson being observed (for example, “Student practice”).

As stated in the Summer Practicum handbook distributed to candidates where the domains of “The Kraken” rubric were explained in more detail, “Remember that the best teaching is not about saying smart things; it’s about getting kids to say smart things. This tool evaluates what you’re getting kids to do” (Intro to Summer Practicum, p. 1). Sposato candidates earned their MET degree only if they had a demonstrable impact on student learning. This demonstrable impact was assessed through a proprietary algorithm that combined: candidate scores from principals’ and external evaluators’ evaluations using

“The Kraken” rubric; data from student test scores where/when available; and student surveys. As briefly mentioned in Chapter Four, these multiple measures were used as the primary means by which Sposato faculty determined that candidates had impacted student learning in some way. All candidates in the inservice year were assessed on as many of these measures as possible; in addition, first-year teachers in schools where Sposato inservice candidates worked that had not received Sposato training were also evaluated using each of these multiple measures. Candidates’ scores from “The Kraken” evaluations and other student learning data were put into the proprietary algorithm; the resulting score was then compared to the non-Sposato teacher score. If candidates scored above the score of non-Sposato new teachers, that candidate was assumed to be more effective than the average non-Sposato new teacher.

Since the only common evaluation point for this algorithm was “The Kraken” rubric, though, this rubric served as the central evaluative tool used by Sposato leaders to determine whether or not their candidates had become “jaw-droppingly effective.” A high enough result on “The Kraken” suggested to leaders that candidates had used moves and efficient, rigorous instruction to create the kind of positive learning environments that allowed their students to learn at high levels.

As mentioned above, this dissertation is not an evaluation of whether or not these evaluative rubrics were valid or reliable predictors of effective teaching practice. Several questions could be raised about the internal logic of the use of these rubrics as a way to assert candidates’ effectiveness. For example: it is hypothetically possible that a teacher could achieve mastery of a skill in one of the domains listed on the “Kraken Jr.” rubric or one of the student learning domains listed on “The Kraken” rubric and not use any of the

teacher moves or instructional methods taught at Sposato. But whether or not the existence of possible alternative routes to effectiveness challenges the validity of “The Kraken,” the “Kraken Jr.,” or any of the other evaluative rubrics is outside the scope of this current study. The purpose of this dissertation is to represent insiders’ perspectives about the Sposato approach to teacher preparation. In keeping with that purpose, it is important to point out that these two evaluative tools were the primary source of evidence for Sposato leaders’ assertions that their candidates were effective. The logic went something like this: (1) candidates were taught to use certain moves; (2) during candidates’ preservice year, they were evaluated on “teacher-facing problems,” or the extent to which they had mastered the skills listed in the Kraken Jr. rubric; (3) based on the assumption that effective teachers used these moves automatically to enhance learning environments, candidates were then evaluated during their inservice year on the “student-facing problems” included on “The Kraken” rubric which indicated whether or not they had in fact become effective.

Because these evaluation processes were high-stakes measures of candidate progress, coaches and staff used the domains of “The Kraken” rubric to focus candidates’ learning on the things candidates had to do to create classrooms that would enhance student learning and thus score highly on “The Kraken” rubric. As one coach said, “So we do certainly cross-reference “The Kraken” as we are looking for big takeaways. I will pull one up and say, ‘Okay, this is aligned to this,’ and we are able to kind of track growth along those lines” (Interview #9, coach). Candidates, too, were encouraged to self-diagnose their practice in terms of how the student learning domains built into “The

Kraken” were being addressed in their student teaching. For example, one candidate at the end of the MET year said:

It becomes internalized that when I am in the classroom alone, I am scoring myself in my head or I’m figuring out if there were – so the way we get evaluated in the MET year, we get two scores, one for mastery of the target task and one for classroom climate – so I am always scoring myself in my head as, “What would it be right now? How can I make this better?” So I think what makes Sposato great is that they force you to be so reflective all the time and constantly thinking about your practice and the way that they make you do that is that you are constantly practicing. (Interview #1, candidate/MET year)

Because “The Kraken” represented a high-stakes measure of the Sposato definition of effective rookie teaching, faculty, coaches, and candidates alike lived and breathed the internal logic of the relationship between “teacher-facing problems” and “student-facing problems.” The way this high-stakes assessment became internalized by Sposato insiders provides further evidence that the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness was an integral part of how Sposato insiders made sense of the work they conducted at Sposato.

**Evaluating program effectiveness.** The evaluation culture at Sposato described in the previous section also served a secondary purpose, though: to help leaders demonstrate that to a great extent the curriculum they implemented “worked” because the program had a rich data-driven culture and used this data-driven culture to make data-based decisions.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the key teacher preparation practices at Sposato was the frequent monitoring and evaluation of program progress because

Sposato insiders held the concept of “data-driven teacher education” in high esteem. For example, a news report about Sposato included the following quotation from the current Sposato Dean: “Match Education officials rely heavily on multiple forms of data – from student growth (as measured through test scores), feedback from student surveys, and performance scores given by school principals. ‘We are obsessively data-driven,’ McCue says.” (Velderman, 2013, p. 4). All of the forms of data mentioned in this quotation were chosen because of their relationship to student learning and were used as inputs into the proprietary algorithm mentioned above. But they were also used to demonstrate that the Sposato model was more effective than other schools of education because of the interest in even collecting and using such student learning data. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Sposato leaders viewed their program as a “learning program” (Bryk et al., 2015) that used data to inform program development. Being a data-driven learning program allowed Sposato leaders to claim that their program was effective in part because they were willing to self-evaluate, learn from errors, and continually refine the precision of their mission and goals.

In addition, the evaluation and assessment culture at Sposato allowed leaders to claim the program was effective because they used the data culled from these evaluations to make high-stakes decisions. The high-stakes evaluations represented by “The Kraken” rubric leading up to the awarding of the MET degree described above ensured that some people each year did not graduate from Sposato. As stated in Chapter Four, many candidates who exited from the program did so using the “healthy exit” mechanism allowing them to leave during the preservice year with no penalty because of a lack of fit between their interests and the program’s goals. But Sposato data also revealed that every

year there were some candidates who had progressed into the inservice year as teachers of record in a “No Excuses” school who did not score highly enough on “The Kraken” evaluations to earn the MET degree. Only 35 of the remaining 42 candidates in the 2015-2016 MET year (from an entering cohort size of 78 in the 2014-2015 preservice year) were projected to have earned the MET degree by the end of the inservice year. These numbers are consistent with other cohort years.

This practice of using data from “The Kraken” rubric and the proprietary algorithm to make high-stakes determinations about teacher quality allowed program leaders to promote the idea that their teacher preparation program was more rigorous than an average program. The current and former Deans of Sposato stated this belief in an op-ed posted on the Sposato website: “Wouldn’t you be wary of any graduate school that boasted a 100 percent graduation rate? Indeed, only two-thirds of the students who enter Sposato GSE actually earn what we call a Master’s in Effective Teaching (MET)” (McCue & Gutlerner, 2016, p. 2). The idea that teacher preparation programs are low quality because they are not selective or rigorous enough has become almost a truism in contemporary critiques of preservice teacher preparation in the United States. As stated in Chapter One, the entire discourse around the need for higher teacher quality has been due in part to the assumption that university-based teacher preparation programs have been too lax in both the selectivity of admissions and the awarding of degrees (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press; Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016). In contrast, Sposato leaders assumed that having a selective, difficult-to-attain MET program based on demonstrable, quantitative data would provide the field with an important symbol that the candidates who successfully completed the MET degree were not simply “effective” per some

arbitrary standard. Rather they used this collection of student learning data points to demonstrate that leaders at Sposato were making data-driven conclusions about teacher effectiveness and teacher quality.

Ultimately, using an evaluation and assessment culture to help assert the program's effectiveness allowed Sposato leaders to state that not only had they articulated a systematic curriculum that could teach candidates to become "jaw-droppingly effective," they had also created a program that could verify it did what it set out to do. This success stood in contrast to what Sposato leaders saw as the high ideals but failed enactment of much of teacher preparation in the U.S., further fulfilling their justification for the need to articulate a "revolutionary approach" to the practice of teacher preparation.

### **The Epistemology of Teacher Effectiveness and the Price of Being "Revolutionary"**

Sposato insiders developed a practice-based curriculum in order to demonstrate that a new way of doing teacher preparation was possible. This "revolutionary approach" to teacher preparation curriculum was designed to get teacher candidates at Sposato to develop the essential skills and behaviors that would allow candidates to be effective by the first day of their inservice/MET year. As mentioned above, many leaders in the teacher education community assume that teacher education programs with intentionally designed, practice-based curricula aligned to specific learning goals allow "novices to develop expert thinking and skills of enactment" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 400). As can be seen in leaders' justification for the Sposato "revolutionary approach", the Sposato curriculum was designed as a solution to the endemic problem of teacher preparation in the U.S. failing to produce teachers ready to enact skills necessary to

enhance student learning. In this sense, the Sposato curriculum was well designed to address the “problem of enactment” (Kennedy, 1999) and taught its candidates the kind of core practices it had decided were necessary to enact its definition of teacher effectiveness. As mentioned above, this approach was not theoretically dissimilar from the three major practice-based programs of research seeking to articulate core practices and teaching those core practices to teacher candidates prior to their inservice experiences (e.g., Ball, 2000; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011; Lampert, 2010).

However, I found in my investigation of the Sposato “revolutionary approach” that Sposato leaders did not choose to implement a moves-based curriculum simply because they had seen effective teachers in “No Excuses” schools use those moves or because they wanted to establish coherently structured practice-based approaches to teacher education. Rather, I found that Sposato leaders built their curriculum primarily upon the foundation of what they believed good teaching was. As Sockett (2009) suggests in his review of moral and epistemic models reflected in teacher preparation programs, the moral and epistemological foundations of teacher education programs define what kinds of teachers are produced. In the preceding analysis, I have shown that the justification, implementation, and evaluation of the Sposato curriculum were all oriented toward creating “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” In this final section, I argue that all of these aspects of the Sposato curriculum rested on the same epistemological foundation, which I refer to here as a “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness. This epistemology was consistently and effectively implemented in the Sposato curriculum because of the tightly bounded habitus governing the work of teacher preparation at Sposato. As stated in Chapter Four, it was the intention of Sposato

leaders to create a set of internally coherent program experiences for candidates. One of the ways this internal coherence was achieved in the Sposato curriculum was through the consistent implementation of this “moves-based epistemology.”

The Sposato “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness was marked by two key features: (1) the strongly held assumption that there was a linear relationship between teacher moves and student learning, or what has traditionally been considered in the field of research on teaching as a “process-product” view of the effects of teaching (Floden, 2001; Shulman, 1986); and (2) the assumption that the knowledge that mattered most for teachers’ practice was the knowledge that was learned and developed in practice, or what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) referred to as a “knowledge-*in-practice*” conception of the relation between knowledge and practice in teacher learning. In this next section, I detail the ways in which these two features of the Sposato epistemology of teacher effectiveness were the foundation upon which the Sposato “revolutionary approach” was built. This in turn established a set of rules for how teacher preparation at Sposato would be designed so as to consistently create “jaw-droppingly effective rookies.” I then consider the price of building a curriculum on this epistemological foundation by discussing the reservation shared by Sposato insiders that candidates, though well prepared to be effective per the Sposato definition, were not necessarily well prepared to engage in broader or more in-depth instructional decision-making.

**The central features of the epistemology of teacher effectiveness.** The first feature of the “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness articulated in this chapter is the assumption that a predictable, linear relationship exists between what a

teacher does in the classroom and what a student learns. At Sposato, the faculty's objective was to demonstrate that their "revolutionary" approach to teacher preparation produced effective teachers, as emphasized in the course guide given to candidates: "The bottom line in teaching is outputs, not inputs. The ONLY measure of whether you did a good job is what your kids can do as a result of having been in your class" (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 6). The reason "Cycles of Practice and Feedback" and moves were built into the Sposato curriculum was because leaders had seen these methods and behaviors enhance student learning. One administrator put it this way in his interview,

There are what I would say is a pretty large number of fairly discrete, fairly technical skills [an effective teacher does]. And, sort of, somebody's, a teacher coming out of our program, a teacher going into work with the schools that we partner with, who hasn't developed those skills is not going to be able to serve the students they're working with nearly as effective as somebody who does. And in that respect is going to be ineffective at working to close the achievement gap.

(Interview #22, administrator)

Working from this epistemological assumption that discrete teacher practices led directly to demonstrable student learning gains, Sposato leaders reinforced the curricular choices they had made.

This epistemological assumption about the linear relationship between teacher practice and student learning is similar to the "process-product" (Shulman, 1986) and "effects of teaching" traditions of research on teaching (Floden, 2001). The focus of these research traditions was to determine which teaching behaviors were positively correlated with desired outcomes working from the assumption that consistent relationships could in

fact be determined in controlled research settings. The research that Match's founder, Michael Goldstein, called for in articles posted on the Sposato website (e.g., Goldstein, 2012; also, Goldstein cited in Mathews, 2010) fit perfectly into this "effects of teaching" tradition. However Floden (2001), in his review and analysis of these traditions of research on teaching, pointed out that researchers had not been able to establish causal connections because "The complexity of teaching and learning make absolute certainty and predictability unreasonable expectations" (p. 13). Floden's findings seem to be confirmed by the "No Excuses" research (e.g., Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011), which has determined that certain "No Excuses" schools raise student achievement but cannot say with statistical certainty that single discrete practice used at "No Excuses" schools are independent predictors of those academic achievement gains. As Floden found, it may not be possible to find such discrete, predictable, linear relationships because of the inherent complexity of the teaching profession.

Yet the Sposato curriculum was founded on the principle that such linear relationships do exist, which led Sposato insiders to narrow their curriculum to focus only on the specified teacher moves and instructional techniques that they believed were consistently associated with student learning outcomes. The reason narrowing their focus in this way was so central to the Sposato curriculum was because Sposato leaders were trying to prepare teachers who would close achievement gaps. The only way to do this was to identify and then transmit knowledge about "what works" to candidates in ways that they could readily learn prior to their first year.

Sposato leaders made it clear that their program did not teach all of the knowledge that candidates would need throughout their entire careers. Rather they assumed that their

program provided the foundational practical knowledge candidates needed to be effective immediately upon entry into teaching and that candidates would learn more professional knowledge later, as stated in the instructional methods course guide distributed to candidates in their preservice year:

Veterans of 20 years are still looking for ways to tweak their lessons, to push their kids even further. So we're under no illusions that you'll make perfect instructional decisions. You shouldn't be either. Not going to happen. That's why we don't speak in terms of "perfect" or "optimal"—even if there were such a thing as the perfect lesson plan and corresponding execution—your skills won't allow you to craft it in year 1. (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 5)

This perspective, that the Sposato curriculum had to be designed to introduce candidates to a basic threshold of knowledge that would make them effective, relates to the second feature of the epistemology of teacher effectiveness.

As mentioned above, the epistemological assumption about what knowledge and practice mattered to Sposato insiders is similar to what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) have referred to as a "knowledge-*in-practice*" conception of the relationship between knowledge and practice as it relates to teacher learning. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), this conception is defined by the perspective that

some of the most essential knowledge for teaching is what many people call practical knowledge, or what very competent teachers know as it is embedded in practice and in teachers' reflections on practice. Here it is assumed that teachers learn when they have opportunities to probe the knowledge embedded *in* the work of expert teachers and/or to deepen their own knowledge and expertise as makers

of wise judgments and designers of rich learning interactions in the classroom. (p. 250)

This relationship almost perfectly describes the Sposato approach to teacher preparation and their emphasis of the knowledge that effective first-year teachers must learn in order to be effective. A “knowledge-in-practice” conception of teacher learning, which “highlights teachers’ learning of knowledge that is already known by expert teachers themselves albeit often known tacitly and in ways that are unable to be articulated clearly or appropriately to others” (p. 268), mirrors the epistemological perspective shared by Sposato insiders that the more complex knowledge of how to be effective would develop over time in and with more practical experience. But the curriculum at Sposato, motivated by a desire to get candidates to a baseline level of teacher effectiveness before becoming teachers of record, was designed to transmit as much knowledge as possible about the moves and instructional methods effective “No Excuses” teachers use in their classrooms during the preservice year.

The entire Sposato curriculum was structured around these epistemological assumptions that learning to teach is a linear, developmental process. A helpful metaphor for thinking about this process is that before a child can learn to walk, he or she must first learn to crawl. For Sposato leaders, the analogue to teaching was that before a teacher could create rigorous instructional environments and effortlessly use a broad range of skills, he or she first had to develop automaticity with “presence,” “management,” and “instructional” moves and use a streamlined, efficient “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach to instruction. The Sposato approach to teacher preparation did not reject the idea that teaching in and of itself is a difficult task. As stated in the Sposato course guide,

“We [Sposato leaders] hope that it goes without saying that teaching is incredibly complex work that requires a very strategic mind. It’s why we’re so selective in the admissions process, why we care so much about your ability to think critically” (SPO 120 Course Guide, p. 13).

In reality, however, the Sposato curriculum took a technical rather than a complicated or complex perspective because Sposato leaders believed that the complicated/complex nature of teaching could be “solved” for the rookie year if the right, technically rational, effective teaching methods that predicted student learning were identified, articulated, and taught to beginners. This view contrasts, though, with other approaches to teacher learning used in university teacher education programs. For instance, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) suggest that complexity must be embraced in teacher preparation because, as Floden (2001) found in his review of the effects of teaching literature, the inherently complex work of teaching cannot be resolved or eliminated.

The epistemological foundations of the “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation at Sposato created an intentionally narrowed view of teacher learning, knowledge, and practice consistent with a moves-based curriculum based on the shared assumption that this curriculum would best prepare teachers to be effective beginners. As demonstrated above, this meant that the Sposato curriculum focused only on knowledge about how to design efficient classrooms environments that would elicit student learning gains.

The “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness ensured that the Sposato curriculum reinforced the vision of teacher effectiveness central to the Sposato

theory of practice as described in Chapter Four. But this also created certain absences in the curriculum. Sposato leaders were aware of these absences and to a large part accepted them as appropriate to an effective preservice teacher preparation program. For example, an area that received little attention in the Sposato curriculum was how social justice was actually defined in relation to teaching. Similarly, the strict Sposato emphasis on practice, moves, and effectiveness along with the goal of “no unrealized theory” did not allow for coursework that investigated the theoretical foundations of educational practice. Since Sposato leaders shared the epistemological stance described above, they felt it was their responsibility to deliver to teachers the knowledge of the “right,” effective teaching practices. And it was assumed there was no space in the curriculum for any material not related to effective teaching practices, a topic discussed further in Chapter Six.

**The price of pursuing a “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation.**

The downside of Sposato insiders’ commitment to an epistemology of teacher effectiveness, was that teacher candidates were prepared only to be technical implementers of the single (and limited) “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” instructional method taught at Sposato. This is a large price to pay when engaging in the work of teacher preparation, which was reflected in reservations expressed by some Sposato faculty, coaches, and candidates, as discussed below.

The first concern had to do with getting teacher candidates to become “automatic” in their use of moves. This goal was completely consistent with the “moves-based epistemology” of teacher effectiveness, particularly the knowledge-in-practice conception of teacher learning which assumes that beginners should learn the habits and skills used by effective teachers. Sposato faculty did not intend the concept of automaticity to be

taught as the unthinking application of discrete practices, though. For instance, in the course guide for the classroom management course taken by candidates in their preservice year, a section on moves stated explicitly: “1. An ounce of proactive is worth a pound of reactive; 2. If you see something, DO something; 3. Climb your Ladder; 4. Be consistent, not a robot” (SPO 112 Course Guide, p. 82). As suggested here, Sposato faculty wanted moves to be used consistently, but used with discretion as well.

However, one of the largest problems Sposato administrators faced was that focusing on automaticity led to candidates not using an appropriate amount of judgment and decision-making in their practice, or as one faculty member stated,

The result [of teaching candidates this way] was not as much flexibility and decision-making. Right? Like they were able, some people were able to execute what we were asking them to do really well because they were able to master this discrete skill, but when presented with a new variation on that task, they really struggled to apply that same principle because the principle was so specific to the task. (Interview #25, administrator/faculty)

Candidates had been taught moves in the discrete categories of presence, management, and instruction in predictable situations because it was assumed that candidates needed to learn what move to use in a given discrete situation. But when presented with situations candidates had not previously seen or practiced, candidates were not as well prepared to decide whether and how to use the moves they had learned to do automatically because the situation looked different.

An unintended consequence of teaching automaticity was that some principals who had hired Sposato graduates gave negative feedback about Sposato candidates,

which led to Sposato leaders rethinking the instruction of moves: “This piece was one of their [principals’] major pieces of feedback, was like, ‘Your people know the moves but they don’t think holistically enough about what they’re doing and why when it’s not working for kids’” (Interview #17, administrator/faculty). The major implication of the problems faced by Sposato insiders at all levels was that the teaching of automaticity resulted in candidates who had learned to do things in this one-best way but who could not easily adapt when the one-best way was impracticable or infeasible.

The second price of the Sposato “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation was the creation of teachers who only knew the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” approach, which is somewhat similar to direct-instruction. Of the five candidates I interviewed during their inservice year, four were teaching in “No Excuses”-affiliated charter schools and were expected by their schools to use this kind of instructional approach. As mentioned above, there is significant alignment between the “No Excuses” focus on data-driven instruction and the Sposato instructional approach to “Cycles of Practice and Feedback.” However, Sposato leaders claimed that “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” represented universally good teaching, which meant that it would be appropriate and effective in any classroom in any school. This was challenged by the one candidate who was not teaching at a “No Excuses” school as well as by one of the candidates who was teaching in a “No Excuses” school. Both of these candidates agreed that “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” might indeed work for many students, but they questioned whether or not this supposedly universal approach to good teaching was actually universally effective.

The candidate not teaching in a “No Excuses” school described her frustration with her lack of knowledge about differentiation of instruction for students with different learning styles. She felt this knowledge had not been adequately imparted in the program because of the Sposato focus on fairly uniform iterations of the “Cycles of Practice and Feedback” model and stated:

I feel like there were limitations in the model in terms of what kids could be doing that would produce that same end result: like creative ways to achieve that. I feel like, because it was so systematized and formulaic, things really just ended up being a matter of what’s going to go into the guided notes. Kids were just working on pencil and paper. And I feel like that does work for a lot of kids. But there are a lot of kids who would learn differently from a different avenue. And we didn’t really explore those very often. So, I mean, that’s definitely a limitation of the model in terms of creating a teacher that is going to inspire a kid with different learning styles. (Interview #15, candidate/MET year)

As this excerpt indicates, this candidate voiced the concern that streamlined instructional approaches had the tendency to ignore diverse learning needs. Similarly, another inservice candidate questioned the consistent implementation of behavioral systems as they impacted the learning environment:

By the end of the year, I don’t treat every child the same because not every child needs the same thing from me. I try to be – if it’s a blatant question of disregard for my direction, that is one thing, but there are levels of compliance and there are levels of effort that I think you get from kid to kid. So I think that is the one thing

that I question a little bit about Sposato. I'm like, 'Okay, they are not little robots.' (Interview #1, candidate/MET year)

This candidate questioned whether the consistent focus on discrete moves actually lost sight of authentic student learning. Sposato faculty would agree that they did not want candidates to develop automaticity in unthinking ways. However, this candidate's concern spoke to the complex nature of how the Sposato curriculum was received. The implication here is that the prescriptive, direct teaching of a one-best instructional method relayed a message to candidates that nuance and complexity did not have an inherent place in the Sposato curriculum.

Both of these candidates had generally positive things to say about the Sposato curriculum, but their experiences suggest that the "Cycles of Practice and Feedback" and moves-based instructional model taught in the Sposato curriculum was not in fact as universal as leaders claimed it to be. Granted, more research into candidates' experiences with this epistemology in their own teaching practice would be necessary to back up these assertions, since these two experiences should not be considered representative of all candidates' experiences. However, these experiences do provide some evidence that the ultimate consequence of the Sposato curriculum being built on an epistemological foundation of teacher effectiveness placed limits on what knowledge and practice was allowed within the confines of the Sposato curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

Sposato teacher candidates were taught to be effective per the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness, and were deemed effective per the Sposato evaluative tools described in this chapter. In this sense Sposato leaders could justifiably say their program

was a clear demonstration that it is possible to consistently prepare “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” In this sense, Sposato did represent a “revolutionary proof point” in teacher preparation. The consequence of establishing this kind of “revolutionary approach,” however, was that the “jaw-droppingly effective rookies” the program created were prepared to be technically proficient only in their first year of teaching. Though the Sposato model assumed that teachers would continue learning beyond their “rookie” years of teaching, the concept of preparing teachers for the professional lifespan was not explicitly built into the Sposato curriculum.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Using a Progressive Neoliberal Political Strategy to Enact a Vision of Teacher

#### Preparation for Equity and Justice at Sposato

As demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, both the Sposato habitus and its epistemology of teacher effectiveness created a set of ideological, conceptual, and structural boundaries around the work that was possible in the teacher preparation program at Sposato. Partially because of these limits, Sposato leaders and faculty members were able to accomplish the two major goals they had set for the program: (1) to demonstrate that there was a new and better way of conducting the preservice preparation of teachers; and (2) to prepare effective beginning teachers who would help to close the achievement gap in the context of “No Excuses” and/or similar urban schools. In this chapter I focus on the second of these major goals by analyzing the extent to which the Sposato program prepared teacher candidates to be successful, effective teachers.

In this chapter, I argue that the Sposato program achieved its goal of preparing effective teachers for “No Excuses” schools by enacting a very clear vision about the purposes and goals of teacher preparation. Just as the literature on effective teacher preparation programs stresses program coherence (Tatto, 1996; Sleeter, 2008) and practice-based curricula (Grossman et al., 2008), it is also widely agreed upon that teacher preparation programs tend to be most effective when leaders and faculty share a common vision about the ends the program is designed to reach (Hammerness, 2010, 2013). I show in this chapter that the Sposato vision was primarily marked by what Howe (1997) has referred to as a “compensatory” interpretation of equal educational

opportunity, wherein equity is achieved when people who are at a relative disadvantage are provided with resources to compete fairly with more advantaged peers, and what Fraser (2003) and others have called a distributive notion of justice, wherein justice is achieved if and when a society has equitably distributed its resources. Howe (1997) and Fraser (2003) each argue that these approaches to equity and justice goals are only partial perspectives. For instance, Fraser and Honneth (2003) debated whether or not distributive justice frameworks would be sufficient to achieve broader justice goals absent a recognition-oriented notion of justice, wherein justice is only achieved if formerly marginalized populations are given power and voice within a society. But the Sposato view was not a naïve one. Rather Sposato leaders pursued their vision of equity and justice, which some scholars would call “partial,” because they assumed this vision allowed educators to do what was necessary to provide equity and justice for minoritized students attending the high-achieving, high-poverty schools aligned to this vision and at which their teacher candidates obtained jobs. In this chapter I also show that the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice pursued by Sposato insiders was aligned to the equity and justice vision of the “No Excuses” urban education reform movement, described in Chapters One and Two as a controversial yet popular vision for urban education reform that was also marked by its commitment to closing achievement gaps (Miller, 2015).

This chapter also argues that Sposato leaders taught their candidates to enact the Sposato vision by teaching candidates to be “culturally affirming” teachers. This set of perspectives assumed to guide successful teaching in urban schools is distinct from other similar-sounding notions about how to prepare teachers for urban schools, such as the

culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) described later in this chapter or the kinds of social justice teacher education that have explicit critical and transformative goals such as Kretchmar and Zeichner's (2016) "Teacher Prep 3.0" framework mentioned in Chapter Two. My analysis indicates that underlying this approach to "culturally affirming teaching" at Sposato was the assumption that the students who attended "No Excuses" schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, who were primarily students of Color, needed to have effective teachers who were ready to meet their specific needs. It was also assumed that "culturally affirming teaching" perspectives once adopted by candidates would allow candidates to work toward the Sposato vision and thereby achieve equity and justice for their students. I also show that because of the limits set by the Sposato habitus and the program's "moves-based epistemology" of teacher effectiveness, "culturally affirming teaching" served an instrumental rather than a transformational purpose: to teach candidates to use the features of "culturally affirming teaching," such as student and family relationship-building, in order to organize their classrooms to boost student achievement rather than to use these features to, for example, build communities ready to transform fundamental social structures causing deeper inequities and injustices.

Finally, in this chapter I argue that despite Sposato leaders' successful enactment of their vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice, this vision was limited in its impact because the compensatory and distributive nature of the Sposato vision led Sposato insiders to enact technically rational educational solutions to complex social problems. My analysis indicates that Sposato leaders promoted such technically rational solutions to educational problems because of their intentional decision to focus pragmatically on equity and justice goals that were attainable, actionable, and practicable

within the confines of a teacher preparation program designed to produce teachers for a particular school context. Yet my analysis ultimately shows there were some negative consequences for pursuing this kind of gradualist political strategy.

In order to build these three arguments, this chapter describes the context-specific “No Excuses” environments in which the work of teacher preparation at Sposato was conducted and uncovers the shared vision of equity and justice that was attached to this program, these schools, and this branch of the contemporary education reform movement. I draw on the education reform and social movement frameworks I discussed in Chapter Two in order to establish how Sposato leaders and candidates connected their context-specific work to this larger movement.

I then use curricular documents, insider interviews, and observation notes to describe the “culturally affirming teaching” set of perspectives taught to candidates at Sposato and the ways Sposato leaders assumed this approach for successful teaching in high-poverty, urban schools would lead candidates to enact the Sposato vision in their own practice. This second section draws on the research literature about successful teaching in urban schools (e.g., Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013; Sleeter, 2008) to help make sense of the “culturally affirming teaching” approach Sposato leaders claimed was necessary to be successful in “No Excuses” schools.

Finally, I unpack and critique the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice as it played out in practice. I show that the Sposato political strategy to achieve its equity and justice goals was intentionally limited in scope to what leaders and candidates could practicably achieve within the Sposato model as currently structured.

Leaders taught candidates to conduct the technically rational work of closing achievement gaps because this was the work that was deemed possible within “No Excuses” schools and teacher preparation programs.

### **Why Prepare Teachers for Success at “No Excuses” Schools?**

As I demonstrated in Chapter Five, Sposato leaders believed that their program’s “revolutionary approach” to curriculum prepared teacher candidates to be effective in any school. However my analysis reveals that teacher preparation at Sposato was inextricably linked to the context and expectations of “No Excuses”-affiliated urban schools. One candidate made this point explicitly:

If it [Sposato] was just about proving that there is a different way to train teachers, then we would be placed in Newton and Belmont and these places too, because what does it matter? If you are effective, you are effective, no matter what school you are in. But that is not where we get placed. That is not where they try to place us and it’s not a part of our agreement to do the program and to go to a school like that at least for the first couple years of our career. (Interview #11, candidate/MET year)

As understood by this candidate, the purpose of Sposato was to get candidates to take what they had learned about being effective and specifically apply that knowledge in schools serving low-income populations in historically marginalized city neighborhoods, specifically “No Excuses”-aligned schools.

One reason Sposato leaders aimed to prepare teachers to be successful in “No Excuses” schools was because they knew from their extensive experience in the “No Excuses” environment that a certain type of high-quality teacher was required to succeed

in these schools. This kind of teacher was marked by the beliefs and motivations about student learning built into the Sposato theory of practice discussed in Chapter Four. As one adjunct faculty member stated:

I think there's a real need for schools that believe that all students can achieve. That even if there is a significant, they are reading well below grade level, or there's significant poverty, they haven't been exposed to certain things that puts them at a disadvantage at a young age – that we need schools that don't make excuses for that. That believe that regardless of what happens to you before we see you at school, we are going to hold you to a high standard, because we believe that you can meet this standard and we believe in the possibility of what you can achieve after you leave our school. (Interview #20, faculty)

This faculty member's quotation was representative of the commonly held assumption among Sposato leaders that “No Excuses” schools succeeded because educators in these schools believed that closing the achievement gap was in fact possible, and they developed specific methods to do so.

It was assumed among the Sposato leadership that this kind of gap-closing, effective teacher could be created at Sposato. According to Candal's (2014) report on the model, “[Sposato] fills a specific niche, especially in the world of high-performing No Excuses charter schools, which rely on highly-skilled teachers trained to accelerate learning for students who often start school woefully behind” (p. 1). In keeping with this assumption, Sposato leaders set for the program the goal to create successful teachers for “No Excuses” contexts because they knew a need existed and they believed their program could meet that need.

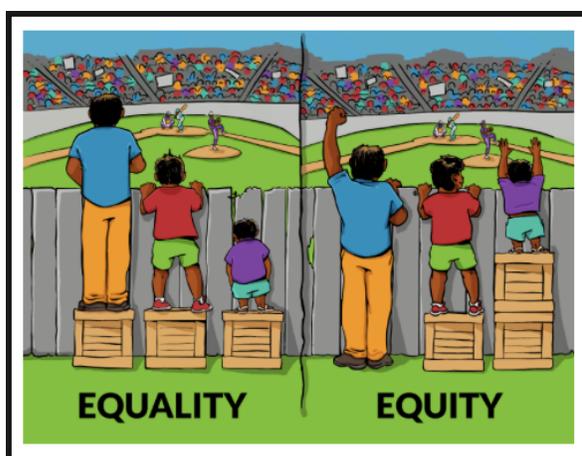
But beyond the fact that Sposato leaders believed their program was well-suited to producing the right kind of teacher for “No Excuses” schools, the primary reason that Sposato leaders worked toward this context-specific goal was the shared definition of equity and justice espoused by Sposato insiders and by the leaders of the “No Excuses” branch of the education reform movement. Across all interviews and observations with Sposato full-time faculty, part-time coaching staff, and candidates, similar common themes emerged related to this shared vision: (1) equity was defined as a compensatory project to achieve equal educational opportunity, meaning insiders believed the purpose of equity was delivering opportunities and resources to people who had previously been denied those things; (2) justice was defined as a distributive project, meaning insiders believed that justice could only be achieved if everyone was provided with equitable access to certain high-quality educational opportunities; and (3) this work toward equity and justice was assumed to be accomplishable if it was tied to the contemporary standards and accountability education reform movement, of which Sposato insiders considered their program a part. These themes are addressed below.

**Definitions of equity.** Sposato faculty and candidates alike understood equity goals as efforts to level the playing field so that the minoritized students in “No Excuses” schools would be able to compete with their more affluent and privileged peers. For example, one administrator noted:

I think equity, I would say, is everyone having the same opportunity. I think there is a graphic that I really like that is kind of like, three people peering over a fence, all of different heights. Do you know what I’m talking about? So it’s like, making it so that everyone has the same line of sight. That is equity. And so to me, that is

equity. I think it's like a leveling of the playing field, it's making sure that the reason why the gap exists in the first place, so, money, race, location, are factors that we're trying to even out here. So I think that's the equity thing. (Interview #3, administrator)

This explanation of equity referred to a picture mentioned in several interviews I conducted with Sposato participants, an approximation of which is shown in Figure 6. The point of this picture is that the idea of equity is about providing enough resources and support so that all students have a fair shot at reaching a similar destination point. This perspective on equity is contrasted in the picture with a notion of equality, which is the idea that it is enough to provide all students with the same resources regardless of individual starting points. Sposato candidates and faculty viewed their work as a project for equity, not equality in the sense conveyed by the picture.



*Figure 6.* The equity vs. equality image of the three boys. (retrieved from: <http://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>)

The goal of the Sposato vision of equity was students' ability to self-determine their own futures, including college, career, and economic independence, or as one

candidate said, equity is the “ability for all students to have the same opportunity – I’m trying to formulate this as I say it – have the opportunity to go in whatever direction they so choose” (Interview #15, candidate/MET year). But Sposato insiders shared the belief that providing students in “No Excuses” schools with such equitable opportunity required that candidates be made aware of the social structures that had historically limited these minoritized populations from this kind of self-determination. As one candidate mentioned, the Sposato equity project was about

Giving people the ability to not have a glass ceiling as much and rise above.

Historically, if someone knows their stuff, they will move ahead eventually. They will break through it and they will pave the way for their people, but you have to know what you are doing first to be able to apply it and so equity, especially in schools, is like – not thinking that because that kid grew up in a trailer park, that he is less than. (Interview #7, candidate/residency year)

This vision of equity involved teachers who were aware of why students had been historically denied equal access to opportunities and empowered to deliver to students the educational resources they needed to catch up. From this conception of equity, it was assumed that if teachers and schools provided the right supports and resources and implemented the kind of content-rich curriculum and efficient instruction discussed in Chapter Five, students from the historically marginalized communities served by “No Excuses” schools would be able to attain levels of economic independence and social power people in their communities had previously been denied.

In addition, the Sposato vision of equity assumed that minoritized students in “No Excuses” schools could only get access to this economic freedom if they were given more

equitable access to what Sposato insiders referred to as the “culture of power,” what they understood to be the habits and dispositions of economically independent people in the U.S. that helped these people maintain their social status. As stated in the course guide for the relationship-building course taken by candidates in their preservice year:

We want you to create a class culture that is inclusive of, and welcoming to, all the backgrounds represented in your classroom, and that helps students access the ‘culture of power’ that is dominant in our society. Because if our students can access this other culture, while valuing their own, they can be obtain (sic) both economic freedom and personal freedom. (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 26)

This excerpt from this course guide summarizes the definition of equity built into the Sposato vision. Equity was assumed to be achieved when students previously denied access to the “culture of power” were provided the resources and supports to access it; providing these resources and supports to level the playing field was also assumed to undo harms caused by previous disadvantages experienced by students.

As can be seen from this definition of equity, the Sposato vision also assumed that teachers were the social agents responsible for creating this level playing field. For example, one candidate in her residency year defined the equity goals present at Sposato solely in terms of teacher quality:

Obviously right now I think there is not enough teachers to do the right job and there are certain groups, especially upper middle class, who are able to offset maybe bad teaching that happens. Who knows: I probably had a bad teacher. But I also had parents who made me do math workbooks in the summer and sent me to camps and I played sports and all this other stuff. Went to museums and libraries

and blah, blah, blah. I think the job as teachers, especially teachers in this school and other ‘No Excuses’ charter schools, inner-city, low income communities, where in these training programs are creating the best teachers for the people who need it most. (Interview #13, candidate/residency year)

At Sposato, it was assumed that effective teaching was urgently needed because the students who attended these urban schools did not have the social resources and supports to mitigate the effects of ineffective teaching. The equity-oriented belief at Sposato was that “No Excuses” schools and the program offered immediate and direct access to rigorous educational opportunities for students who had been denied these opportunities. The Sposato curriculum, prescriptive methods, and direct feedback to candidates described in Chapters Four and Five allowed administrators, faculty, and coaches to ensure candidates had all of the tools they needed to engage in efforts to level the playing field for students in “No Excuses” schools.

Overall, the Sposato approach to achieving equity can best be understood by what Howe (1997) has referred to as a “compensatory interpretation of equal educational opportunity” (p. 28). According to Howe, the goal of this compensatory approach is “to help shape desirable educational careers by compensating for characteristics of individuals that disadvantage them in educational institutions” (p. 29). In the picture in Figure 6, this is consistent with giving the shortest boy the tallest box to stand on so he can see over the fence. This compensatory view, which according to P. L. Carter and Welner (2013) and Reich (2002) has become one of the most prominent liberal accounts of how to achieve equal educational opportunity, admits that there are large social problems which create both social and educational inequities such as structural racism or

historical wealth inequalities. But it also states that educators can and should do whatever it takes to design and provide educational opportunities that can overcome these deficits. What this view implies is that it is the responsibility of educators to compensate for disadvantages experienced by students by providing access to rigorous and enriching academic experiences that it is assumed more privileged students take for granted (e.g., AP curricula, laboratory-based science classes). This compensatory view also carries with it the assumption that being granted access to the “culture of power” is a universally desirable outcome. Educators who have this compensatory view tend to assume that helping students reach this outcome is a sufficient goal and that their work can be deemed successful if and when previously disadvantaged students are given the opportunity to reach that end point.

The major implication of this compensatory view of equity, though, is that it is defined as an individualistic project with little focus on the causes of historical disadvantages that have led to inequitable distribution of opportunities for communities. Just as the image in Figure 6 shows that equity is providing the right-size box to each individual to see over the fence and thus level the playing field, the way equity at Sposato was defined led candidates to focus on individual needs of students rather than the collective needs of historically marginalized groups and the reasons why those groups had been denied access to quality education and to the “culture of power” in the first place. As discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, this individualistic view of equity was not conceptually rich enough to help explain the impact of larger social and systemic forces that produce and reproduce inequities or to redress larger social problems.

**Definitions of justice.** At Sposato, recognition of fundamentally unjust social structures and the need to redress these injustices motivated the work of teacher preparation as much as the desire to provide students with equal educational opportunities. As stated in this excerpt from the “Core Values” document distributed to candidates:

Teaching, and, by extension teacher education can change the world. It can help end cycles of poverty, reverse centuries of inequity, and change the culture of power in the United States. We’ve seen it happen—kid by kid, family by family, school by school. Match Education, including Sposato, exists to play a part in this challenge. (Core Values, p. 3)

Sposato leaders believed that through their teacher preparation program they were engaged in the work of social justice, and they wanted candidates to believe that to be true as well. This emphasis on having candidates understand the relationship between teacher preparation and social justice was so important to Sposato leaders’ approach that they developed an entire community and social context course in their curriculum to “focus more on challenging its students [candidates] to grapple with the ‘big picture’ of highly complex issues rather than on acquiring specific pedagogical tools” (SPO 100 syllabus, p. 1). Particularly in the “No Excuses” contexts in which Sposato candidates served, teacher preparation for social justice was assumed by Sposato insiders to be a primary means of positively impacting students’ and families’ lives.

Yet, paradoxically, Sposato insiders had a relatively more difficult time defining social justice than they did defining educational equity despite the importance of the concept to their vision. There was a basic recognition of social injustices faced by

students attending “No Excuses” schools among Sposato insiders, but they did not provide a more explicit definition of what social justice was or how it could be achieved, as this comment by a candidate suggests:

Social justice is a huge umbrella that a lot of things fall under. But when I think about it and when I think about all the conversations I have had with other residents, with the staff, there is only so many things you can do to try to make the world a better place. There are a lot of different ways to work for social equality and work to better the lives of others and to try to close the opportunity gap and the income gap, really, in our country. Education is one avenue to do so, to give kids a better chance of having a full, strong education, to be able to go to college if that is what they should choose to do and get the job they want to be able to do to be economically mobile and, again, to close that gap a little bit. That is the social justice piece of it: trying to right a wrong, I think. (Interview #11, candidate/MET year)

This candidates’ perspective, common across multiple interviews I conducted with different Sposato insiders, mentioned the massive scope of the work that needed to be done to work toward more socially just outcomes for students in “No Excuses” schools because of the multiple social oppressions faced by the historically marginalized communities being served by “No Excuses” schools.

Similarly, as one administrator stated when comparing Sposato perspectives on equity and justice, “I think equity is something that we can more tangibly try and address, whereas there are so many injustices that currently happen every minute of every day, particularly to the populations that we are talking about” (Interview #3, administrator).

Sposato insiders assumed that teacher preparation could be a means of achieving social justice, but they found it easier to discuss equal educational opportunities in specific detail. From this perspective, the kinds of equitable opportunities “No Excuses” educators could provide to individual students facing particular disadvantages, as mentioned above, were more concrete and actionable than the more complex means required to redress the systemic injustices experienced by these students.

The Sposato emphasis and prioritization of concrete and specific action over broader, more theoretical constructions of justice was aligned to the enactment of direct instructional approaches central to the Sposato theory of practice and curriculum discussed in Chapters Four and Five. The Sposato model of teacher preparation focused consistently on what could be discretely and prescriptively taught to candidates to prepare them for their first year of teaching. Sposato course materials intentionally did not focus on theorizing “social justice” in favor of teaching candidates how to do things in the classroom that were to lead to perceived socially just outcomes for students. For example, the Core Values document distributed to candidates stated,

It may seem somewhat ironic, but the reason that we don’t talk explicitly about social justice in Sposato all that often is because we care so much about it. We firmly believe that the way we’re going to affect social justice is by obsessing over the details of teaching and teacher education. There are plenty of other teacher education programs that have the same passion for promoting social justice. They often have multiple courses on race, class, multi-cultural education. There’s constant debate and reflection on these issues. In our program, not so much. Why? Because we think our limited time is best spent on practicing the

technical skills you need to master in order to teach effectively – that’s how we move the needle on our commitment to social justice. (Core Values, pp. 3-4)

The assumption here was that if Sposato candidates were taught to do certain things to increase justice for their students, they would be able to enact those things in their future classrooms.

One potential explanation for leaders’ prioritization of teaching skills rather than discussing concepts related to social justice was offered by an administrator who reflected on her own university-based, social justice-focused teacher preparation background:

It was interesting, because there was a big – the whole department and I think the school [at my university-based teacher education program], has a big social justice focus. However, it seemed like the focus of that was teaching kids about social justice rather than, how do you go into situations that are socially unjust and do something to ameliorate that problem? It was like, they were kind of expecting everyone to end up working in suburban, white middle class classrooms and teach the kids about other people’s problems or something. So those kids would have a greater sense of the world, which, great, they should. But it was weird because it was sort of like, we were supposed to have this social justice focus, but then there was no acknowledgement of kids were behind in grade level or kids who brought challenging emotional or behavioral issues to the classroom. It was kind of not acknowledged. I had a really hard time sort of navigating that. That was what I wanted to do, those are the kids I wanted to work with.

(Interview #18, administrator)

The Sposato vision of social justice, then, was predicated on the idea that new teachers needed to immediately provide just outcomes for students just as the Sposato vision of equity demanded that candidates know how to provide rigorous and enriching educational opportunities to individual students. Having candidates learn *about* social justice was deemed inferior and insufficient in comparison to having candidates learn to engage in behaviors that were conceptualized as part of *enacting* social justice in classrooms. In fact the entire Sposato model assumed that if a specific teaching move or method that would “guarantee” a desired outcome was known, then that method absolutely should be taught. Therefore, rather than spending time theorizing about what makes for socially just environments or outcomes, Sposato leaders spent more time teaching candidates how to do the things that would help them succeed with students in “No Excuses” schools. And as mentioned throughout this dissertation, these schools were widely assumed among Sposato leadership to be more just educational environments than many of the other urban schools serving these same populations.

Sposato leaders also assumed that achieving equity would be the first step to achieving socially just outcomes. Social justice, then, or the creation of an entire educational environment in which equal educational opportunity for all students no matter their prior disadvantages had been secured, was assumed to be a long-term outcome. This long-term outcome of justice stood in contrast to the short-term outcome of equity that Sposato insiders assumed could be secured for students on an immediate, individual basis. Viewing the provision of equal educational opportunity as the mechanism through which social justice would ultimately be attained represents what is commonly understood as a distributive view of justice (Cochran-Smith, 2010; Boyles,

Carusi, & Attick, 2009; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Sleeter, 2008). A distributive view is marked by a focus on individual equality in society and defines injustice as inequalities caused by inherently unjust social structures (Fraser, 2003). Therefore, as Cochran-Smith (2010) states in her analysis of theories of justice for teacher education, a distributive view supposes that “the remedy for injustice is redistribution of material and other goods, including opportunity, power, and access with the goal of establishing a society based on fairness and equality” (p. 450). As seen from this definition, the compensatory vision of equity espoused by Sposato insiders aligns nearly perfectly with this distributive vision of justice.

In terms of teaching and teacher education, McDonald and Zeichner (2009) point out that people holding a distributive view tend to assume that the purpose of teacher education is developing technically proficient candidates prepared to fairly distribute educational opportunities to students. The consistency of this definition of justice with how Sposato insiders made sense of equity prompted Sposato leaders to concentrate on the discrete, practicable, actionable moves they wanted candidates to master. This consistent vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice also allowed Sposato leaders to build into their curriculum a clear and consistent focus on how teachers should be prepared to enact this vision, as explored in more detail in the section on “culturally affirming teaching” below.

A distributive vision of justice, which is consistent with a compensatory vision of equity, prompted Sposato leaders to address only certain material and technical schooling injustices. As Boyles, Carusi, and Attick (2009) state in their review of contemporary frames of social justice in education:

Distributive notions of justice find their strength in egalitarian ideals where each person has an equal share. While such dispensations are necessary to justice, absent from this egalitarian concept is the emancipatory emphasis found in social justice, an emphasis that seeks to free people from oppression. (p. 38)

From this perspective, programs espousing a distributive view prepare teachers to meet students' basic academic and educational needs, but not to interrogate or negotiate the fundamental causes of social injustice such as institutional racism. As mentioned above, Sposato leaders chose not to include theorizing about social justice in their curriculum; in this way they stopped at an articulation of the immediate, technical aspects of justice that could be more equitably distributed by teachers in "No Excuses" schools such as academically rigorous curriculum and instruction. As demonstrated in the last section of this chapter, Sposato insiders grappled with the tensions that arose between the lack of a broader vision of a more robust set of socially just outcomes and the result that this lack of a broader vision led to a relatively narrow enactment of justice.

**The connections between Sposato and the education reform movement.** It was important for Sposato faculty and staff to demonstrate to candidates that the definitions of equity and justice central to the work at Sposato were also central to the work of its partner schools. For example, one administrator made a point of emphasizing that equity and justice work was not happening only at Sposato: "It's actually not just us, it's people in other charter schools, it's people and teachers, it's deans, it's principals, it's other faculty members that also have a great perspective on what the work that they're doing right now as well" (Interview #8, administrator). In the view of Sposato leaders, the equity and justice work they conducted was part of a larger project to address the

achievement gap and the lack of access of some communities to the “culture of power.” From this perspective, it was assumed that some schools and educators had begun to do the real work of addressing the inequity and injustice issues defined above. Sposato faculty and staff intentionally sought to ensure that their teacher preparation program was portrayed to candidates as part of this larger community of education reformers who were pursuing urban education reform from this shared vision.

Sposato faculty focused on the connection between their approach and the education reform movement in the community and social contexts course candidates took during their residency year. One of the objectives of this course was “To describe historical inequity in urban public education—its origins, persistence, connections to race and poverty, and education reform’s approach to these issues” (SPO 100 syllabus, p. 1). This class, which met approximately five times over the course of candidates’ residency year focused on the social, educational, and political context of the “No Excuses”-aligned schools in which candidates were working. For instance, during the first night of the class, the focus was on how “No Excuses” schools were positioned as key engines of innovation within the education reform movement. The following vignette describing a course lecture during this night illustrates this:

*The administrator began his lecture with an explanation of the roots of the contemporary branch of the education reform movement: ‘As long as there have been public schools, there have been debates about how to run public schools. One of the popular and more cynical bits of analysis was that income was destiny and the debts that had been accrued were insurmountable. A new wave of education reform was personified by the first KIPP schools, Amistad Academy,*

*and Roxbury Prep, who learned a lot from islands of excellence, teachers who were having a disproportionately gigantic effect on students' lives. What was revolutionary about what these folks said was that while poverty is complex, we are going to insist that students who go to our schools are going to achieve at the same rate as their wealthier, white peers. We are going to hold ourselves to this high standard and not accept excuses for failures.'*

*The administrator then described what it was that 'No Excuses' schools did as participants in the education reform movement: 'No Excuses is not a term we love, even though we'll do the air quotes with our fingers. It's a little glib and it doesn't reflect the real complexity of the work or that students in our schools have a profoundly non-level playing field. There's a growing body of thought to help structure our schools this way. But we need some ability to speak in shorthand and the language that you'll hear us say is high-achieving public school, but that's not even perfect. These are schools where the mission of the school, organizational structure, culture, are aligned with the original sort of ideas of the No Excuses school reform movement.'*

*The administrator concluded the lecture by describing major innovations within the 'No Excuses' field. He specifically mentioned the following things used by 'No Excuses' schools that he claimed were consistent with innovations within the education reform movement more broadly: rigid academic standards; standards-based instruction; school mantras and values-based character education; and innovative, nimble approaches to human resources rooted in*

*merit-based conversations about teacher effectiveness.* (Observation #13, SPO 100 – session 1)

This lecture elaborated the way the work of “No Excuses” schools and its partner teacher preparation programs were intended to achieve a higher social purpose consistent with the definitions of equity and justice described above. This excerpted lecture provides insight into the distinctions Sposato faculty and staff made between the work done by most urban schools and the more effective work done in “No Excuses” schools that took upon themselves the responsibility to focus on equity and justice in concrete and actionable ways. In this lecture, the education reform movement writ large was portrayed as an intentional and deliberate set of innovations designed to upend the inequitable and unjust status quo faced by most students and families who were affected by the persistent failures of urban schools. As seen in this lecture, Sposato leaders viewed education reform as a social movement bounded by the ideological commitments toward equity and justice demonstrated above.

Social movement theories (Tilly, 1995; Flacks, 2005; Staggenborg, 2016) suggest that movements involve organized challenges to prevailing social systems along with a shared set of prescribed solutions to predetermined and agreed upon problems. Based on my interview and observational data, it was clear that Sposato faculty and staff defined social problems and their solutions in terms of a way of thinking they called “education reform.” The contemporary education reform movement is a more diffuse and less bounded entity than portrayed in this lecture; for instance, many contemporary reformers focus much less on urban education as the sole problem needing to be addressed and much more on market-based reform as a mechanism to raise teacher quality across the

board (e.g., Hess & McShane, 2014). But what Sposato leaders referred to as “education reform” is fairly consistent with what has been described by Mehta (2013a) as a standards-based education policy paradigm in which reformers “all saw school reform as possible and necessary absent broader social reform, all assumed that success would be measured by performance on state and national tests, and all expressed skepticism about educators’ claims of professional expertise” (p. 187). Following from these premises, Mehta claims this current education policy paradigm calls for the scientific rationalization of education in order for more effective solutions to take hold. This means that those considered “reformers” are those motivated within this movement to identify discrete problems and to create innovative solutions to those problems, assuming that the reason these problems have not already been solved is the lack of dedicated efforts to find technically rational solutions to them.

As can be seen from this vignette from this community and social contexts course, the way Sposato leaders made sense of education reform was consistent with a technically rational-based view of education reform. The Sposato vision was defined not only by a compensatory framework for equity and a distributive framework for justice, but by the desire to use technically rational means to enact that vision in practice. The Sposato vision required leaders not only to teach definitions of equity and justice to candidates, but also to align the curriculum of Sposato to this technically rational vision. And this was done not only because they believed in the rightness of their vision, but because this work was consistent with the social movement to which their program was connected. In the next section, I demonstrate that in order to achieve their goal of preparing successful teachers for “No Excuses” schools, Sposato leaders taught

candidates a specific set of perspectives that they assumed would allow candidates to address the problem of low student achievement that had been caused by inequitable social structures once candidates became inservice teachers.

### **How Candidates Were Taught to Be Successful at “No Excuses” Schools**

As described above, the vision of compensatory equity and distributive justice espoused by leaders at Sposato and at “No Excuses” schools required from teachers not only a dedication to closing achievement gaps but also a desire to help meet the distinct needs of individual minoritized students who had been denied access to educational opportunities. Given their experience working in and leading “No Excuses” schools, Sposato leaders also believed that the complex needs of the high-poverty populations served by “No Excuses” schools required a nuanced understanding of students in urban schools, or as stated by one administrator,

I think many of the students who come to work in Match and the partner schools have not been particularly well served by their prior schools. And so they tend to come into school with academic deficits that they might not have in a more mainstream context. And so what that requires of our people is a sort of more precise understanding of what rigor looks like and how to effectively provide feedback and differentiation in ways that are going to sort of more urgently bring them up to grade level and ultimately past grade level. I think there’s also, in many of our schools, where families sometimes come having had bad experiences in school in the past, where there might be a certain kind of skepticism or suspicion of or about school. And so there is work, I think our teachers or trainees

are required to build bridges, build relationships, in ways that might not be as important in other contexts. (Interview #22, administrator)

Sposato leaders shared this administrator's perspective that candidates at Sposato should be prepared to address these challenges since they were being prepared specifically to teach in "No Excuses" schools. Sposato leaders took on the responsibility of directly teaching candidates a particular set of perspectives assumed to guide the work of successful teachers at "No Excuses" schools that they referred to as "culturally affirming teaching."

In this section, I take up the notion of "culturally affirming teaching" as a set of perspectives for how to best address the needs of students of Color in "No Excuses" schools as well as how this set of perspectives was taught to candidates. I detail the knowledge sources for this set of perspectives and compare and contrast "culturally affirming teaching" to different understandings of what it takes for teachers to be successful with students in urban schools such as Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy. I then suggest that the "culturally affirming teaching" set of perspectives taught at Sposato was designed to reach the instrumental end of closing the achievement gap in keeping with how Sposato leaders defined effective teaching.

**How Sposato leaders defined "culturally affirming teaching."** Sposato leaders assumed that candidates had to learn how to be "culturally affirming" in their teaching practice in order to ensure that the students from marginalized communities who attended "No Excuses" schools felt welcomed and safe in those environments. As described in the course guide for the relationship-building course candidates took during their preservice year, "We call this acceptance and celebration of diversity 'culturally affirming teaching.'

Every student, and every teacher, should feel that their culture and background is affirmed and valued in your classroom” (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 26). Candidates were taught to show authentic appreciation and respect for students’ home cultures in order to enhance relationships and trust in the learning environments they had been taught to create. Candidates were taught that “culturally affirming teaching,” then, as a set of perspectives deemed necessary for candidates to adopt in order to better enhance student learning in “No Excuses” schools, contained three broad perspectives: (1) teachers had to understand and identify the effects of their own individual identity and privilege in their teaching as well as show adequate appreciation for students’ home cultures; (2) teachers had to be effective relationship builders with students and families to establish trust in and for a given “No Excuses” school’s culture; and (3) teachers had to maintain a “whatever it takes” mentality because of the scope and the urgency of the work of closing achievement gaps in schools serving historically marginalized communities.

The first thing Sposato leaders taught candidates to do in order to become “culturally affirming” teachers was to become aware of the effects of their own cultural identities on educational experiences. For this reason, as stated in the objectives for the community and social contexts course candidates took, Sposato candidates were expected to

Explore the community in which they teach, learning about their students' lives outside of schools to build stronger relationships and identify ways to bring students' community and culture into the classroom [and] To identify their personal relationship to the culture of power and the specific ways in which it

impacts how they will become culturally affirming educators. (SPO 100 syllabus, p. 1)

Since the majority of candidates at Sposato were White recent college graduates from middle class upbringings, it was assumed that these candidates did not have an adequate understanding of the experiences their future students had living in poverty in urban centers and generally being denied access to “the culture of power.” Leaders, then, wanted candidates to first unpack their own relationship to the “culture of power” and to understand how that culture had either benefitted or hindered their own educational experiences.

Sposato faculty members felt that making candidates aware of certain sociocultural privileges would allow candidates to better negotiate among the cultural differences present in their future work environments, or as stated by one administrator,

So it really is more like how do you as an adult, as a professional, manage to be in a workplace where it’s predominantly White and White privilege still exists in that world even though you’re still working in a school that is predominantly students of Color. (Interview #5, administrator)

This administrator stressed that since most candidates at Sposato had been born into the “culture of power,” they would have to understand the difference between having a relatively unearned privilege and not having access to this kind of privilege. Teacher candidates needed to discern the inequitable effects of White privilege if they were to be adequately prepared to enter workplaces where these injustices were present. “Culturally affirming teaching” was first intended to get residents to see that the “culture of power” had been inequitably distributed.

Sposato leaders hoped that raising teacher candidates' awareness about the inequitable distribution of access to power and about the inherent worth of students' home cultures would lead candidates to a broader appreciation of cultural difference. For instance, one coach mentioned that Sposato seemed to succeed in making sure candidates did not take a deficit view toward students: "I think that because they [Sposato faculty] talk to their residents about it [culturally affirming teaching] when those things come up, it's about changing it so that the outcome is better for kids, not looking at the kids like there is some sort of deficit for them" (Interview #24, coach). According to this coach, Sposato faculty did an adequate job of teaching candidates to understand that students' home cultures were not to blame for the historic lack of access these students' families and communities had had to the "culture of power." From this perspective, which was widely shared among Sposato faculty and staff, "culturally affirming teaching" allowed candidates to both appreciate students' home cultures and simultaneously teach students about the "culture of power" without discarding either. It was essential, from this perspective, to make sure that candidates were taught to help students negotiate between their home culture and the "culture of power" as a way to show the inherent worth of maintaining the former and the economic and cultural opportunities that could be afforded students by learning how to access the latter.

The second major aspect of "culturally affirming teaching" was a teacher's ability to build relationships with students and families. In the guidebook for the course candidates took in their preservice year on relationship-building, Sposato faculty described the core ideas they wanted to transmit to candidates about this concept:

We have 5 main beliefs about relationships: (1) It's part of a teacher's job to build relationships. (2) Teachers should use their relationships to push students academically. (3) Your relationships with students should be professional, not personal. (4) Parents are equal partners. (5) Teachers who are unafraid of conflict will build stronger relationships, faster. (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 60)

Sposato leaders assumed that many families sending their children to "No Excuses" schools were dissatisfied with the schools their children had attended previously, assuming that they had not adequately served their children's academic needs. For this reason, Sposato leaders taught candidates to emphasize relationship-building to help negotiate the distrust and skepticism parents might have about a school's ability to impact student achievement.

A major emphasis in this relationship-building course taken by candidates was on making sure that parents and students each knew that the focus of the work in a "No Excuses" school would be on meeting the academic needs of the student that had potentially not been met in other school environments. Candidates were taught to build these relationships to ensure that all academic needs at home and in school would be addressed. In the course guide for the relationship-building course candidates took during their preservice year, Sposato leaders took up this idea explicitly and elaborated why relationship-building skills would allow candidates to enhance students' academic achievement:

Here's one way to think about it: your class is like spinach. Some students like spinach, so they'll gladly eat it. Others know that spinach is good for them, so they'll eat it grudgingly, with a little encouragement. But a certain percentage of

students just hate spinach, and they don't understand why they should have to eat it. That's where you come in. The only reason someone in this last group of students might start to eat some spinach is as a favor of sorts to you, because you actually believe she can succeed, you expect the very best of her, and you legitimately see her as someone with great potential and on track to college. Students who don't like spinach may have had disappointing experiences with school in the past, may struggle with school material and find it incredibly frustrating to try and fail all day long, may have had difficult relationships with teachers in the past, and might not think of school as a way to achieve goals that are important to them. (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 62)

Relationship-building at Sposato, as a key feature of "culturally affirming teaching," was taught to candidates so that candidates would not blame either parents or students for their past academic experiences. Teaching relationship-building to candidates was assumed to allow candidates to more clearly establish academic goals for their classroom. As stated in this quotation, some students would resist the "spinach" of an academically rigorous classroom. "Culturally affirming" teachers were taught to build positive relationships to help increase the "palatability" of such an academically rigorous classroom.

In addition to using relationship-building to enhance academic achievement, according to Sposato leaders a major part of the job of relationship-building was also making sure that students and parents legitimately trusted the classroom teacher as someone who cared about students' academic development. Teaching candidates to build relationships in order to rebuild trust worked from the assumption that previous

educational experiences would have led families to believe otherwise. Therefore, candidates were taught to rebuild trust by emphasizing certain messages, as one administrator commented:

So the way we structure that instruction delivers the message that it's important. And the message we're sending is that we believe that you can do it, we believe the students can do this. And that I'm not going to give up on you. So those are the three key messages that we are ensuring that our students understand and the outcome of this class is that they get those beliefs and those beliefs are transmitted through the procedures that we teach them, through the instructional practices and the culture building of their classroom. So big picture outcome is: our teachers can build strong classroom cultures. (Interview #5, administrator/faculty)

Strong classroom cultures were those with “culturally affirming” teachers who had built relationships with students and families and who made sure their students knew the focus of the classroom was academic achievement. Along these lines one coach stated,

I think every kid can be smarter tomorrow than they are today. Whatever that looks like. I think that a kid comes from a family and being involved with that family will help the child in the long run. I think messaging to every child and family that achievement is important. (Interview #24, coach)

The relationship-building that “culturally affirming” teachers engaged in was assumed to establish trust with students and families because of the clear, consistent emphasis that “No Excuses” schools zeroed in on academic achievement. Candidates at Sposato were taught to build these kinds of relationships to assuage the fears of families who were assumed to have been mistreated by other school environments and to contribute to a

school and classroom culture focused on achievement. At Sposato, it was assumed that this kind of classroom culture could not be built unless these strong relationships had been built first.

The final perspective related to “culturally affirming teaching” taught to candidates at Sposato was to maintain a “whatever it takes” attitude due to the urgency of the mission prevalent at “No Excuses” schools to close the achievement gap. Candidates were taught to do “whatever it takes” both to make sure students succeeded academically so that they could begin to access the “culture of power” but also to ensure that the trust that had been built between teachers and families would not have been misplaced. For example, one adjunct faculty member said that successful teachers at her school and at Sposato,

believe that every student in their classroom can and will achieve. And that if a student is struggling at the moment, that maybe they need to teach – that it’s not just about the student not getting it, but that the teachers believe that they have a part in ensuring that the students completely understand the content at the end of the time. I think that the teacher really values their part of what is happening in the classroom. So really owning that if a student is not engaged, for example, it’s not just that the student doesn’t care, it’s really looking inside themselves and being reflective to say: what could I do differently to get the student where they need to be? (Interview #20, faculty)

“Culturally affirming teaching” was assumed to be marked by a high level of self-responsibility for students’ success and adherence to a relentless work ethic. As stated in the course guide for the relationship-building course candidates took during their

preservice year, candidates were taught to get students to “love you, love the team, love the journey, and love the destination” (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 5). These goals were pursued at any cost, without sacrificing relationships or forcing students to abandon their home culture, because of the importance of the destination of college and career readiness for eventually gaining access to the “culture of power.”

By integrating each of the three perspectives described above, “culturally affirming teaching” as a way to guide successful teaching in “No Excuses” schools was also intended as a way to allow candidates to enact the Sposato vision of equity and justice. Because the core idea of the Sposato vision was to help create a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities historically denied to marginalized communities, the “culturally affirming teaching” set of perspectives was designed to teach candidates how to give students opportunities that would put them on the path to success. One way to understand this approach to teaching and teacher preparation for urban schools is in terms of Haberman’s (1995) “star teacher” framework as well as the case studies of successful urban teachers conducted by S.C. Carter (2001) and Whitman (2008), which as briefly described in Chapter Two, helped establish the “No Excuses” movement.

Each of these research-based frameworks for successful urban teaching suggests that the primary way to be a successful teacher in an urban environment serving students of Color from low-income families is to hold these students to an uncompromising vision of success and academic achievement while providing them with an academically rigorous curriculum and with enough resources and support to succeed. According to Whitman (2008), success in schools filled with this kind of teacher had not been accidental. Rather Whitman suggests that, “The notion that inner-city schools can only

succeed when heroic educators are at the helm gives too little credit to the shift in pedagogy and academic culture that animates the new paternalistic schools” (p. 9). Though leaders at Sposato and its partner “No Excuses” schools would not refer to their approach as “paternalistic,” the central idea holding together these conceptions of successful urban teaching is that high-quality, dedicated, and willing educators who have been well-prepared to make up for the past systemic failures of the students they serve will work relentlessly to prove that high levels of academic achievement are in fact possible in these contexts. It is of course worth noting here, as I did in Chapter Two, that “No Excuses”-affiliated schools, which are assumed to be filled with a certain type of successful urban teacher, have a demonstrated but disputed track record of success at closing the achievement gap. The “culturally affirming teaching” set of perspectives taught at Sposato was very consistent with the features of the “No Excuses” model, though: the “whatever it takes” attitude, a focus on building relationships to restore trust in educational systems, and the creation of academically rigorous environments that provide access to the “culture of power” for historically marginalized communities (Miller, 2015).

This perspective on what it takes for teachers to be successful with students in urban schools stands in stark contrast to another often-used approach in urban teacher education programs: Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of “culturally relevant pedagogy.” Ladson-Billings’ approach calls for a much more rigorous recognition and inclusion of the inherent value of cultural difference, rather than the “culturally affirming teaching” perspective that awareness of difference is necessary to help a teacher diagnose what resources a student needs in order to access the “culture of power.” Unlike the

Sposato approach which as discussed in Chapter Five was focused on delivering received notions of rigorous curriculum using predictable, efficient instructional methods, Ladson-Billings' framework suggests that the moral and epistemological frameworks that define students' home cultures should be brought into the center of pedagogical and instructional approaches taken by a teacher. Ladson-Billings' approach also does not emphasize teaching students to negotiate between their home cultures and "the culture of power," as the Sposato model did intending to get candidates to prepare their students for economically independent lives. Rather, Ladson-Billings' "culturally relevant pedagogy" emphasized teachers' "ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). This critical consciousness is intended to call into question the very nature and construction of the "culture of power."

On its surface, the three perspectives comprising "culturally affirming teaching" taught at Sposato seem to be aligned with the spirit of Ladson Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy, especially in the sense that Sposato leaders emphasized teaching candidates to appreciate students' home culture and the importance of student and parent voice in school-based decision-making. However, the lack of "critical consciousness" in the Sposato approach, which is at the center of "culturally relevant pedagogy," suggests that the "culturally affirming teaching" perspectives lack a more systematic investigation of received assumptions about the "culture of power" necessary to undo the deleterious effects this culture has had on minoritized students and their families. In fact, as demonstrated above, the set of perspectives comprising "culturally affirming teaching"

taught to Sposato candidates was designed to distribute access to the “culture of power” more equitably as called for in the Sposato vision of equity and justice.

Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant pedagogy focuses on the systemic and authentic inclusion of students’ home culture as a fundamental source of knowledge in schooling and envisions using critical consciousness to assert multiple possible just outcomes for historically marginalized students other than accessing the “culture of power.” The “culturally affirming teaching” perspectives taught at Sposato, on the other hand, were primarily focused on using relationship-building and cultural affirmation to get students on the right academic track within already-established social and educational systems. Yet despite this fundamental difference between these two approaches, Sposato candidates were presented with a consistent and unified vision of what success looked like in urban schools and for urban students. And as briefly mentioned above, “culturally affirming teaching” as a set of perspectives guiding this kind of successful teaching was well designed to enact the Sposato core vision of teacher preparation for compensatory equity and distributive justice.

**The instrumental purpose of “culturally affirming teaching.”** At a certain level, it was assumed that “culturally affirming teaching” perspectives needed to be taught at Sposato because teacher candidates at Sposato were mostly White, recent college graduates from relatively affluent backgrounds. As has been discussed in the literature on preparing White teachers to teach diverse student populations (e.g., C.R. Anderson & Cross, 2013; Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013; Sleeter, 2008), effective programs are those marked by their ability to teach White teacher candidates how to enact some form of cultural affirmation. As stated in Sleeter’s (2008) review, “It is not

enough to prepare White teachers to teach [diverse student populations] *as well as* the average White teacher does currently. Doing so would only perpetuate lower expectations, discomfort, and lack of appropriate pedagogical knowledge” (p. 561, emphasizes in the original). The Sposato approach to “culturally affirming teaching” emphasized this idea that it was not enough to prepare their teachers to be effective by just using moves or efficient instructional approaches as discussed in Chapter Five.

“Culturally affirming teaching,” then, was designed to address an intrinsic purpose: to teach upper middle class, White teachers to establish positive classroom cultures for minoritized students in “No Excuses” schools from historically marginalized communities so that they would feel safe, cared for, and loved. As pointed out in the course guide for the relationship-building course, “Here’s a secret we discovered recently: kids are people. And we already know that people want to be noticed and cared about as individuals. Therefore: Kids, like all people, want to be noticed and cared about as individuals” (SPO 110 Course Guide, p. 68). This passage, written in an intentionally humorous tone like many internal documents at Sposato, demonstrated that Sposato faculty intended to teach candidates to be “culturally affirming” teachers not as a “con” to generate student learning gains but as a way to embrace the communities in which they worked.

Yet Sposato administrators noted that candidates often felt they did not receive enough clarity about how they should use the “culturally affirming teaching” set of perspectives in their teaching. One administrator explained the reason for this lack of clarity was that “culturally affirming teaching” had not been as rigorously theorized as

other core concepts in the Sposato curriculum such as “moves” or “Cycles of Practice and Feedback:”

We kind of compartmentalize into instructional preparation or intellectual preparation, instructional execution, classroom management and relationship building as the four big pieces that really contribute to an effective teacher. The fifth piece that I think we are starting to add more, but I don't think we have figured out what that right door into how – what do these people really need to know that they are going to encounter as first-year teachers – is around cultural competence and developing cultural competency. We have, probably since year four of the program, even year five, so this the fourth year that we've, I think every year we get a little step closer in terms of thinking about application of culturally affirming teaching, of just “What are the aspects of race and class that our residents really need to know to add to effective teaching?” And that is a puzzle I don't feel like we have totally solved. (Interview #26, administrator)

As demonstrated in Chapter Five, Sposato leaders felt confident that they had figured out what and how to teach candidates to be effective teachers. Similarly, leaders attempted to articulate a clear and consistent definition of “culturally affirming teaching,” based on the three perspectives described above. The moves of relationship-building, such as implementing classroom rituals and mantras or a move Sposato leaders referred to as “remember the sneeze” – a method of taking explicit notice about little things students do to make them feel appreciated (see Appendix C for a list of these moves), were treated just like the moves of classroom instruction, management, and presence. Leaders taught these concepts as discrete, technical skills candidates should learn and as behaviors that

could be practiced and perfected. But despite the precision with which these relationship-building moves were taught, Sposato leaders were more uncertain about whether they had adequately articulated how to get candidates to emphasize the three perspectives comprising “culturally affirming teaching” in their classrooms.

Ultimately, the reason why leaders and candidates struggled with the enactment of the “culturally affirming teaching” set of perspectives was because these perspectives were primarily designed to serve an instrumental purpose related to the technically rational vision leaders and candidates shared. Candidates were taught to be “culturally affirming” so that their classrooms would better enhance student learning. Given that “culturally affirming teaching” was taught like everything at Sposato, i.e., the technical things a teacher does so that certain student learning outcomes occur, at Sposato conversations about “culturally affirming teaching” always returned to the technically rational goal of closing achievement gaps consistent with the Sposato vision of equity and justice. The perspectives comprising “culturally affirming teaching,” then, can also be understood as extensions of the Sposato habitus and the epistemology of teacher effectiveness since leaders assumed candidates would not learn to become “jaw-droppingly effective rookies” until they also learned technical skills related to “culturally affirming teaching.” This suggests that while the set of perspectives comprising “culturally affirming teaching” was intended to introduce candidates to concepts like cultural differences and eschewing deficit perspectives, the function of teaching candidates to be “culturally affirming” in practice reinforced the narrow, technical images of what successful and effective teaching looked like described in Chapters Four and Five.

The literature on the effective preparation of White teachers for diverse students, similar to Ladson-Billings' theories of culturally relevant pedagogy, raises questions about programs that focus almost exclusively on closing achievement gaps and teaching students about the "culture of power" without questioning this concept. For example, Sleeter (2008) points out in her review that it is not enough to prepare teachers to be effective instructional or curricular implementers: "Preparing White teachers is not simply a matter of equipping presumably unbiased individuals with additional skills and strategies to use with diverse populations. If it were that simple, patterns of racial bias and exclusion would not continue to permeate schooling" (p. 561). Similarly, Milner, Pearman, and McGee (2013) in their critical review of literature on teacher education, found that preparation programs in which candidates were prepared to teach students of Color that did not rigorously interrogate assumptions about the inherent injustice of the "culture of power" allowed the negative consequences of that culture to go unquestioned.

Drawing on this work, what I am suggesting here is that because Sposato leaders used the "culturally affirming teaching" perspectives primarily as a mechanism to enact their vision of compensatory equity and distributive justice, their teacher preparation program was not designed to address how the "culture of power" had historically been constructed in ways that excluded the marginalized populations served by "No Excuses" schools. Sposato leaders recognized historical patterns of exclusion as the cause of educational problems like the achievement gap. But their intentional adoption of technically rational approaches to equity and justice in teacher preparation set certain limitations on the possibility of them using this vision and this model as a means to achieve broader equity and justice goals.

## **The Consequences of Pursuing a Progressive Neoliberal Political Strategy**

In order to accomplish their goal of preparing candidates to be successful and to close achievement gaps in “No Excuses” school contexts, Sposato leaders designed a program that was marked by a distinct vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice. As demonstrated above, Sposato faculty and staff accomplished this goal by teaching candidates to enact this shared vision. From the perspective of Sposato leaders, then, the program’s vision was realized because teacher candidates at Sposato went on to be “culturally affirming” teachers in “No Excuses” schools.

Articulating and enacting a clear vision is a commonly agreed upon feature of effective teacher preparation program design (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Hammerness, 2013), similar to the concept of program coherence discussed in Chapter Four, which allows a program to achieve strong alignment of core ideas and learning opportunities, and the concept of curriculum discussed in Chapter Five, which allows a program to teach candidates core practices essential to classroom success. According to Hammerness (2013), “vision captures the kind of teachers that faculty hope their graduates will develop into as full-time classroom teachers; it may also represent the kind of role that faculty hope their teachers might play in the educational system” (pp. 401-402). At Sposato, leaders knew that to be successful at a “No Excuses” school required teachers to be “culturally affirming.” In addition, Sposato faculty hoped their candidates would be the next generation of “No Excuses”-style reformers of the educational system. My interviews with candidates suggest this assumption was not unfounded: all the candidates I interviewed at both the preservice and inservice level defined equity and justice in essentially the same terms as Sposato faculty.

However, in this final section, I argue as I did in Chapters Four and Five that the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice was limited in two main ways: (1) its partialness, meaning that the program focused on technically rational solutions to complex problems such as focusing on the achievement gap as a way to address larger social injustices; and (2) its unsustainability, meaning that Sposato leaders enacted their vision by preparing first-year teachers but without a strategy for how to keep those teachers in the profession. I show that this response to the solution of closing the achievement gap was taken up intentionally by Sposato insiders because they believed they had done everything in their power and within their sphere of influence to enact their vision. I demonstrate that leaders acknowledged that underlying their vision was the assumption that broad social injustices could only be addressed gradually. I then show that this acknowledgement of the inherent gradualism of their vision was due to a political strategy consistent with what Lahann and Reagan (2011) have referred to as “progressive neoliberalism.” I conclude this chapter with consideration of the consequences of accepting this inherently gradualist vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice.

**The limitations of the Sposato vision.** The first limitation of the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice was the fact that, as demonstrated above, compensatory views of equity and distributive approaches to justice tend to promote technically rational solutions to complex social problems. This approach is marked by its fundamental partialness. For instance, as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the work of teacher preparation at Sposato was always related back to teacher effectiveness and closing the achievement gap. The following vignette from the

community and social contexts course taken by candidates in their preservice year, in which candidates were taught about what Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2006) has called the "education debt," helps to illustrate this point:

*The entire focus of this first session of the Community, Culture, and Context course of the 2016-2017 year was 'the education debt.' The class spent most of the first class hour breaking down the major themes in Ladson-Billings' analysis of the education debt, and class members brought up several questions related to institutional oppression and systemic injustices that exacerbate educational achievement gaps over time. Yet the framing question of this class session was 'What is the education reform movement's answer to the education debt?' and faculty members asserted that the clearest path for 'No Excuses' educators to help undo the education debt was by working to close the achievement gap at 'No Excuses' schools. Although the larger structural problems discussed in the Ladson-Billings article were mentioned, faculty reminded candidates that they were about to be teachers in schools that explicitly addressed this particular aspect of this complex set of problems. (Observation #13, SPO 100 – session 1)*

The focus in this class, consistent with other classes at Sposato, was not understanding and grappling with the large systemic problems that produce and reproduce inequities. Rather, Sposato leaders identified a single problem among a constellation of broader social problems – the achievement gap – and proposed their solution to that problem: train teachers in a very particular way that will close that gap.

The fact that in this course closing the achievement gap was framed as a solution to the "education debt" suggests that Sposato insiders assumed that their partial, technical

solution to closing the achievement gap would address larger complex problems. As mentioned above, reformers within the “No Excuses” movement tended to believe that complex problems should be recognized, but they also believed that it was the responsibility of reformers to find pragmatic and practical entry points to these problems, or as one faculty member said during this same class session, “That is why these [“No Excuses”] schools exist. There was a sentiment that enough is enough. Is it perfect? No. Does it still need to evolve? Of course it does” (Observation #13, SPO 100 – session 1).

But by promoting the inherent partialness of the Sposato vision as a way to solve the problems of inequity and injustice in the educational system, Sposato leaders ran the risk of never actually addressing the core problems that caused the immediate educational inequities and injustices Sposato candidates were taught to undo. For instance, some Sposato staff raised concerns that a focus on closing achievement gaps was insufficient for addressing the broad social problems like poverty and racism experienced by the historically marginalized communities served by “No Excuses” schools. As one adjunct faculty member said,

Schools alone I think are not going to address poverty in this country and I think when people say that schools alone are all you need, it’s a cop out. It’s a statement designed to get a lot of people off the hook for a lot of things. Education alone is not enough. It’s an important part, but if you are living in poverty, you are already – I think the argument is like – just permanently behind, before you even get to school. (Interview #21, faculty)

This faculty member insisted that Sposato did “the best possible job” several times in his interview, but still raised the concern that problems like poverty or racism were out of the

control of any teacher preparation program or school seeking to address these problems using technical means.

As Mehta (2013a) and others have claimed, technically rational solutions tend to be effective methods for achieving material gains and providing educational opportunities otherwise being denied to students. However, these are necessary but insufficient methods because, as stated in Ladson-Billings' (2006) own assessment of the education debt, an "all out focus on the 'Achievement Gap' moves us toward short term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem" (p. 4). Ladson-Billings cautioned that "inequalities in health, early childhood experiences, out-of-school experiences, and economic security are also contributory and cumulative and make it near-impossible for us to reify the achievement gap as *the* source and cause of social inequality" (p. 10). In contrast to Ladson Billings' viewpoint, underlying the Sposato vision was the assumption that the achievement gap was the central cause of social inequality because it was the cause most proximal to "No Excuses" reform models. The partialness of the Sposato vision reified the idea of the achievement gap rather than framing it as one of many solutions that had be addressed using coordinated and simultaneous strategies. This approach also subsequently reinforced the technical, instrumental, and individualist methods that were taught to candidates.

The second major limitation of the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice was the fact that Sposato was designed to prepare first-year teachers to enter "No Excuses" schools who would eventually close the achievement gap but did not necessarily have a programmatic strategy for how to prepare teachers to structurally confront the achievement gap throughout the professional lifespan. As the literature on

“No Excuses” schools described in Chapter Two has demonstrated, there is significant faculty and staff turnover in “No Excuses” schools because of the amount and quality of work expected from these teachers (e.g., Torres 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Rather than be a program that sought to find a sustainable solution to the achievement gap by preparing teachers for an entire career, the Sposato approach consistent, with its vision of equity and justice, was to consistently prepare new crops of first-year teachers ready to stem the tide of a widening achievement gap.

For example, one candidate in her inservice year recognized that there would always be a need for Sposato teachers since the Sposato model was not designed as a way to eliminate the persistence or intractability of the achievement gap as a social problem:

Their goal is to close the achievement gap and not have this giant discrepancy between children of different races or different incomes in terms of their quality of education. So I think – and I was surprised when they told me that. They were like, “Our goal is to cease to exist, our goal is to not need Sposato.” That’s obviously never going to happen, but I do think they have a broader mission of providing high-quality teachers to deal with these educational discrepancies and deficiencies when it comes to race and class and I think that the way that they deal with that is by training good teachers for these kids. (Interview #1, candidate/MET year)

From this perspective, shared by many candidates and faculty interviewed, the Sposato program was designed to provide candidates with a certain set of skills to address a certain set of problems immediately in their first years of teaching, but these methods

could only at best provide hope that someday the problems being addressed by those candidates would be more sustainably solved.

At Sposato, the lack of a sustainable solution to the achievement gap was understood by candidates to be reflected in the program's mission to create effective *rookie* teachers. A candidate in her preservice year expressed the frustration, shared by all candidates I interviewed, that the work of closing achievement gaps in "No Excuses"-affiliated schools may not be sustainable:

I feel very inundated with the message of like, "We need to make first-year teachers great." But I feel like where it should be going is, to make these first-year teachers great and then make these teachers really great for these kids who need this. It doesn't feel like there is a lot of that focus on sustainability and retention and whatever. It feels very much like the program actually exists on the fact that people are constantly shifting. Because they always have these new first-year teachers and there are always jobs available. They have 100% job placement. That's because people are leaving. And that is actually, probably, a worse problem. (Interview #23, candidate/residency year)

Candidates at Sposato were highly motivated to work in urban education, yet they saw a landscape in "No Excuses" schools that seemed to burn teachers out and did not see their preparation program offering a solution to *that* problem. As noted in Torres's (2014, 2016a, 2016b) program of research discussed in Chapter Two about the retention of teachers in "No Excuses" schools, "No Excuses"-aligned institutions tended to lack a focus on how to keep teachers ready to engage in the "No Excuses" vision beyond the

first few years and before they burned out. According to teacher candidates, the Sposato vision for equity and justice tended to fall into this same trap.

It is important to note that although Sposato candidates stated these concerns about lack of sustainability and Sposato's partial understanding of achievement gap in "No Excuses" schools, all of them shared the Sposato vision of equity and justice described above. None of the candidates I interviewed flat-out rejected the "No Excuses" model of urban education or the Sposato model of teacher preparation. This indicates that the lack of sustainability of the Sposato model was viewed as a limitation by insiders but not as an inherent contradiction of the model itself.

**The inherent gradualism of the Sposato vision.** The limits of the Sposato model are part of an endemic problem in teacher preparation for equity and justice. Any single solution offered to address complex problems is inherently partial, which is why most theorists of teacher education for social justice have called for more complex definitions (Cochran-Smith, 2010). On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that it is much easier to theorize these concepts than to enact the work of teacher preparation for social justice.

One way to make sense of the political strategies of the Sposato vision is through the lens of what Lahann and Reagan (2011) have referred to as "progressive neoliberalism." According to Lahann and Reagan, this strategy is defined by "the spirit and assumptions of the progressive and social justice tradition combined with business-infused managerial strategies" (p. 13) and located within "a political space that exists for neoliberals who challenge some elements of conservatism and align themselves with

progressive goals” (p. 8). In addition, progressive neoliberalism is bounded by five core assumptions:

(1), Public education, as it is currently constituted, reinforces social inequities by failing to provide an excellent education to all students; (2), public education can benefit from deregulating market reforms that reward the most efficient service providers, encourage innovation, and bridge the private and public spheres; (3), public education can benefit from the logic, technology, and strategy of business; (4), the market cannot be trusted to rectify inequity by itself, and instead positive action is required to offset historical disparities; and (5) public education is an arena for social activism in which actors can work both within and against the system for equitable ends. (Lahann & Reagan, 2011, pp. 13-14)

From the perspective of “progressive neoliberalism,” it is assumed that the current socioeconomic status quo is working for some and not working for others, but it can be made to work for others if access to opportunities are more efficiently, effectively, and broadly distributed.

The theory of change behind Lahann and Reagan’s (2011) progressive neoliberalism, then, is that reformers should work toward progressive ideals of equity and justice but use whatever means necessary, including market-driven neoliberal methods, to achieve those ends. Though some theorists have questioned the incompatibility of neoliberalism and progressivism (e.g., Engel, 2000, Harvey, 2005), Lahann and Reagan point out that progressive neoliberalism remains a popular political strategy within the contemporary educational reform movement because of its compatibility with the core

commitments to how equity and justice as described above can be achieved in and through schools.

Sposato, as a teacher preparation program intended to work for equity and justice, was aligned with this progressive neoliberal perspective. Sposato insiders held the progressive belief students attending “No Excuses” schools and their families had been marginalized and minoritized through lack of access to educational opportunities and to the skills and habits assumed to represent the “culture of power.” Sposato leaders also assumed that inequities and injustices could be undone through the technically rational work of preparing “jaw-droppingly effective rookie” and “culturally affirming” teachers for “No Excuses” environments. This is related to the progressive neoliberal assumption that positive action by dedicated public educators is necessary to undo histories of inequality and injustice.

The consequence of pursuing a progressive neoliberal strategy, though, is the persistent rationalization that the slow-paced work of closing achievement gaps (which may never ultimately be closed) can bring about a more systemic form of justice. In the Sposato vision described in this chapter, candidates were prepared to be effective new teachers who would enhance learning opportunities for individual students using the best technical curricular and instructional methods known to the Sposato faculty. The assumption was that these students would gain access to the “culture of power” and that accessing this culture would allow them to be economically independent given the current U.S. social power dynamics. Along these same lines, it was assumed that individual students would eventually be socially and economically self-determining.

Yet political strategies like the Sposato model of teacher preparation are inherently gradualist. They focus on distributing educational opportunities in a compensatory fashion to individual students. And rather than address the causes of social problems, reformers who use these strategies assume that if more people implemented similar methods, the solutions would gradually come to scale. This set of assumptions was one additional reason why Sposato leaders wanted their model to serve as a “revolutionary proof point” in the preparation of preservice teachers as described in Chapter Five. Despite the partialness of this model, gradualism was adopted by Sposato leaders and candidates as an intentional political strategy to take control of a complex situation that would otherwise appear unsolvable or unapproachable.

The progressive neoliberalism at Sposato was an attempt to gain control over problems that had been previously deemed intractable. As demonstrated above, faculty and candidates at Sposato were not ignorant or naïve enough to assume that the work of teacher preparation in their program would ever solve all problems faced by students in “No Excuses” schools. And their solution to the intractability of social problems was designed to be a coordinated effort to undo the inequitable consequences of historical inequities experienced by their students. But the emphasis within this progressive neoliberal vision of equity and justice was to produce something even if that something was not perfect. Similar to many innovations within the contemporary education reform movement, the point was not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. So the ultimate consequence of this political strategy was accepting the consequence that the strategy would only ever address problems in partial and gradual ways.

## **Conclusion**

Sposato teacher preparation methods, along with the urban education reforms of “No Excuses” schools (Miller, 2015) were not antithetical to the work of social justice. In fact, as I have shown throughout this dissertation, the teacher preparation program at Sposato was successful on its own terms: it prepared effective new teachers who engaged in “culturally affirming” practices and knew how to close achievement gaps. These candidates were assumed to be ready to enact a vision of equity and justice in their classrooms that would not only close achievement gaps but would also allow historically minoritized students access to the “culture of power” in the U.S. The Sposato definition of social justice was gradualist yet grounded in the pragmatic belief that technically rational solutions across multiple fields of work would in the long run bring about wide-sweeping changes if brought to scale.

As I have shown in this chapter, achieving the goal of preparing candidates to be successful in “No Excuses” schools depended on a reform strategy predicated on a compensatory view of equity that rested on individualist rather than collective grounds and a distributive approach to justice that rested on the technical redistribution of academic resources and supports. Sposato leaders argued that their approach to reform achieved all that could possibly be achieved given the unfair social and political circumstances of urban education in the U.S., which they had no immediate power to undo. Their approach to teacher preparation, which they assumed could and should be used to close achievement gaps, accomplished all it could possibly accomplish and subsequently provided a powerful example of a program that produced effective teachers.

Yet the tendency within progressive neoliberal political strategies like the Sposato vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice is to assume that equity and justice goals must be narrow if any progress toward equity and justice is to be accomplished. As demonstrated in this chapter, the fact that leaders and candidates took a compensatory view of equity and a distributive view of justice meant that they oriented their teacher preparation program toward technical solutions to complex problems. The danger of neoliberal education reform is that it is often presented as the only actionable strategy to accomplish equity and justice goals (Harvey, 2005), which then reifies the inherently limited and partial approaches taken to enact this vision rather than emphasizing the coordinated social activism necessary to help fully realize broader social justice ends.

The limited approach to a vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice described in this chapter mirrors the other limitations in the Sposato model. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the internally coherent program design had the ultimate effect of ushering dissenting opinions and beliefs out of the program, which enhanced consensus about key educational problems and solutions but lost the richness of diverse viewpoints. And as demonstrated in Chapter Five, the epistemological foundations of the Sposato curriculum came from a single, tightly-knit instructional community (Miller, 2015) and limited the definition of effective teaching to the technical implementation of received views of curriculum and instruction. It is possible to claim that Sposato, because of its very consistent approach to coherence, curriculum, and vision, did a better job than some urban teacher preparation programs at preparing “effective” teachers for certain schools. But the negative consequences of realizing this model must also be considered.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Beyond Teacher Effectiveness: Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy**

New graduate schools of education have established themselves as part of the “new normal” of the teacher preparation landscape in the United States. Although as mentioned in more detail below the U.S. political landscape is uncertain following the election of Donald Trump, the dominant viewpoint described in Chapters One and Two continues to be that more high-quality teachers are needed to solve America’s educational crises. Underlying this viewpoint is the assumption that university-based teacher education has generally failed to produce high-quality teachers, which has led to a teacher quality gap that disadvantages schools with large populations of poor and/or minoritized students (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press; Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016; Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016). These views have helped create a policy and practice environment in which teacher preparation at nGSEs is regarded by many as a promising innovation, and nGSEs have expanded in scope and impact. For example, the Relay Graduate School of Education has recently expanded to a tenth state (Connecticut) and the Gates Foundation has spent upwards of ten million dollars to support the work of teacher preparation innovation at highly visible nGSEs like Relay and Sposato (Sawchuk, 2015).

Similarly, “No Excuses”-style schools have continued to garner attention based on high student achievement outcomes (Davis & Heller, 2016) despite the lack of consensus about whether or not the specific curricular and instructional practices at these schools actually cause the student learning gains the schools report (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Fryer, 2011; Seider et al., 2016). Interestingly, the “No Excuses” label is disliked

by many of the educators who work within the highest achieving of these high-poverty urban charter and turnaround schools in the Boston area, including leaders at Match Education and the Sposato GSE. Despite this distaste for the label, the idea that there is a certain behavioral and instructional culture that makes “No-Excuses” schools distinct is taken for granted by the educators, policymakers, and communities who continue to support this model of urban education (Miller, 2015; Sondel, 2016; Torres, 2016a, 2016b). Just as nGSEs seem now to be part of a “common sense” solution to the problem of low teacher education quality, “No Excuses” schools have become a “common sense” solution to the problem of low-achieving urban school districts and neighborhoods in part because of the track record these schools appear to have at producing high student achievement and high numbers of students attending college.

As mentioned in Chapter One, preparation programs like the one at Sposato are part of efforts by “No Excuses”-style reformers to use the space that exists within the current nGSE policy environment to try out teacher preparation innovations related to their definition of teacher effectiveness. However, as noted in Chapter One, despite the growing popularity of teacher preparation at “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs, there has been no systematic, independent research about them. This study set out to address this need by analyzing what one such a program was designed to do based on the internal logic of that program and unpacking the implications of this new kind of program design for the field of teacher education. The intention of this qualitative case study of teacher preparation at the Sposato Graduate School of Education was to analyze from insiders’ perspectives how teacher preparation at this “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE was designed, implemented, and enacted by administrators, faculty, and candidates. In addition, the

study sought to make sense of specific curricular and pedagogical innovations present at Sposato to contribute to an empirically-grounded understanding of its vision of high-quality, effective teacher preparation for urban schools and how that vision was enacted in practice.

As I showed in Chapter Two, there is a need in the field of teacher preparation research to more fully understand what it is that makes a program effective or even powerful (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al., 2016; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Similarly, as I have argued, U.S. urban education reform policy debates have tended to look for models and practices that “work” at boosting student achievement and thus providing just and equitable outcomes for students and communities. To a great extent, as argued throughout this dissertation, teacher preparation at Sposato was successful. That is, it stands as a coherent, consistent example of how a preparation program can be designed to reach the outcomes of producing “effective” teachers for “No Excuses” schools. In this dissertation I have shown that teacher preparation at Sposato accomplished what its leaders and faculty members intended the program to do. In that sense, I have shown that the Sposato program was effective per its own internal definition of effectiveness and consistent with what I refer to as the “teacher effectiveness doctrine,” or the growing consensus in teacher education quality debates that teacher quality should primarily be defined by teacher effectiveness, or the ability of a teacher to directly and positively impact student learning. This information is valuable to the field of teacher education especially since some previous critiques of teacher preparation at nGSEs do not work from access to data that actually gets at what the program does and how it works.

With this said it is also important to reiterate that the point of this study was not simply to understand as much as possible about how insiders at a “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE enacted their own approach to teacher preparation for urban schools and whether they succeeded. This study was also designed to consider the implications of this approach as a model for urban teacher education more generally. For that reason, this case study of Sposato offers a much more nuanced perspective about what teacher quality and teacher effectiveness actually mean in practice. As I demonstrated in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the Sposato program as designed and enacted did indeed create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers,” but only in the sense of the definitions and goals that were inherent to the Sposato program. Based on the data I collected, I uncovered and unpacked the Sposato theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) in Chapter Four and demonstrated that the Sposato “habitus” led to the reification of a narrow definition of teacher effectiveness directly connecting teacher moves to student learning. In Chapter Five, I analyzed the epistemological stance underlying the Sposato curriculum and demonstrated that candidates were being prepared almost exclusively in terms of technical proficiency for the first year of teaching rather than for more complex professional decision-making. Finally, in Chapter Six, I demonstrated the consistency between a narrow, more technical definition of teacher effectiveness and the equity and justice goals to which Sposato insiders were committed. I suggested that this was a consequence of a progressive neoliberal political strategy, which assumes that social change occurs in a gradualist, individualist way.

Overall, my analysis reveals that the Sposato program was remarkably consistent and coherent in terms of vision, curriculum, and practice. Based on the Sposato concept

of teacher effectiveness that was central to the Sposato model, leaders and faculty members did indeed successfully enact their mission of creating “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers.” However this understanding of teacher effectiveness provides a necessary but insufficient approach to teacher preparation for urban schools. It intentionally reinforces a technical image of the work of teaching, which limits the equity and justice goals of a teacher preparation program. Of course, it is important to note that no teacher preparation program wants its candidates to be unprepared for the daily tasks of enacting classroom management, engaging students, and offering instruction. Technical skills must be addressed in all preservice teacher preparation if they are to succeed. But this dissertation raises questions about whether a singular focus on teacher effectiveness adequately prepares candidates for the complexity of the classroom work they are about to begin and for the larger questions about creating curriculum and becoming part of larger social movements for justice and equity.

My questions about the notions of justice and equity at Sposato are somewhat similar to Kretchmar and Zeichner’s (2016) critique of the perspectives promoted in Hess and McShane (2014)’s edited volume *Teacher Quality 2.0* and in Gastic’s (2014) essay on teacher preparation in that same volume. Kretchmar and Zeichner (2016) argue that although the field of teacher preparation has for too long neglected an emphasis on student learning, technical definitions of teacher effectiveness, such as those emerging out of the “teacher effectiveness doctrine” I have identified throughout this dissertation, lack a rigorous emphasis on the importance of preparing community teachers who can help to transform current inequitable and unjust social systems rather than just the schools that exist within these systems. What they refer to as “Teacher Prep 3.0” is a

framework for transforming teacher preparation so that teachers are prepared to be in solidarity with and integrated into communities in order to actually achieve the broader equity and justice goals that many advocates of teacher education have long set for themselves (Cochran-Smith, 2010; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Milner et al. 2013; Richert, Donahue, & Laboskey, 2009; Sleeter, 2009). Although Kretchmar and Zeichner (2016) are fairly skeptical of “Teacher Quality 2.0” programs like the one at Sposato, what this dissertation has shown is that the work of teacher preparation at Sposato should not be discredited simply because Sposato insiders do not share the same ideological focus on community transformation. Rather the internal logic of the Sposato model should be understood in its own right in order to uncover opportunities within this model to push forward theorizing within the field of teacher preparation for urban schools.

It can be argued, as I have done in my analysis, that the approach to teacher preparation at Sposato limits what is considered possible in teacher preparation for urban schools. But it is important to understand what those limits are, how those limits are either supported or questioned by insiders to the program, and what can be done within the program to address those limits should concerns or questions be raised. Rather than simply provide a critique of the Sposato approach to creating “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” using an epistemology of teacher effectiveness and a progressive neoliberal political strategy, this dissertation has attempted to provide an empirically-grounded set of assertions and arguments about the ways the Sposato approach has redefined and reshaped the purpose of preservice teacher preparation, and ultimately what that means more broadly. Therefore, the major implication of this study of teacher preparation is not that Sposato insiders are wrong about the way they do teacher

education, but that their approach will only be sufficient to help achieve a set of outcomes similar to those valued by practitioners at Sposato and its partner “No Excuses” schools – such as the urgent need to close the achievement gap – rather than outcomes such as undoing structural racism in urban classrooms (Richert et al., 2009) or challenging the inequities produced by the neoliberal assumptions latent in certain curricular approaches (Sleeter, 2009).

The findings of this study offer some perspective for rethinking essential questions of teacher preparation practice currently debated by teacher education practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and reformers. What can be learned from the Sposato model and the implications of this study for the research, practice, and policy of teacher preparation is the focus of the rest of this chapter. In this chapter, I first discuss implications for research, providing insight into how this study, as a pilot for the larger study of nGSEs described in Chapters One and Three, can be used to make sense of the nGSE phenomenon and what the findings suggest about the type of research that should continue to happen at nGSE sites. I next discuss the implications of this study’s findings for the practice of teacher preparation at “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs and beyond. In particular, I try to address the question: What might another way of preparing high-quality teachers look like that tries to learn from the limitations of centering teacher preparation in a teacher effectiveness framework as described in this case study? Finally, I discuss the implications of this study’s findings for policy and policymakers, focusing specifically on the concept of innovation and what innovation could or should look like given the currently shifting U.S. policy landscape.

## **Implications for Research**

As discussed in Chapters One and Three, this case study of teacher preparation at the Sposato Graduate School of Education is the pilot for a larger study of the nGSE phenomenon as well as one of four cases being investigated through within- and cross-case analyses. In terms of the larger nGSE study, the immediate implications of this research project have to do with how to apply its methods and findings and use them to refine the scope of the three other case studies. In that vein, this dissertation offers three major suggestions for what was learned in this study in its capacity as a pilot for the larger study.

First, a careful accounting of the ideological and epistemological foundations of nGSE approaches to teacher preparation is necessary to truly understand how and why certain nGSE models have been constructed. Sposato has a tightly internally coherent theory of practice, an epistemology of teacher effectiveness, and a progressive neoliberal political strategy for enacting equity and justice. These were the foundation upon which all work at Sposato was based. These stances, which defined the relationship between the ideological and the practical, were central to how, what, and for what purpose teacher candidates were taught. This suggests that in the larger nGSE study – and in future studies of alternative approaches to teacher education that are outside of universities – it will be essential to track these ideological foundations of knowledge, practice, and justice across case sites to determine whether there is a shared epistemological or moral stance about teacher preparation among sites. The importance of tracking these stances will be not only to see how knowledge, practice, and justice are defined by groups of like-minded practitioners, but also to see whether or not there are broader ideological trends

or shifts happening in the field of teacher education as represented by the work of nGSE insiders.

Second, the larger study of nGSEs must identify, unpack, and account for different definitions of teacher effectiveness. It has frequently been suggested by both proponents (Gastic, 2014; Hess & McShane, 2014) and opponents (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016; Zeichner, 2016) of nGSEs that teacher preparation programs at nGSEs focus almost exclusively on teacher effectiveness. However it is not clear whether the definitions of effectiveness that animate nGSE programs are similar across programs. The larger nGSE study must identify and account for the possibility of multiple definitions of teacher effectiveness. Along these lines, in her study of several urban charter schools, Merseth (2009) and her colleagues found that although these charter schools had shared commitments related to educational opportunity and achievement, there was not necessarily a single definition of what teaching and learning looked like across all schools in the study. Similarly, as I have argued, the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness is fixed and strictly defined by student learning outcomes that leaders at Sposato and its partner schools measure regularly and in specific ways. If in the larger study we find that teacher effectiveness is a commonly held value among nGSE practitioners, we will still need to examine what is meant by “effectiveness” across sites and sort out how that concept is variously practiced, enacted, or implemented.

Third, the larger nGSE study has as its goal determining what the new nGSE model or models of teacher preparation is/are. My dissertation suggests that in order to do this, we must look at a broad range of teacher preparation practices outside of coursework and student teaching. The findings of this case study suggest that much of the Sposato

curriculum was delivered to Sposato candidates in induction processes not tied to the formal course sequence or to their practicum experiences (for example, the program orientation day and the “No Excuses” principal panel Q&A). These experiences at Sposato were as important to helping Sposato leaders create “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” as the formal teacher preparation curriculum was. In addition, the contexts in which the practice of teacher preparation occurred at Sposato were “No Excuses” charter schools, and candidates’ experiences were fundamentally shaped by the unique cultures of these context-specific environments. Therefore, the larger nGSE study will need to discover whether or not this kind of context-specific experience is common at other nGSE sites, and if so, what the implications of an all-encompassing practical experience for candidates is in relation to “traditional” university programs, which tend to be context-general in the sense that candidates’ student teaching and coursework experiences are not tailored to a specific school context.

Outside of these three implications for the larger nGSE study, other implications for research derived from this case study of Sposato have to do with the current state of the field of teacher education research. The current research on urban teacher education and urban teacher residencies, as discussed in Chapter Two, has generally focused on either the relative effectiveness of a given practice, approach, or entryway to the teaching profession, or on how to better prepare White teacher candidates to enter schools serving students of Color (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). Urban teacher education research has not, on the whole, accounted very much for the broader political environments that are shaping and being shaped by the introduction of nGSEs to the field. This dissertation has argued that the field of teacher preparation research must establish relationships with

nGSE practitioners to study the broader nGSE phenomenon in a more systematic way in order to break down the barrier that currently exists between the practice of teacher preparation at nGSEs and university-based teacher preparation researchers. Practitioners in both of these groups are committed to improving teacher education quality, but they are currently not in the same conversations about the practice and politics of teacher preparation. This dissertation suggests that university-based researchers who engage with nGSE practitioners can learn more about questions central to the field related to effective program design and implementation.

In addition, I showed in Chapter Five that some nGSEs were designed to provide exemplary new models of effective teacher preparation for urban schools. Teacher preparation researchers must be aware of the impacts of the practice of urban teacher preparation nGSE leaders and advocates can have outside of nGSEs. For instance, curricular and instructional practices that began in “No Excuses” schools have now become widely cited and implemented in urban and other schools that do not affiliate with the “No Excuses” approach (Miller, 2015). As discussed in Chapters One and Two, there is no consensus in the research on “No Excuses” schools about the effectiveness of these methods, yet their popularity, particularly the taxonomy of teacher practices written by Doug Lemov (2010) in his book *Teach Like a Champion*, has started to reshape what effective practice looks like in these schools. Since nGSE leaders want to engage in conversations about effective teaching practice, teacher education researchers have a responsibility to partner with programs like Sposato and other “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE sites to see whether or not the practices used by a context-specific nGSE like Sposato would be useful or effective in other settings.

One last implication for research from this case study relates to the current emphasis in teacher education on practice and the importance of practice for teacher and student learning. The field of teacher preparation is currently being shaped by what Cochran-Smith (2016) has identified as five “turns,” or major policy and practice shifts that have changed the way the field of teacher preparation is understood by researchers and practitioners. These five turns are: (1) the policy turn, or the idea that implementing the right teacher quality policies will ensure the country’s economic health; (2) the accountability turn, or the pervasive belief that accountability systems focused on outcomes will improve teacher education quality; (3) the practice turn, or the increasing emphasis on clinical or practice-based experiences in teacher education; (4) the equity turn, or the growing emphasis on social and educational equity as an achievable goal of education reform; and (5) the university turn, which in the U.S. has actually been a turn away from the university as the most legitimate location for teacher preparation and is perhaps best illustrated by the nGSE phenomenon (Cochran-Smith, 2016; Cochran-Smith, Miller, et al., 2016). One of the key findings from this dissertation is that the rhetoric and practice of the nGSE phenomenon reflects a link between the university turn and the practice turn by asserting that increasing teacher education quality by focusing on clinical and practice-based experiences requires the dislocation of teacher preparation programs away from universities.

Yet as discussed in Chapter Five, the practice-based approach to teacher preparation at Sposato is significantly different from some other contemporary practice-based approaches to teacher education. Many of these, which have been developed by groups of university-based researchers working on new contexts for learning teaching

practices, including teaching simulations, assume that a practice-based focus is central to a program's effectiveness. But they do link the practice focus to a turn away from university-based preparation. This suggests that the political environment reinforcing the turn away from the university in U.S. teacher preparation is being shaped in part by the assumptions nGSE educators have about teacher effectiveness and the failures of university-based approaches to teacher preparation. Research into teacher preparation, then, must take into account the ways in which these five turns intersect in a given teacher preparation innovation while simultaneously acknowledging the distinctions between and among them.

### **Implications for the Practice of Teacher Education**

This study would be useful for those seeking to design new urban teacher education, urban teacher residency, or nGSE preparation programs because it offers insight into the structures and policies which allow teacher educators to focus on a clear, coherent, and consistent mission. Research on teacher preparation program effectiveness has long demonstrated programs that intentionally guide candidates' experiences toward an explicitly identified learning goal are more effective at helping candidates achieve this learning goal than programs that do not have this kind of intentional design (see for example, Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). The teacher preparation methods described in this dissertation, enacted with fidelity by leaders and candidates at Sposato, provide an example of what a "well-oiled machine" in teacher preparation could look like. The consistency of the implementation of the Sposato model also offers an almost perfect example for exploration because the Sposato program is so carefully and intentionally run and all intended outcomes in the program are reached. Teacher education practitioners

investigating program design could treat Sposato as a test case to see what it would look like, for instance, to build a program on the three essential beliefs or five central actions of the Sposato theory of practice. In addition, teacher education practitioners could look to the Sposato curriculum described in Chapter Five to examine what the outcomes of pursuing a moves-based curriculum would be. Finally, teacher education practitioners can learn from the Sposato case what the positive and negative consequences are of implementing a progressive neoliberal political strategy to enact a particular vision of equity and justice.

With all of this said, however, in large part because of how faithfully the model of teacher preparation was enacted at Sposato and the remarkably consistent way all the work was directed toward accomplishing their mission, this dissertation also suggests that Sposato provides a powerful example of the unstated consequences that come with pursuing this kind of teacher preparation. As argued throughout this dissertation, the narrow definition of teacher effectiveness directly connecting teacher moves to student learning at Sposato limited the range of participants' beliefs and practices deemed acceptable. For example, the Sposato model encouraged Sposato insiders to continually study discrete, technical skills to see if the use of those skills would more effectively or efficiently help close the achievement gap than moves currently enacted by teachers. But the model downplayed concerns about whether or not moves can in fact yield higher levels of student achievement because such concerns were inconsistent with the belief that the "right" teacher moves, implemented well, would lead to higher student learning.

The Sposato model had the further consequence of preparing effective first-year teachers, but not necessarily preparing these teachers for ongoing careers in teaching. The

largest gap in the curriculum at Sposato was the lack of frameworks for dealing with the full challenges and complexity of the teaching profession, particularly in high need urban environments. As I have shown, the Sposato approach focused on teaching moves to simplify the process of learning to teach so that candidates would be ready to impact student learning on the first day of their first year on the job, but in doing so eliminated from their curriculum discussion of the complexities of teaching, including curriculum creation, the challenge of not only celebrating but negotiating difference in the classroom, and the inherently political, values-laden nature of all curricular and instructional choices. The decision not to deal with these complexities was not accidental or unexamined. Rather it was consistent with the Sposato definition of teacher effectiveness and with Sposato leaders' justifiable rationalization that they were preparing teacher candidates to enter into very specific environments that required a certain kind of teaching—that is, the “culturally affirming,” gap-closing teaching required by “No-Excuses”-style schools serving primarily poor and/or minoritized students.

If teacher preparation practitioners wanted to create an effective urban teacher preparation program that both focused on student learning and attempted to move beyond a strict adherence to the definition of teacher effectiveness promoted at Sposato, the findings of this dissertation suggest the following ideas. First, coherence can be both a blessing and a curse for teacher education programs. That is, coherence can establish a clear and consistent approach to practice-based, context-specific teacher preparation. But it can also lead to the exclusion of the voices and perspectives of certain candidates. This is clear in the disproportional number of teacher candidates of Color who exited the Sposato program, for example. Second, to move beyond a focus on teacher effectiveness,

a teacher preparation program would have to organize its work from an epistemological stance that embraced the inherent complexity of teaching and that viewed the relationship between knowledge and practice in generative tension rather than in terms of a fixed, linear relationship between formal knowledge and implementation *or* in terms of knowledge defined only in terms of the moves of effective teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This alternative epistemological stance, which Cochran-Smith and Lytle call an “inquiry stance,” would be more consistent with a notion of teacher preparation introducing candidates to the problems of practice (Kennedy, 2016) and the professional dilemmas (Schneider, 2016) teachers face on a day-to-day basis, as well as the idea that teacher preparation communities should work for democratic purposes and justice goals (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Working from an epistemological stance that regards the introduction of dilemmas and problems of practice as educative opportunities for teacher candidates would provide a different transition between the first year of teaching and subsequent years. Finally, such a teacher preparation program would have to potentially consider an alternate political strategy to the progressive neoliberal approach described in Chapter Six. Though this political strategy allowed Sposato insiders to enact their vision of teacher preparation for equity and justice, this dissertation suggests that a program pursuing a vision of equity as participatory and democratic rather than as compensatory (Howe, 1997), or social justice as based in recognition rather than redistribution (Fraser & Honneth, 2003), would need a different political strategy.

Ultimately, since this case study provides a rich, empirically-grounded account of what “No Excuses” teacher preparation looks like, the findings from this study could help practitioners debate what kind of teacher preparation they think should be pursued for

urban schools. As mentioned in Chapter One, it is not consistent with this dissertation's purpose to make a normative claim about teacher education. However, this study has been organized so that practitioners can use its findings to examine the beliefs and practices present within the Sposato model in order to see if the Sposato approach to teacher preparation represents a way of doing urban teacher preparation aligned to their mission, values, and ideological stances.

### **Implications for Policy**

During the writing of this dissertation, the American political landscape drastically shifted with the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. As with many political and social concerns in the early months of this new era, it is unclear whether the Trump administration will fundamentally redefine the federal role in education. It is also unclear whether or how the dominant standards and accountability policy paradigm (Mehta, 2013a) will continue, particularly since the President's budgetary preferences as of March 2017 seem to indicate a desire to defund and deregulate federal programs to allow for more privatization rather than an emphasis on standards and accountability that has been central to federal policy for thirty years (Klein, 2017a). For instance, the new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, is an ardent supporter of school choice initiatives such as tuition vouchers and tax credits and was in favor of a Congressional repeal of certain regulations the previous Secretary of Education John King had established using the department's regulative authority granted in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Secretary DeVos also has come out in support of the state-based

policymakers and authorities who were granted power to develop accountability initiatives at the state level in this reauthorization (Klein, 2017b).

Similarly, although both the President and the Secretary of Education are supporters of the for-profit higher education sector, there has so far been no new guidance from the Department of Education about what the federal government role should be in teacher education regulation outside of a Congressional repeal of teacher preparation regulations previously articulated by Secretary Arne Duncan and subsequently supported by Secretary King. And at the state level, in the November 2016 election, Massachusetts residents rejected a referendum that would have lifted the current statutory cap on the number of public charter school applications authorized in the state (Vaznis, 2016). This means that for now there will not be a more aggressively unregulated charter market in Massachusetts. All of these matters indicate that the policy environment related to new graduate schools of education and to the expanding network of “No Excuses”-affiliated schools rests on uncertain ground.

That being said, the current policy environment that supports “No Excuses”-style charter schools and nGSE growth is one that prioritizes innovation, effectiveness, and student learning outcomes. The emphasis on innovation in the current policy environment rests on the principle that innovation should be incentivized by policymakers in order to allow teacher educators to figure out what program designs best lead to the creation of effective teachers and ultimately higher student learning gains (Mitchel & King, 2016). The model of innovation at Sposato could be seen as an example of how innovation has worked to achieve effectiveness, especially since much of the Sposato justification for the program’s “revolutionary approach” to teacher preparation rests on its claims that its

model is in fact innovative and successful (Goldstein, 2013; McCue & Gutlerner, 2016; Mehta, 2013b).

In terms of effectiveness, the accountability turn in teacher preparation has established an accountability culture marked by what some regard as subtractive forms of accountability because of the uniformity and compliance inherent in more technical and test-based forms of accountability (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., 2017). This accountability regime has reshaped teacher education by reducing the policy focus in the field to narrow concepts of “what works” and emphasizing that “data will save us” (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., in press; Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016). Project TEER (Teacher Education and Education Reform), of which I am a member, is a research team currently exploring teacher education research and accountability issues (Project TEER is different from the team conducting the larger nGSE study). Project TEER has proposed an alternative form of teacher education accountability that would help to reclaim accountability for the democratic project which we call “democratic accountability for teacher education” (Cochran-Smith, Baker, et al., 2017). This is an accountability framework designed to increase internal responsibility for the practice and outcomes of teacher preparation and to turn teacher preparation toward a strong equity perspective that recognizes and challenges the systemic aspects of society that reproduce inequalities. Despite this and other work that is focused on teacher education for equity and justice, my case study provides evidence that the teacher effectiveness doctrine remains the central defining accountability perspective shaping definitions of program effectiveness.

Finally, in terms of student learning, the policy and accountability turns in the field of teacher preparation have also created an environment in which holding teacher

preparation programs accountable for student learning has become a primary emphasis of nearly all measures of quality (Cochran-Smith, Stern, et al., 2016). This feature of the current teacher education policy environment is not completely negative. For too long, teacher education was marked by a lack of focus on student learning (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, et al., 2016). The teacher effectiveness approach so central to the Sposato model of teacher preparation has highlighted the importance of focusing on student learning. But the kinds of student learning that “count” in the current policy environment are only demonstrable or measurable forms of student learning and not broader student learning outcomes such as student participation in democracy or student socioemotional development.

This brief overview of the values reflected in the current policy environment in teacher preparation is intended to suggest that many policymakers might be heartened by the findings of this dissertation and happy to see that teacher preparation at Sposato is to a large extent innovative and successful at creating “jaw-droppingly effective rookie teachers” who focus on student learning outcomes. Policymakers might be eager to replicate the Sposato model because of its alignment to the current priorities of teacher education quality policy. This dissertation also demonstrates that “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSEs tend to perceive themselves as a strategy to help change the practice of teacher preparation. Because Sposato insiders have operated within a policy space that has incentivized teacher preparation innovations to design and implement a practice-based curriculum that has been successful at preparing teachers ready to enact a “No Excuses” vision of equity and justice, many proponents of “No Excuses” teacher preparation look to Sposato as a proof of concept. The current and former deans of Sposato have called for

additional policies that help establish programs like Sposato and have championed the teacher preparation academy funding in Title II of ESSA which would allow more Sposato-like programs to proliferate (McCue & Gutlerner, 2016). But that does not imply that policy should be directed toward pursuing this change strategy at scale.

In fact, several scholars in the field of educational change have tracked the temptation to call for scalability and replicability of change models as soon as a single case has proven effective or has even demonstrated some potential for success (Elmore, 2016; Fullan, 2016). Recent trends in educational change have shown that change tends to fail following the too-speedy replication of educational change strategies that only worked in a single case because the context surrounding that single case fostered its success (Hopkins & Woulfin, 2015; Mintrop & Charles, 2017; Rincón-Gallardo & Fleisch, 2016). The field of educational change tells us that the complexity of change processes necessitates a much more cautious approach (Shirley & Miller, 2016; Shirley & Noble, 2016; Zhao, 2017).

This dissertation suggests that it is possible to achieve the coherent implementation of a context-specific teacher preparation curriculum and vision, but that coherence does not guarantee success were this model to be scaled up even if policymakers were willing to disregard the unintended consequences and limits of the Sposato model. To a great extent, the reason the Sposato model works is the incredible amount of human, social, and cultural capital invested by Sposato leaders trying to make it work. The final implication for policy from this dissertation, then, is that the nGSE phenomenon as a change strategy for teacher preparation policy should be pursued cautiously. Educational change strategies, such as nGSEs, should not be assumed to be a

panacea nor should any one specific type of nGSE be assumed to be the “best” approach even if that approach works for the insiders at that program. Despite using the phrase “revolutionary proof point,” this dissertation shows that Sposato leaders were confident their model worked because all the intricate pieces of their context were known and addressed and made to work for their specific context. But even policy that incentivizes innovation in teacher preparation should not support the replication of a single model assuming that what worked for this model would work universally. Therefore, teacher preparation policy should support innovation, but not mandate what that innovation should look like.

### **Limitations, Positionality, and Future Research**

Despite the contributions described above, there are at least two important limitations to this study. The first limitation of this study is that this dissertation is a single case study and therefore the findings are not necessarily generalizable to other cases that are part of the nGSE phenomenon. Even though this case study positioned Sposato as both an intrinsic case, interesting in its own right, and an instrumental case, useful for making sense of the nGSE phenomenon, the findings of this study should not be seen as necessarily representative of other nGSEs. However, this case study does provide information about the model of teacher preparation created by a well-defined and highly publicized “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE. This model will be useful to further investigation in the larger nGSE study of the social movement behind the nGSE phenomenon and in comparison to other “No Excuses”-affiliated nGSE sites. In addition, since this case serves as the pilot study for the larger nGSE study as well as one of the cases being used for cross-case analysis in the final phase of the larger study, the analyses

and interpretations in this dissertation are an initial, valuable step toward the potential articulation of a model or models of teacher preparation at nGSEs. Cross-case analysis has been included in the larger study to specifically address the limitations inherent in conducting single case studies of instrumental cases (Stake, 2006). Only after understanding and unpacking the models of teacher preparation within each of the strategic research sites chosen as part of the larger study will my research team be able to articulate a potential model or models of teacher preparation at nGSEs.

The other major limitation of this study relates to the access I had during data collection and analysis. For a variety of reasons, my purposive sample of teacher candidates did not include anybody who was a “healthy exit” (i.e., a candidate who chose to leave the program because he or she had discerned it was not a good fit) or candidates who had failed out of the program. The candidates I had access to were only those preservice and inservice candidates from the 2015-2016 academic year who had already passed the exit deadline. Not having candidates who had exited the program or failed out of the program suggests that my candidate sample is limited to only those who agreed with the Sposato model. Thus, my conclusions related to the second research question may not be as representative of the entire candidate experience because of these omissions from the sample. I have tried to limit the scope of my interpretations and conclusions to account for this research limitation.

Though not a limitation of the study, I also want to account for certain aspects of my positionality as a researcher that shaped how I approached the design of this study and the investigation and interpretation of this case. I entered this qualitative case study with a theoretical orientation critical of neoliberal policy trends in education and across

most policy sectors, which I maintain. This perspective leads me to be cautiously skeptical of organizations that seem to embody neoliberal assertions about education reform related to standards and accountability. However, I also am an alumnus of an alternative teacher certification/education program that prepared teachers for urban Catholic schools, which makes me somewhat more sympathetic to the motivating interests and actions of the teacher candidates who entered Sposato and were prepared to teach in a program not connected to a “traditional,” university-based school of education. Both of these perspectives undoubtedly influenced my interpretations of what I saw and heard throughout this study as did my commitment throughout this study to understand, not judge, the Sposato teacher preparation program. Though several of my critical a priori assumptions about neoliberal education reform were supported by the evidence I collected, I was also challenged frequently throughout this study because of the good intentions and dedicated work of Sposato insiders who respectfully disagreed with me on issues of equity, justice, and policy.

As mentioned above, the key piece of future research that will come out of this study will be the cross-case analysis of the Sposato case along with the other three case sites included in the larger nGSE study. In addition I plan to continue to conduct research into the multiple levels of the “No Excuses”-style urban education movement and the relationship of this movement to teacher preparation. As articulated throughout this dissertation, several candidates I spoke to voiced concerns about the practice, sustainability, and ethic of the work at “No Excuses” schools even though they agreed with the idea that these schools were the best chance for students of Color living in poverty to start on the road to college and a career. Future research, like the programs of

research being conducted by Kretchmar (2014), Sondel (2016), Torres (2016a, 2016b) and their colleagues about the effects of the “No Excuses” model on urban education environments across the U.S., must continue to discover how the teaching profession is defined in “No Excuses” schools, from preservice preparation throughout the professional lifespan. These programs of research achieve an appropriate balance between raising questions about the unintended consequences of certain beliefs or practices without negating or denigrating the intentions of the educators who work in these schools. The focus of the research that will extend from this dissertation will continue to unpack the effects of the practice of teacher education, curriculum, and instruction of “No Excuses” charter management organizations as an urban education reform, but will be similar to other programs of research in its efforts to learn from the well-intentioned perspectives of insiders in these environments.

Therefore, the focus of continued research into this model of urban education and teacher education reform must account for how these schools and nGSEs define their work in relation to the commonly addressed need to redress the complex social injustices faced by these communities. Particularly in the era of American politics that began with the inauguration of President Trump in January 2017, the already precarious situation of minoritized populations in this country runs the risk of being further threatened by the current administration’s economic nationalism. More rigorous research is now needed into the work of the teachers and teacher educators in “No Excuses”-affiliated schools and nGSEs in order to make sense of the ways these educators are working with minoritized populations.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Protocols

#### **Protocol 1: Administrator Interview**

*This interview will be about your experiences as an administrator at this teacher education program as well as the beliefs and assumptions you have about teacher preparation as it relates to your role as an administrator here. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be tape-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?*

#### **I. Introduction and Dispositions/Beliefs**

- Tell me about your role at the NTR and how you came to work for this program.
  - What did you do before this work?
  - If you had to describe this program to someone not familiar with it, how would you?
- In your opinion, what is the purpose of teacher education/teacher preparation?
  - Related to this, do you have thoughts about how and where teachers should be prepared to teach?
  - Have you had experience in your work at NTR when you have seen this purpose being played out in practice? If so, could you share a story about this experience?
- Given that there are many different takes on what an “effective teacher” is, what would you say makes for an effective teacher and how is an effective teacher cultivated?
- What would you say is the mission of the NTR?
  - How was the mission/vision developed?
  - How would you say the mission/vision plays out in the lived experience of administrators, faculty, and teacher candidates at NTR?
- How would you define equity or social justice as it applied to your role here at the NTR? Can you relate this definition back to the mission and purposes you’ve laid out here?

#### **II. Interests/Motivation**

- I’ve gotten a sense for the culture here at NTR based on your responses. What parts of the NTR are a good fit with your personal beliefs about teacher preparation or education in general?
  - Are there any that don’t fit well? If so, why? If not, why not?
  - What motivates you to continue pursuing the work in your administrative role?

#### **III. Actions/Practice**

- How are decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment made at NTR?
  - Who is responsible for making sure these decisions are carried out?

- How are residents chosen for the NTR program?
  - How would you describe an ideal resident and how are they supported once here?
  - How do you assess the progress of residents once in the program?
- What skills/practices are most important for a teacher to develop?
  - In general/specifically in this context (students of Color/low SES)/specifically at NTR
  - What attitudes/values do you hope a teacher develops during their time as a resident here?
- I know that partnerships with cooperating teachers and adjunct faculty are an important part of the NTR program. How would you describe NTR partnerships? How are they developed and maintained?
  - What are the characteristics of the schools and organizations with which you partner? How would you describe an ideal partner?
- What would you say are the most important outcomes or goals you hope for in teacher preparation at NTR?
  - What methods/practices are used at MTR to reach these outcomes/goals?
  - Do you assess your progress toward these goals? If so, how? What assessments do you put in place here to track your progress toward reaching these goals?

### **Protocol 2: Faculty/Coach/Mentor Interview**

*This interview will be about your experiences as a faculty/coach/mentor at this teacher education program as well as the beliefs and assumptions you have about teacher preparation as it relates to your role here. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be tape-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?*

#### **I. Introductions and Dispositions/Beliefs**

- Tell me about your role at the NTR and how you came to work for this program.
  - What did you do before this work? / What do you do as your full-time job?
  - Do you have any current relationships with other teacher preparation programs/schools of education?
- In your opinion, what is the purpose of education? Also, what is the purpose of teacher education/teacher preparation?
  - Related to this, do you have thoughts about how and where teachers should be prepared to teach?
  - Have you had experience in your work at NTR when you have seen this purpose being played out in practice? If so, could you share a story about this experience?
- Lots of people and groups have different ideas about what an “effective” teacher is. What would you say makes an effective teacher?

- What skills/practices do you think are most important for a teacher to have?
- What about teachers' attitudes/values—what do you think are the most important things in that area?
- How would you define equity or social justice as it applied to your role here at the NTR? Can you relate this definition back to the mission and purposes you've laid out here?

## **II. Interests/Motivations**

- What attracted or interested you in working with the NTR?
  - What have been your prior experiences with teacher education/schools of education?
  - Are there any features that distinguish NTR from these other experiences? If so, could you describe these?

## **III. Actions/Practices**

- Based on your experience at NTR and what you earlier described as effective teaching, do you see this view of what makes an effective teacher being represented at Match?
  - What specific teaching skills/practices do you see being emphasized with the teacher candidates here at Match? What attitudes/values do you see being emphasized here?
  - What do you think are the most important strategies faculty here should employ (or do employ) so that these skills/practices and attitudes/values will be emphasized?
- Thinking about the individual course you teach (role you play) at NTR, what activities/instructional strategies do you think are the most essential for the residents during this experience/course?
  - Why do you emphasize these strategies over others? Are there some strategies you intentionally choose not to emphasize in your course?
- Thinking about the individual course you teach (role you play) at NTR, how do you assess and evaluate the residents?
  - Why did you choose these assessments? Could you describe the relationship between the goals you mentioned and the assessments you have just described?

### **Protocol 3: Teacher Candidates (Preservice and Inservice)**

*This interview will be about your experiences as a resident at this teacher education program as well as the beliefs and assumptions you have about education. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be tape-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?*

- Choosing to be a teacher is a big commitment, which people make for lots of different reasons. Why did you choose teaching?

- What's the most important thing to you about the work of teaching?
- What do you see as the main purpose of teaching and, even bigger, the main purpose of education?
  - In your opinion, how does teaching fit into this purpose?
  - Have you had experience in your time at the NTR when you have seen these purposes being played out in practice? If so, could you share a story about this experience?
- If you were recruiting somebody else to be in the NTR program, what would you say?
  - Are there key stories or examples that you think represent the kind of experience people have in the program? Given your own educational background and your residency experiences, what would you say is the ideal way for a teacher to be prepared for a full-time teaching position?
- How would you define equity or social justice as it applied to your role here at the NTR? Can you relate this definition back to the mission and purposes you've laid out here?
- What interested you in the NTR?
  - Would you mind sharing a story about your experience in looking into NTR and what other opportunities you were considering prior to accepting NTR's offer?
- In your own words, what is the mission of the NTR?
  - What parts of this mission are a good fit with your personal beliefs about teacher preparation or education in general?
  - Are there any that don't fit well? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Looking forward, what are your career goals/plans after you complete your residency?
  - Where do you hope to work once you graduate from the NTR? Are there types of schools that you find yourself more or less attracted to based on your beliefs/educational values?
  - What do you hope to accomplish as a teacher once you graduate from the NTR?
  - Do you see yourself staying in the classroom long-term?
  - Were there specific aspects of the NTR experience that led you to this decision?
- What would you say are the most important skills/attitudes/values/practices of a good teacher? Of an effective teacher?
  - What do you believe a teacher should know, do and be responsible for in his/her classroom and school? What are a teacher's most important professional responsibilities?
  - Do you think there is a difference between what a teacher would ideally do and what a teacher can practically do? Have you had experiences at NTR that has shaped how you approach this question?
- Describe the ways in which NTR has prepared you for your role as a teacher.
- What strategies and practices have you been taught or introduced to in your coursework here at NTR?

- What would you say are the most important instructional practices you've observed in the classrooms in which you have either tutored or assisted while a resident at NTR?
- Which of these strategies would you use when you become a full-time teacher (do you use now as a full-time teacher)? Are there any strategies that you have observed/learned about that you think would not be useful to you as a full-time teacher (have not been useful to you now as a full-time teacher)?

## *Appendix B*

### List of Sposato MET Graduate Coursework

NB – courses are year-long if not otherwise noted

#### Residency Year

- SPO 100: Community, Culture, and Context
- SPO 115: Classroom Culture Building
  - Prior to the 2016-2017 academic year, this course had been divided into two separate courses (SPO 110: Relationship Building, SPO 112: Classroom Management)
- SPO 120: Instructional Methods (Fall only)
- SPO 122: Content Learning Labs for Humanities (Spring only)
- SPO 123: Elementary and STEM Methods (Spring only)
- SPO 124: Instructional Methods for Humanities (Spring only)
- SPO 130: Sheltered English Immersion (Spring only)
- SPO 150: Fall Pre-Practicum (Fall only – Group of 6)
- SPO 152: Spring Practicum (Spring only – Golden Hour)
- SPO 154: Summer Practicum (Summer only)

#### MET Year

- SPO 200, 210, 220: The Dimensions of Teaching I, II, and III

## Appendix C

### List of Moves Taught at Sposato

The following list includes all categories of moves taught at Sposato. Where needed (i.e., when Sposato terminology does not describe the move itself), further elaboration is offered in brackets. NB – the investment and relationship building moves listed at the end of this list are not taught in the same way as the other categories of moves. This category of moves is taught to candidates as a set of suggestions related to “culturally affirming teaching” rather than the skills and behaviors effective teachers must do automatically in the classroom.

- **Presence**
  - Excited Engagement
  - Quiet Engagement
  - Neutral Authority
  - Serious Authority
- **Classroom Management**
  - *Proactive*
    - Greet students before class
    - Deliver clear directions & expectations
    - Narrate the positive [“You publicly describe students following directions,” SPO 112 course guide, p. 60]
    - Circulate
    - Use proximity
    - Scan
    - Plan reminders of expectations
    - Use positive incentives effectively
  - *Reactive*
    - Proximity
    - Non-Verbal
    - Stop and Stare
    - John Sit Up [“In this move, you’re correcting the behavior of one individual student by telling him or precisely what to do,” Sposato 112 course guide, p. 68]
    - Demerit
    - Private check-in
    - Send-out
    - We Need Three [“You have asked for all students to put pencils down. You look around the room and see 3 kids still writing. You say, ‘We need 3 more pencils down.’ The three students realize what’s happening and put their pencils down,” SPO 112 course guide, p. 76]
    - Group Reset
  - *Rebuilding*

- Targeted Narration [“You’ve been redirecting Cam a lot today, so you look for times when he’s doing the right thing. ‘All pencils down. Eyes here. Cameron’s on it. Now we need two more pairs of eyes.’” SPO 112 course guide, p. 79]
    - Precise Academic Praise [“You look for good academic answers from Cam, then immediately praise him either publicly or privately,” SPO 112 course guide, p. 79]
    - Private Check-In
  - **Instruction**
    - *Set-up*
      - Giving Directions
      - Framing [“Framing (it’s spelled wrong because we put AIM in the middle because it seemed cool) means telling students more about what they are learning – why it’s important, how it fits with other things they’ve learned, how it fits into the larger picture of your subject, and how it fits into your students’ lives,” SPO 120 course guide, p. 30]
      - Explaining and Modeling
    - *Practice*
      - Students doing written or spoken work independently/in pairs/in groups
      - Call and Response
      - Visual Thinking
      - Cold/warm calling
      - Turn and Talks
      - Stop and Jots [all students write something down quickly, SPO 120 course guide, p. 39]
      - Basketballing [an extended discussion, SPO 120 course guide, p. 39]
    - *Feedback*
      - Provide more Information
      - Provide Choices
      - Go to Another Student, then Back
      - Just Answer the Question Yourself!
      - Hold out for All the Way
      - Rollback [“Repeating a student’s partially correct answer to see if simply hearing it again will help her identify the mistake; most effective when you suspect the student made a careless error,” SPO 120 course guide, p. 54]
      - Answer MY Question
      - Technical Vocabulary
      - Right is Right
      - Another Way to Answer
      - A Better Word
      - (More) Evidence
      - Same Skill; New Setting

- Make a Hypothesis
  - Integrate a Related Skill
- **Uncategorized**
  - The Behavior Management Cycle
- **Investment and Relationship-Building Moves**
  - *Investment*
    - Visibly track goals and values
    - Décor
    - Hooks
    - Embedded Values
    - Teachable Micro-Moments
    - Rituals and Mantras
    - Little Celebrations
    - Big Celebrations
    - Games and Competitions
    - Classroom Jobs
    - Fun
    - Teachable “Stop the World” Moments
  - *Relationship-building*
    - Remember the Sneeze [“Students feel good when you notice and remember stuff about them as individuals – the little things that make them unique,” SPO 110 course guide, p. 68]
    - High-fives
    - Private check-ins during class
    - Chat for no reason
    - One-on-ones