Critical Education

Assessing the "Education Debt"
Teach For America and the Problem of Attrition

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Abstract

With this paper, I explore the impact of teacher attrition on Teach For America's (TFA) ability to produce more long-term, systemic educational change. I do so via my application of critical race theory and Gloria Ladson-Billings' concept of the "education debt" to TFA's consistently high rates of attrition. I begin with a general discussion of long-term educational change, paying particular attention to how and why teacher attrition matters. Next, I present the four components of Ladson-Billings' (2006a) conception of the "education debt," after which I explore just one factor that I believe may prevent the realization of TFA's goal of ending educational inequity (teacher attrition) in both practical and moral terms. Using critical race theory as an additional level of analysis that is consistent with Ladson-Billings "education debt" framework, I conclude that TFA's concrete materiality falls short of its intention to end educational inequity, especially concerning the longevity of its recruits. This, I contend, suggests the need for educational resources to be equitably redistributed, in part, via high quality educators for our most under-served youth populations, including those currently taught by TFA.

Introduction

Teach For America (TFA), a non-profit organization that recruits and places high-performing[1] recent college graduates and professionals in hard-to-staff low-income urban and rural public school districts for two-year teaching commitments, has become an increasingly powerful voice in the world of education reform in the U.S., despite its characteristically polarizing mission (e.g., Brewer, Kretchmar, Sondel, Ishmael, & Manfra, 2016; Brewer & Wallace, 2015; Kavanaugh & Hadley Dunn, 2013; Trujillo, Scott, & Rivera, 2017). Arguments in support of TFA are based on, for example, the program's ability to recruit academically successful college graduates (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2007; Raymond & Fletcher, 2002), typically with extensive records of leadership (Farr, 2010/2011), and to produce comparable, or better, educational outcomes when compared with other similarly experienced teachers (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006; Glazerman Mayer, & Decker, 2006; Henry, Bastian, Fortner, Kershaw, Purtell, Thompson, & Zulli, 2014; Henry, Purtell, Bastian, Fortner, Thompson, Campbell, & Patterson, 2014; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Hansen, Backes, & Brady, 2016). This also includes, by comparison, the limitations of traditional teacher education programs (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998). Arguments against TFA, however, are based on evidence of the program's deficiencies in such areas as teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Glazerman et al., 2006; Veltri, 2008, 2010), effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez Heilig, 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Pilcher & Steele, 2005), and retention (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2009; Brewer, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Mac Iver & Vaughn, 2007; Noell & Gansel, 2009). Critics also cite concerns for overall student devaluation and teacher deprofessionalization (Anderson, 2013a; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Veltri, 2010). Although researchers have come to understand the challenges associated with making broad generalizations about TFA's overall efficacy, many policymakers and other stakeholders continue to understand the organization in largely one-dimensional, and often ideologically based terms that position TFA as a sort of panacea for all the inequities that persist in our country's schools. Despite the reality that its recruits represent less than 0.3% of the U.S.'s nearly four million classroom teachers (NCES, 2013), the organization has achieved a kind of mythical status in popular and public discourses, representing not one of several policy options, but rather a sort of monolithic standard of reform. Often, this failure to adequately consider the layered complexities of the organization's theoretical mission and practical application has resulted in decidedly negative outcomes for both students and teachers (e.g., Anderson, 2013a; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Veltri, 2010).

With this paper, I explore just one of these complexities by investigating the impact of teacher attrition on TFA's ability to end educational inequity. To begin, I provide a general discussion of long-term educational change, and especially how and why teacher attrition matters, after which I outline the reform context into which TFA, as an institution, has been introduced. Next, I present Gloria Ladson-Billings' concept of the "education debt" and its potential application to TFA's consistently high rates of attrition. Using critical race theory as an additional level of analysis that is consistent with Ladson-Billings' "education debt" framework, I then provide analysis of the ways in which TFA's concrete materiality exacerbates existing inequities, especially concerning the longevity of its recruits. This, I contend, suggests the need for a more redistributive form of justice, in part, via high quality educators for our most under-served youth populations, including those currently taught by

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[1] TFA boasts an average undergraduate GPA of 3.4 for its 2016 applicant pool (Teach For America, 2016c).

TFA. As such, the central question underpinning these analyses is "what is owed to historically disenfranchised and oppressed peoples, given the devastating impact of teacher attrition on schools and communities at large?"

The Problem: Long-term Educational Change & Teacher Attrition

In order to establish more excellent and equitable schools, it is important for policymakers to think about and actively commit to long-term, systemic change, which may mean looking beyond the classroom realities that impact children's lives at the ways in which schools are positioned within the larger social world (Anyon, 2014). Too often, the U.S. has revealed a tendency toward "quick-fix" policies that seek to remedy the deficiencies in previous designs without adequately considering the layered complexities of those policies (Anderson, 2013b). In many ways, this has resulted in a virtual "orgy of reform" that has exacerbated existing inequalities (Schrag, 2010, p. 355). On this point, I agree with Groenke (2010), who writes:

> In contrast to the empty "equity" rhetoric used by federal policymakers to push dangerous neoliberal agendas, and the problematic ways this rhetoric shapes teachers' and administrators' work in schools, true educational equity interrogates institutional racism and classism (among other –isms) and strives to provide equitable access to rich, high-quality educational opportunities for *all* students, not just a select, privileged few. (p. 85; see also, Darling-Hammond, 2007)

Of course, it is much easier to think in terms of the day-to-day classroom practices that impact student outcomes (which often rely on deficit models to explain why specific student populations are not achieving at levels commensurate with the standards that are perpetuated in public schools) than it is to acknowledge that society is not necessarily the fair and just place many educators believe it to be (Ladson-Billings, 2006b). However, the pursuit of a truly equitable educational system demands that we interrogate the systemic inequities that structure those outcomes and actively commit to educational change. I contend that part of this process is ensuring that all students have access to key educational resources, including high quality, committed teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2007).[2] With this section, I outline one element (teacher attrition) that I believe impacts the realization of more long-term educational change, after which I work to position TFA as a short-term solution to larger societal problems that are exacerbated by teacher attrition.

Teacher attrition continues to be a serious concern in the U.S., especially for targeted student populations. Although teacher experience has been shown to produce positive outcomes[3] for students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998), many new teachers leave the profession before the effects of this experience may be realized. This is especially true for students of color and of poverty, who are disproportionally impacted by teacher attrition. For example,

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[2] I recognize that schools, in general, are one of many social systems that impact student lives. On this point, my views are most closely aligned with Anyon (2014), who details the systemic nature of inequality in the U.S and how that inequality structures student outcomes.

[3] In these instances, "positive outcomes" is referencing student test score data and its connection with teacher efficacy. Although I do not proscribe to the belief that test data is the best indicator of student achievement, it, nevertheless, is a valuable source of information that is highly relevant in the current policy landscape.

Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Provasnik, Kena, Dinkes, KewalRamani, and Kemp (2008) find that, whereas fourteen percent of teachers in low-poverty settings leave their schools every year, a percentage that is already high among new teachers, twenty-one percent of teachers in high-poverty settings leave their schools annually. Because novice teachers typically fill these vacancies, students, especially those in low-income settings, often experience a stream of inexperienced teachers (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Lankford, Loeb, & Wykoff, 2002; Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000; Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998), who may be less effective than other more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). For example, Mayer et al. (2000) find that "the highest-poverty schools and schools with the highest concentrations of minority students had nearly *double* the proportion of inexperienced teachers (those with three or fewer years of experience) than schools with the lowest poverty (20 versus 11 percent) and lowest concentration of minority students (21 versus 10 percent)" (p. iv). For Donaldson and Johnson (2011), "this revolving door transfer of teachers from the schools that most need skilled, experienced teachers remains a serious problem" (p. 6). This is a reality that is both practically unsustainable and morally unacceptable.

TFA claims that it prepares recruits to "confront educational inequity through teaching, and work with unwavering commitment from every sector of society to create a nation free from this injustice" (Teach For America, 2018b). This often means work outside the classroom via a network of alumni who may or may not continue their work in the education sector.[4] In fact, TFA rates of attrition are consistently high (e.g., Boyd et al., 2009; Mac Iver &Vaughn, 2007; Noell & Gansel, 2009).[5] Because experience has been shown to produce positive outcomes for both TFA and non-TFA teachers alike (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010[6]), TFA's low retention rates suggest that the organization's leaders might not stay in teaching long enough to reap the benefits that such experience may offer.[7] As such, its overall theoretical mission may be shortsighted.

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[4] According to Kopp (2011), "Our goal isn't actually to get our people to stay longer than two years, but rather to provide excellent, committed teachers for two years and to build a force of leaders who will work for fundamental change from within education and from positions of influence in every other sector. We know Teach For America shapes the career paths of corps members, as evidenced by the fact that 60% of our alumni are working full time within education and that many more are working to take the pressure off of schools by improving the quality of health and social services in low-income communities. We think this is important because achieving educational excellence and equity will require long-term, sustained leadership within education. At the same time though, we think it's critical that many of our corps members do enter other sectors, taking with them the commitment and insight that comes from their Teach For America experience so that they can work for the kind of changes in policy and public opinion that are necessary for ed reform to take hold" (as quoted in Tilson, 2011, para. 5).

[5] These rates of attrition are likely even higher when including teachers who leave before the completion of their two-year service commitments.

[6] According to Vasquez Heilig & Jez (2010), "most studies find that the relatively few TFA teachers who stay long enough to become fully credentialed (typically after two years) appear to do about as well as other similarly experienced credentialed teachers in teaching reading; they do as well as, and sometimes better than, that comparison group in teaching mathematics. However, since more than 50% of TFA teachers leave after two years, and more than 80% leave after three years, it is impossible to know whether these more positive findings for experienced recruits result from additional training and experience or from attrition of TFA teachers who may be less effective" (Executive Summary, para. 4).

[7] According to Vasquez Heilig & Jez (2010), "the evidence suggests that districts may benefit from using TFA personnel to fill teacher shortages when the available labor pool consists of temporary or substitute teachers or other novice alternatively and provisionally certified teachers likely to leave in a few years. Nevertheless, if educational leaders plan to use TFA teachers as a solution to the problem of shortages, they should be prepared for constant attrition and the associated costs of ongoing recruitment and training" (Executive Summary, para. 7).

TFA explicitly markets itself as an organization capable of placing high quality educators into two-year service commitments in high-need and traditionally hard-to-staff urban and rural areas. As such, high rates of attrition are to be expected. However, the consequences of teacher attrition warrant more serious consideration. To be fair, the organization suggests that systemic change does not necessarily require long-term classroom service; rather, classroom teaching will provide two years of experience, which may ultimately provide recruits with a better understanding and deeper concern for the daily realities of the classroom so that they can then contribute more meaningfully towards educational policy, both within the education sector and beyond. Teacher attrition, then, becomes little more than collateral damage in the preparation of a decision-making elite. However, this approach is largely shortsighted in that it focuses more on the context of the school, not the systemic nature of inequality and how it manifests in educational settings.

TFA, Neoliberal Reform, & Racial Inequality

Critical and race (and critical race) analyses have enjoyed an increasingly prominent role in education scholarship over the past decade. These sorts of analyses represent an important addition to a research landscape that is characteristically saturated with one-dimensional understandings of students and schools (i.e. student achievement, standards, accountability, school choice and deregulation, etc.). As one example of this cutting edge work, Picower and Mayorga (2015) present a collection of essays that trace the ways in which race figures into neoliberal school reforms (the two have characteristically been treated as separate manifestations of inequity) and especially how those policies perpetuate racial inequality (see also, Leonardo, 2009). In that volume Jones (2015), for example, argues that neoliberal reformers, in their attack on teachers' unions and advocacy of policies that encourage the hiring of typically non-local, predominantly White teachers (like those recruited by TFA), use the language of social justice to advocate for inequitable policies, including those that result in the pushing out of Black teachers. Similarly, White (2015), in her analyses of "No Excuses" charter schools, argues that the practices characteristically favored by charters, which disproportionately hire TFA corps members, "push students toward conformity, therefore, work to further marginalize disadvantaged students and perpetuate Whiteness" at the expense of the cultural norms, funds of knowledge, and uniqueness of targeted student populations and communities (p. 140).

These works are particularly relevant to the discussions included here in that TFA's ideological mission (and practical materiality) is consistent with other neoliberal reforms that serve to perpetuate, not alleviate, existing racial inequalities (amongst other forms of oppression). Despite its alignment with neoliberal reform trends that embrace the perceived advantages of market competition, however, TFA's focus on students who have been targeted by inequitable schooling practices and policies suggests a concern with the elimination of structural inequalities.[8] This added feature, because it is not typically manifested in the traditional neoliberal mission based on free markets and individual accountability, has incited Lahann and Reagan (2011) to conclude that TFA represents a new political formation which they term "'progressive neoliberalism' to reflect . . . the spirit and assumptions of the progressive and social justice tradition combined with business-infused managerial strategies" (p. 13).[9] However, the perceived flaws of the TFA agenda (in terms of its perpetuation of

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[8] TFA places its corps members in the most under-served communities, including those that serve primarily students of color and of poverty.

[9] Lahann & Reagan (2011) base their conclusions on the following five 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

structures of inequality) suggest that the organization may not be as committed to social justice as it would have us believe. In fact, I argue that TFA's mission rests on narratives of equity in order to attract dedicated young college graduates and professionals under the guise of social justice (see also, Anderson, 2013). Ultimately, TFA maintains disproportional relations of power, despite its statements to the contrary, thus suggesting that the organization's ultimate goal must have much more to do with furthering the neoliberal agenda than the real elimination of educational inequity.

In concert with these increasingly powerful critiques, scholars have utilized critical race theory as a framework for dissecting contemporary education policy, including the ways in which TFA functions as a symptom of colonial, imperial, and White supremacist ideology. For example, Lapayese, Aldana, and Lara (2014), based on interviews with TFA educators of color that were analyzed via a CRT lens (specifically, interest convergence), conclude that "TFA exists, and flourishes, because it benefits White racial and economic interests" (p. 20). Additionally, Barnes, Germain, and Valenzuela (2016), based on textual analyses of TFA founder Wendy Kopp's written language, contend that "serving the interests of privileged partners first, and only extending benefits to students and communities of color where their interests overlap, is a strong organizational priority" (p. 26; see also, Cann, 2015; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Milner & Howard, 2013). When combined with literature that treats the intersections of neoliberal reform and racial injustice, this scholarship serves as a helpful addition to an education research landscape that is becoming progressively more dynamic.[10] With the remainder of this paper, I attempt to expand these discussions by investigating TFA through the lens of critical race theory in general and Ladson-Billings' (2006a) conception of the "education debt" in particular, paying special attention to the ways in which TFA's rates of attrition may hinder its ability to produce more long-term educational change. I also problematize the inherent elitism that the organization ultimately espouses and how this mindset may function to deprofessionalize teaching.

Assessing the "Education Debt"

With her American Educational Research Association presidential address, *From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools*, Ladson-Billings (2006a) challenges the discourse of the "achievement gap" and the ways it has been used to describe the test score gap that exists between White, predominantly middle-class students and their poor and/or non-White peers. For Ladson-Billings "this 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) which manifests: 1) *historically* in the inequitable practices that have traditionally targeted students of color and of poverty (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Fultz, 1995; Tyack, 2004); 2) *economically* both in the funding disparities that disproportionately impact schools serving large populations of targeted student groups and in the wealth disparities that have accumulated between, for example, Whites and Blacks; 3) *sociopolitically* in the extent to which communities of color have been excluded from the

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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" (pp. 13-4). They believe that progressivism and neoliberalism are most clearly divergent according to the last two assumptions, which are progressive in nature.

[10] See, for example, *Critical Education* (2013), which published a series of articles that analyzed TFA through various lenses.

democratic process; and 4) *morally* in our[11] approval (whether intentional or otherwise) of practices that are overwhelmingly inconsistent with what we know to be right and just. In order to establish more equitable outcomes for targeted student groups, we must actively commit to paying this debt, in all its manifestations.

Critical Race Theory & the "Education Debt"

Ladson-Billings' conception of the debt is consistent with her discourses on critical race theory and its relevance to education. Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical and methodological position that intentionally centers race as the primary lens of analysis. Theorized by such authors as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancik, Zeus Leonardo, Daniel Solórzano, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, et al., CRT is typically comprised of the following themes: 1) *the normality (permanence?) of racism* (i.e., racism is endemic to society); 2) *Whiteness as property*, wherein Whiteness has become a legally recognized property interest that includes the right of possession, the right to use (who gets to walk into what spaces with no resistance?), the right to disposition (the right to enjoy those privileges), and the absolute right to exclude (Harris, 1993); 3) *interest convergence*, which contends that those who have the power and privilege to make change only do so when it benefits them in some way, (i.e., *Brown v. Board of Education*); 4) the *critique of liberalism* and notions of colorblindness, the neutrality of law, and incremental change; and 5) *counter-storytelling*, which speaks against a dominant narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Ladson-Billings is widely recognized as one of the first to translate CRT themes into education contexts by highlighting the extent to which race explains many of the inequities that manifest in American schools. This is particularly visible in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; 1998). As such, the education debt becomes something that is clearly raced, classed (as the two are intimately connected), and perpetuated by White supremacy. Additionally, the debt implies that, should educational inequity become a thing of the past, something is owed to children of color and of poverty, which is exactly what TFA aims to do by serving student populations who have traditionally been targeted by inequitable educational practices. However, although this commitment reveals a concern with the historical component of the education debt, TFA fails to adequately address the economic, socio-political, and moral components of the debt, in part as the result of the high attrition rates of its teachers. With the remainder of this paper, I return to the four components of the education debt to examine the extent to which TFA is paying its fare. To conclude, I provide analyses of these phenomena via a CRT lens.

TFA & the "Education Debt"

TFA represents, at least in theory, just one potential avenue by which to address the sorts of concerns that Ladson-Billings describes with her conception of the debt. However, the ways in which TFA aims to establish more equitable schooling environments and the specific practices that it espouses, particularly as they pertain to the persistence of its recruits in the education sector, present a serious challenge to the organization's ability to create more long-term, systemic change. Although initially envisioned as one avenue by which to address critical teacher shortages, that rhetoric has developed into a more general concern regarding

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[11] I use the term "our" to reflect my agreement with Ladson-Billings, who points out that "we want people to take *personal* responsibility for their behavior, *personal* responsibility for their health care, *personal* responsibility for their welfare, and *personal* responsibility for their education. However, in democratic nations, that personal responsibility must be coupled with social responsibility" (2006a, p. 8).

the overall quality of the teachers currently teaching in high-needs schools. This is something that TFA'ers can eventually affect via education policy, not necessarily the classroom. As such, TFA is specifically designed to place teachers for two years, after which they can enact the organization's preferred ideological reforms (read: real change) in the larger education policy arena.[12] Teacher attrition, then, is an acceptable cost. That is, TFA's actual mission is to move corps members quickly through the classroom and into leadership positions. However, again, that approach is shortsighted in that it fails to look at schools and the communities they serve holistically and systemically, particularly in light of the four components of the "education debt," which only exacerbates existing inequities.

Historical debt.[13] Concluding that the segregation of educational resources provided to Black and White students was inherently unequal, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) set the stage for the provision of equal access to key educational opportunities for all students, regardless of race and/or ethnicity. Although it rightly addressed the inherent inequalities of segregation, this landmark legislation also resulted in the ultimate loss of many Black teachers.[14] Black students were compelled to integrate into White schools as a result of the presumably substandard resources provided by their previously segregated facilities, a move that would ultimately contribute to the discursive construction of Black schools, and the teachers and students who populated them, as inherently lacking[15] (which, itself, sets up an asymmetrical relation of dominance[16]). This sort of external, top-down intervention typically occurred at the expense of Black teachers who were currently practicing, and so would function to undermine what was at one time considered a "stable, high-status profession for the African American middle class" (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 2; see also Giddings, 1984). Although about 50% of Black professionals were teachers prior to this legislation, in the nearly twenty years following the ruling almost 40,000 Black educators in seventeen Southern states found themselves without jobs (Evans & Leonard, 2013; Fine, 2004; Irvine, 2002; Madkins, 2011; Tillman, 2004).

Teacher shortages, especially in areas serving large populations of targeted student groups, would remain a serious concern well into the present, thus creating a need for programs like TFA, which was designed to mitigate the harmful effects of these shortages by recruiting individuals into two-year service commitments. At least initially, these efforts seemed to be successful. For example, according to Boyd and colleagues (2006) in their study of New York teachers, alternatively licensed educators, including TFA teachers, often

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[12] TFA has been rather successful in this respect. For example, Higgins, Hess, Weiner, and Robison (2011) identify an over-representation of TFA alumni among the founders and top management team (TMT) members of nationally recognizable entrepreneurial education organizations.

[13] For the sake of consistency, my argument will follow Ladson-Billings' (2006a) organization of the components of the educational debt: 1) historical; 2) economic; 3) sociopolitical; and 4) moral.

[14] Bell (1980, 1992) describes the ways in which this legislation represents one example of interest convergence in that the move to desegregate schools, while producing some negative outcomes for Black students and teachers, ultimately served the interests of Whites.

[15] The ways in which Black teachers and Black schools were targeted as a result of their perceived inadequacy in the aftermath of the Brown decision represents a long and complicated history that has been animated, in part, by what Fultz (1995) identifies as: 1) racist underdevelopment, wherein "a confluence of factors, set in motion by state-sanctioned racism and discrimination, worked in concert to undermine the delivery of educational services to African American children and their families. As a result, African American teaching staffs and classrooms suffered in myriad ways" (p. 406); 2) unrealistic expectations placed upon Black teachers; and 3) "the demands of a mounting African American protest movement which often inadvertently slighted the contributions and accomplishments of African American teachers in order to emphasize the discriminatory neglect and impoverishment of African American education generally," (p. 421).

[16] See, e.g., hooks (1994) who writes: "that shift from beloved, all-black schools to white schools where black students were always seen as interlopers, as not really belonging, taught me the difference between education as the practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination" (p. 4).

took positions in traditionally hard-to-staff high-poverty schools or those that had previously been filled by uncertified teachers. Today, however, these shortages are not necessarily being addressed by TFA recruits (Brewer et al., 2016). In fact, an expanding body of literature points to the placement of TFA teachers outside high-needs areas (Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010), and even to the replacement of veteran teachers by TFA corps members (Miner, 2010). So, although TFA appears to be addressing the historical component of the debt via its focus solely on targeted student populations, the ramifications of its implementation obscure the larger picture.

An economic concern. TFA's rates of attrition are particularly troubling when coupled with the financial investments in its recruits that are committed by school districts and other public resources. Finder's fees, mentoring/induction and professional development investments, as well as taxpayer dollars through AmeriCorps and other federal programs, are going to TFA to fund teachers who, more often than not, are leaving their original placement schools, if not the profession altogether. In many ways, then, the urban and rural school districts that hire TFA recruits may not be reaping the long-term benefits that the program aims to provide. With this section, I outline the public investments in TFA corps members in an effort to challenge the viability of the program as an acceptable and financially feasible alternative to other licensure/training options.

Although alternative licensing programs are typically cheaper for individual teachers, [17] the debt burden for the training and support that these teachers receive disproportionately falls on other constituencies, including federal, state, and local governments. TFA is no exception. In fact, nearly 29% of the organization's 2016 annual operating budget was supplied by public funds via local, state, and federal grants, contracts, and fees (Teach For America, 2016a). For example, TFA receives substantial support from AmeriCorps, a federally funded national service organization, in the form of, among other things, financial incentives that serve as powerful recruitment tools for potential corps members. The AmeriCorps education award can provide upwards of $11,000 to TFA recruits (between $5,300-$5,900 for each year of service), which can be used towards student loan repayment and/or future education expenses. [18] In addition, TFA advertises loan forbearance/paid interest (100% financed by AmeriCorps) for two years of the recruits' commitments (Teach For America, 2018c). In many ways, then, the AmeriCorps stipend, as well as the paid interest on qualifying student loans, serves as a federally funded "signing bonus" for corps members whose long-term aspirations might not necessarily include teaching (Veltri, 2010, p. 23). Overall, these sorts of investments come at a significant public cost, often at the expense of other qualified programs, and so have relevance to policymakers seeking to produce optimal outcomes in the strategic distribution of public resources.

State governments and local school districts, too, have a stake in TFA's financing with tax dollars. First, TFA receives "finders' fees" of up to $5,000 from local districts for each recruit that is hired (Brewer et al., 2016; Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010; Veltri, 2010), despite the fact that districts maintain human resource departments for other new hires, meaning that they must essentially pay twice for new teachers—the "outsourced costs" of TFA-sponsored recruitment and training, as well as the in-house costs accrued by other

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[17] In their study of New York teachers, Boyd et al. (2009) found that the financial burdens of alternative pathways into the teaching profession were "substantially less for the individual teacher than the costs of traditional university-based teacher preparation" because the teacher pays less for coursework and is able to work while completing training. However, this also meant increased costs for the city, because districts subsidize the ongoing training of TFA teachers.

[18] Certain graduate schools also offer to double the AmeriCorps award, even if the graduate degree is achieved in an area outside of education (Veltri, 2010).

district teachers hired (Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010). This also means that districts would spend more for TFA teachers than the local, state, and federal funds allocated to the organization, at least initially. For example, Brewer and colleagues (2016), in their investigation of the financial impact of TFA on district hiring practices in, for example, the Metro-Atlanta area (and similarly in other regions), indicate that

> While TFA costs more in the short run, those exuberant costs are seen, by many, as a justifiable expense given TFA's purported ability to raise test scores (e.g., provide an additional 2.6 months of learning). And while this is seen as a justifiable expense, the filling of a teaching position with a TFA corps member eventually represents a cheaper option than the hiring of non-TFA teachers. (pp. 24-25)

Although this reality certainly complicates[19] the larger picture, I contend that the long-term financial savings potential is but part of the equation. Even if the students of TFA teachers do outscore their non-TFA-taught peers (which is still debatable given the widely contested nature of this claim[20]), teacher quality is certainly much more dynamic and complex than test scores alone might suggest. In fact, I argue that this sort of one-dimensional understanding of student outcomes is part of the problem as evidenced by, for example, Ladson-Billings' (2008) conception of the "education debt," which includes not only economic components, but sociopolitical and moral components as well. Ultimately, when coupled with the already significant financial resources that districts invest in new hires via mentoring/induction, orientation, and professional development programs, the financial costs of TFA attrition are compounded. Because TFA teachers are much more likely than non-TFA teachers to leave their original placement schools and districts (Boyd et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Mac Iver, & Vaughn, 2007; Noell & Gansel, 2009), if not the profession altogether, the schools that hire them are particularly vulnerable to these sorts of wasted investments. On this point, I agree with Barnes et al. (2007), who contend that:

> Low performing schools rarely close the student achievement gap because they never close the teaching quality gap—they are constantly rebuilding their staff. An inordinate amount of their capital—both human and financial—is consumed by the constant process of hiring and replacing beginning teachers who leave before they have mastered the ability to create a successful learning culture for their students. (p. 4)

As a result, the loss of TFA teachers due to attrition is particularly damaging in that it is primarily the districts (and so, ultimately the taxpayers) that must bear the financial responsibility both for the costs of attrition and for the recruitment, hiring, and training of replacement teachers. Unfortunately, the schools that hire TFA teachers are the same ones that serve student populations who most need quality and long-term solutions.

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[19] Brewer at al. (2016) complicate this matter further by pointing out that many teachers (TFA and otherwise) do not remain in the classroom for substantial lengths of time: "It has certainly become more commonplace for teachers (TFA or otherwise) to not remain in the classroom for 30 years or more (Keigher & Cross, 2010; Riggs, 2013; Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999), as such, understanding the cost considerations for districts hiring TFA corps members becomes more dynamic and complex" (p. 13).

[20] See, for example, Vasquez Heilig (2013).

A sociopolitical concern.[21] TFA's consistent use of deficit-informed language to describe the students, families, and communities who experience its corps members prevents the actualization of its mission to mitigate the structures of inequality that persist in our country's schools (Anderson, 2013a). This practice of "blaming the victim," wherein students (as well as families and communities) become targeted and blamed for externally identified inequalities of intellectual competence, motivation, behaviors, and/or cultural differences, ultimately lets the systemic inequities that inform student outcomes off the hook. In many ways, this sort of deficit thinking contributes to the sort of sociopolitical component of the educational debt by excluding families and communities of color from the decision-making processes that inform their students' access to high quality educational resources. For example, in their national study of kindergarteners, West, Denton, and Reaney (2001) found that the teachers of targeted student groups had a tendency to blame parents for what they perceived to be the inadequate preparation of their children for school. Additionally, when a student's perceived deficiencies are presumed the result of parental and/or communal noninvolvement in or antipathy towards their child's education, his/her background is also targeted (Betsinger, García, & Guerra, 2001; Oakes, 2005). This form of deficit thinking is especially dangerous. Brantlinger (1985) documents the long-term resentment felt by low-income parents when their students experienced the application of disparaging labels, rejection, and alienation from "respectable kids." On this point, I agree with Ladson-Billings (2006a) who contends that:

> Each effort we make toward improving education is counterbalanced by the ongoing and mounting debt that we have accumulated. That debt service manifests itself in the distrust and suspicion about what schools can and will do in communities serving the poor and children of color . . . The magnitude of the education debt erodes that trust [between communities of color and schools] and represents a portion of the debt service that teachers and administrators pay each year against what they might rightfully invest in helping students advance academically. (p. 9)

Although teacher attitudes are more directly related to student achievement than facilities or funding (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2004), Cummins (2001) argues it is much safer to blame students and families for academic under-performance than to locate and place the blame with the inequitable distribution of resources and educational opportunities. Ultimately, deficit thinking lets the system off the hook, allowing educators to treat difference as deficit instead of prescribing alternative ways to help students learn and to address systemic inequity.

In contrast to deficit-informed educational practices, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has the capacity to support a more empowered and equitable form of learning for all students, regardless of individual backgrounds.[22] Based on her study of eight successful teachers of African-American students, Ladson-Billings (1995b) defines CRP as a: "theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge

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[21] The following discussions borrow from what was first published as: Author (2013).

[22] The benefits of culturally relevant teaching and curricular practices, as well as culturally sensitive interpersonal dynamics, have been extensively documented (e.g., Brown, 2003; Civil & Kahn, 2001; Conrad, Gong, & Sipp, 2004; Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Goodwin, 2002; Laughter & Adams, 2012; Michie, 1999; Morrison, 2002; Olsen, 1997).

inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). This model embraces three key goals that have animated her CRP framework: 1) academic success, wherein students are able to demonstrate academic competence through learning[23] (although not at the expense of their cultural identities); 2) cultural competence, wherein the curricular and pedagogical decisions made by teachers are designed to maintain, not undermine, a student's cultural integrity[24]; and 3) sociopolitical consciousness, which seeks to transcend the tendency towards equating schooling with individual achievement and, instead, provide opportunities for students to "develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 162). For Ladson-Billings (2006b), the goal of instilling in students a sociopolitical consciousness is particularly challenging in that many teachers lack their own, and so may find it difficult to incorporate sociopolitical issues into their classroom praxis. This is a skill that can be cultivated only with time, experience, and careful reflection.

The ways in which TFA's rates of attrition present a significant challenge to this final sociopolitical element are twofold. First, when recruits leave their original placement schools, if not the profession altogether, they take with them the time and effort invested in the development of the sorts of competencies that Ladson-Billings suggests.[25] In so doing, the students who populate these schools are consistently exposed to new supplies of teachers who may not have had opportunities to meaningfully engage with issues of diversity and who have potentially been fed on a healthy dose of deficit-informed rhetoric. Secondly, the organization contends that its recruits' experiences within schools for their two-year service commitments can be parlayed into other arenas that have the capacity to impact the education sector on a larger scale, i.e. policy, administration, non-profit work, etc. In many ways, this understanding of long-term change is consistent with the sort of top-down model of education reform that has been the subject of much recent critique. For example, in a recent paper that investigated the discursive construction of teacher and student subjectivities via a critical discourse analysis of select popular political and governmental texts, my colleagues and I found that, typically, teachers and students were not only excluded from the policy conversation regarding the form and substance of public schooling, but were actively marginalized (Anderson, Aronson, Ellison, & Fairchild-Keyes, 2014). When the impetus for educational reform rests not with the actors who have the most intimate knowledge of the issues facing our schools, efforts to produce more systemic and long-term change can become jeopardized. This particular understanding of educational change, I think, simply recreates existing structures of inequality that function to maintain the status quo.

A moral concern. There is more to the moral argument being made here, as well. TFA explicitly caters to individuals who may not be interested in a long-term career in

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[23] Ladson-Billings (2006b) does not equate learning with standardized test performance, but rather sees it as what "students actually know and are able to do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers" (p. 34).
    [24] Different from remaining sensitive to and/or understanding the cultures of targeted student groups, this commitment demands that teachers help "students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2006b, p. 36; See also, Sleeter, 2012)
    [25] I do not mean to suggest that sociopolitical consciousness is the inevitable concomitant of teaching in a school that serves students of color and of poverty; on the contrary, this is a skill that requires extensive and active engagement with difficult sociopolitical issues. However, experience with diversity is a significant factor in the development of more inclusive multicultural learning for prospective teachers. For example, Garmon (2001) contends that prospective teachers' responses to diversity are directly connected to both personal dispositions, as well as individual experiences (see also, Greene, 1992).

education, as evidenced by its two-year service commitment. In fact, TFA goes so far as to advertise its graduate school and employer partnerships as follows:

> Teach For America is proud to partner with graduate schools and employers across the country who value the unparalleled leadership, experience, and commitment you'll gain in the classroom. These partners provide benefits that will position you to continue impacting educational equity throughout your career. (Teach For America, 2018, para. 1)

This sort of recruitment technique is presumably geared towards those individuals who might not otherwise consider teaching as a profession. But, do we really want individuals who see teaching as a layover on the way to another more fulfilling career responsible for our most under-served student populations? This sort of thinking is particularly troubling. If targeted students are not receiving their share of quality teachers wanting to be there for the long haul (as often happens in low-poverty districts[26]), are they really receiving an equitable education?

A Critical Race Theory Perspective

Critique of liberalism. The extent to which TFA's high rates of attrition compound the education debt is consistent with several of the critical race theory themes outlined above, most notably the critique of liberalism, Whiteness as property, and interest convergence. For example, at the same time that it espouses dangerous neoliberal ideologies, TFA explicitly serves student populations who have been traditionally (and contemporarily) targeted by inequitable schooling practices and policies, thus suggesting an interest in eliminating educational inequity. As stated above, this is what Lahann and Reagan (2011) term *progressive neoliberalism*: "embracing neoliberalism's focus on deregulation, business strategies, and the managerial culture of accountability, but working to fight inequity and to reform the systems that produced it" (p. 20). However, I contend that, rather than having a real interest in eliminating educational inequity, TFA appropriates social justice language to win support for its ideological mission (e.g., Anderson, 2013). Research suggesting that TFA's outcomes are having a negative impact on both students and teachers is convincing, and the underlying rhetoric embraced by the organization consistently pathologizes, not empowers, the students and communities who experience TFA intervention. As such, the organization contributes to a larger reform complex that seeks to legitimate a neoliberal agenda through a reframing of the "problem" of educational underperformance for students of color and of poverty (see, e.g., Picower & Mayorga, 2015). This is exemplary of CRT's critique of liberalism and the ways in which individuals are able to claim an interest in social justice and systemic change, while at the same time engaging in practices that ultimately perpetuate the status quo. This is most evident in CRT's critique of both the neutrality of law and incremental change, neither of which will actually end racial oppression. In actuality, these sorts of claims disguise the effects of what amounts to racist policy, which, I argue, TFA is. Ultimately, TFA maintains disproportional relations of power, despite its statements to the contrary, thus suggesting that the organization's ultimate goal must have much more to do with furthering the neoliberal agenda than the real elimination of educational inequity.

Whiteness as property. The applicability of CRT's conception of Whiteness as property is a bit more complicated. First, TFA does have a more diverse corps than many other teacher training programs (Teach For America, 2016b). This makes difficult the claim

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[26] The research suggests that there is an inequitable distribution of teacher experience and/or skills between low- and high-poverty schools animated, in particular, by the over-representation of under-certified teachers in low-income and/or high-minority schools (Ingersoll, 2004).

that White TFA'ers have disproportionate access to the spaces served by the organization than that of their Black and Brown peers. However, in terms of teacher attrition, research has yet to distinguish the demographic makeup of TFA teacher leavers, thus making solid contentions that White corps members remain in/leave original their placement schools, if not the profession altogether, exceedingly difficult. This is certainly an area worthy of future research. Should that research reveal that White corps members disproportionately leave their placement schools, potentially for more lucrative careers, especially those that wield more leverage in education policy, the Whiteness as property argument would be solid. As one example of this argument, I think it is helpful to reflect on whether schools serving predominantly White students would allow for the hiring of individuals whose preparation program is based on the recruitment and placement of predominantly teachers of color who have been exposed to limited pre-service training. After all, TFA (which is still majority White) has access to schools that serve predominantly students of color and of poverty, so why is that acceptable, but its inverse not? Although this scenario would most certainly be detrimental to the teachers of color who would add the "diversity" that is currently lacking in majority White schools, I do think this presents an interesting example of how Whiteness as property might operate via the provision of inequitable access to specific spaces.

   Interest convergence. Additionally, TFA's mission, which is complicated by its high rates of attrition, is representative of CRT's conception of interest convergence. For example, TFA presumably serves the interests of targeted student populations by placing its recruits in high needs areas. At the same time, the interests of corps members are served in that their TFA service may be parlayed into other, potentially more meaningful or lucrative careers.[27] The ultimate convergence of these interests, however, does not necessarily result in transformative interventions into the lives of targeted students, especially in light of the organization's high rates of attrition. Instead, corps members are able to take with them the prestige and perceived altruism offered by TFA as they exit the classroom at alarming rates (Labaree, 2010). For example, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977), Anderson (2013b) recently argued that TFA's assumed legitimacy is the result of both the organization's selectivity and immense financial backing, which was bolstered by its founder's individual cultural, and so economic, capital,[28] as well as its connection to "public service under the guise that her [Kopp's] program would help to narrow, if not close, the achievement gap between high- and low-poverty students" (Anderson, 2013b, p. 12). For Anderson, this process was largely arbitrary and functioned to validate what ultimately amounts to an inequitable agenda via the appropriation of social justice language (see also, Labaree, 2010). The reality is that TFA's practical application has not been wholly consistent with its stated goals (e.g., the closure of achievement gaps), which leads me to believe that its commitment to equity may be little more than empty rhetoric designed to maintain the status quo. Ultimately, these concerns are reflective of CRT's contention that racism is normal and, at least according to my own interpretation of race and racism in the United States, likely permanent.[29]

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[27] This also serves the interests of TFA as an institution, which is, in part as the result of its perceived interest in social justice, based of furthering a neoliberal agenda.

[28] "For Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to forms of knowledge, skills, education and academic credentials, etc. which provide those who possess them with high status" (Anderson, 2013b, p. 12).

[29] See below for a more detailed discussion of the two major understandings of how race operates in the U.S.: racial realism and racial idealism. According to Delgado and Stefancik (2012), the racial idealist "holds that racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, mental categorization, attitude, and discourse. Race is a social construction, not a biological reality. Hence we may unmake it and deprive it of much of its sting by changing the system of images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings by which we convey to one another that certain people are less intelligent, reliable, hardworking, virtuous, and American than

Discussion & Conclusions

In order to establish more long-term, systemic change in the education sector, we have to stop "thinking less than" about the teachers who have the most intimate knowledge of the daily realities of the classroom and the unique student populations for whose outcomes they are primarily responsible. Although TFA is certainly not alone in its perpetuation of this sort of mindset, its mission and understanding of educational change is one place to start. With this paper, I have outlined Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2006a) conception of the education debt which manifests: 1) *historically* in the inequitable practices that have traditionally targeted students of color and of poverty (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Fultz, 1995; Tyack, 2004); 2) *economically* both in the funding disparities that disproportionately impact schools serving large populations of targeted student groups and in the wealth disparities that have accumulated between, for example, Whites and Blacks; 3) *sociopolitically* in the extent to which communities of color have been excluded from the democratic process; and 4) *morally* in our approval (whether intentional or otherwise) of practices that are overwhelmingly inconsistent with what we know to be right and just. Although TFA attempts to address that debt in various forms, its ultimate implementation has been shortsighted.

TFA does aim to serve student populations who have traditionally been targeted by inequitable educational practices, and so reveals a concern with the historical component of the education debt. However, I contend that TFA fails to adequately address the economic, socio-political, and moral components of the debt, in part as a result of the high attrition rates of its teachers. Economically, the organization's high attrition rates suggest that districts must constantly invest in replenishing its staff, which may exacerbate already poor fiscal situations, at least initially, and preclude the establishment of institutional expertise amongst school faculty and the facilitation of long-term connections between students and teachers. Socio-politically, when recruits leave their placement schools, they take with them the experience and knowledge that they have acquired, thus exposing students to a constant flux of often under-prepared and inexperienced teachers. Additionally, when corps members locate change beyond the actors who have the most intimate knowledge of the issues facing our schools, long-term change becomes jeopardized. Morally, it is important to point out that, when students do not receive their fair share of quality teachers who are committed to teaching for the long haul, they are not receiving equitable educations. Why is it acceptable for our most under-served students to be taught by our most under-prepared and inexperienced teachers? Although TFA is not alone in its provision of these sorts of inequitable educational practices, it does provide one increasingly powerful example of how these inequities negatively impact students and teachers. In my efforts to imagine more equitable educational outcomes, I do not see TFA as a feasible solution for long-term educational change, and I contend that our students and teachers, both TFA and otherwise, deserve more.

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others. A contrasting school—the realists or economic determinists—holds that though attitudes and words are important, racism is much more than having an unfavorable impression of members of other groups. For realists, racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and status. Racial hierarchies determine who gets tangible benefits, including the best jobs, the best schools, and invitations to parties in people's homes" (p. 17). I position myself as a racial realist, though I embrace Bell's conception of *defiance*, which suggests that, even if racism is a permanent and normal part of society, we must work to defy racist structures of inequality and White supremacy.

Moving Forward

To conclude her discussions of the education debt, Ladson-Billings (2006) poses the following scenario:

Where could we go to begin from the ground up to build the kind of education system that would aggressively address the debt? Might we find a setting where a catastrophic occurrence, perhaps a natural disaster—a hurricane—has completely obliterated the schools? Of course, it would need to be a place where the schools weren't very good to begin with. It would have to be a place where our Institutional Review Board and human subject concerns would not keep us from proposing aggressive and cutting-edge research. It would have to be a place where people were so desperate for the expertise of education researchers that we could conduct multiple projects using multiple approaches. It would be a place so hungry for solutions that it would not matter if some projects were quantitative and others were qualitative. It would not matter if some were large-scale and some were small-scale. It would not matter if some paradigms were psychological, some were social, some were economic, and some were cultural. The only thing that would matter in an environment like this would be that education researchers were bringing their expertise to bear on education problems that spoke to pressing concerns of the public. I wonder where we might find such a place? (p. 10)

Her suggestion that educational transformation might be furthered via research in New Orleans post Katrina is particularly telling in light of what has actually happened in the city over the last ten years since Ladson-Billings' original speech. The explosion of market-based reforms, including charter schools and Teach For America, have resulted in stagnant achievement, despite claims to the contrary (e.g., Gabor, 2015), increasingly segregated schools, and the replacement of a diverse cadre of educators with majority White and inexperienced teachers, including TFA corps members (see, for example, the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans). The reality is that the opportunity pointed out by Ladson-Billings has resulted in, not innovative and transformative educational practices, but largely more of the same, if not worse. This reality leads me to believe that, perhaps, the racial realists have gotten it right.

From a CRT standpoint, there are two primary understandings of how race operates in the U.S.: racial realism and racial idealism. According to Delgado and Stefancik (2012), the racial idealist:

holds that racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, mental categorization, attitude, and discourse. Race is a social construction, not a biological reality. Hence we may unmake it and deprive it of much of its sting by changing the system of images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings by which we convey to one another that certain people are less intelligent, reliable, hardworking, virtuous, and American than others. A contrasting school—the "realists" or economic determinists—holds that though attitudes and words are important, racism is much more than a collection of unfavorable impressions of members of other groups. For realists, racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and status. Racial hierarchies determine who gets tangible benefits, including the best jobs, the best schools, and invitations to parties in people's homes. (p. 21)

I position myself as a racial realist in that I agree that racism is a permanent and normal part of society. What has happened in New Orleans, despite Ladson-Billings' calls for innovation and transformation, are evidence enough of that. However, I find Bell's description of *defiance* to be particularly helpful to the potentially fatalistic position that this belief in the permanence of racism suggests. Bell (1992) writes:

> *Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary þeaks of progress, "short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard-to-accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as a sign of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance. (p. 12, emphasis in original)*

Although racism (amongst other –isms?) is permanent, it is necessary that we accept this reality (in itself an act of defiance) and work to defy racist structures of inequality and White supremacy. In doing so, we must actively commit to paying this debt, in all its manifestations, which likely means working to equitably redistribute educational resources, including high quality teachers.

Ladson-Billing's discussions of an "education debt" (vs. gap) suggest that something is owed to communities that have not only been targeted by inequitable policies and practices, but have also been plundered and pillaged in the name of White supremacy (Coates, 2014). To meet that charge, I pose the following questions. What if TFA sent its corps members only to schools serving majority White and/or middle income students? Currently, children of color are disproportionately exposed to chronically under-qualified and inexperienced teachers who leave their schools at much higher rates than other novice teachers. What if that reality were switched, and we committed to recruiting the best and most prepared teachers for schools that are the least resourced and funded?[30] What if those teachers were trained in culturally appropriate pedagogies (as opposed to primarily classroom management and compliance) and curriculum (vs. standardized curriculum consistent with Whitestream norms)? What if that teaching force was demographically representative of the students that it served and knowledgeable about the local community? What if we worked to ensure that this diverse group of well-trained and well-resourced educators remained in the classroom, in their communities, instead of recruiting them into other areas? Would power allow this? These scenarios are common, generally accepted, and even expected for students of privilege, so why not for everyone else?

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[30] Again, I do not intend to suggest that school funding alone will "fix" the inequities that target students of color and of poverty, but I do agree with Ladson-Billings (1998), who suggests that there is no ethical way to argue "for allowing poor children to languish in unheated, overcrowded schools with bathrooms that spew raw sewage while middle-income White students attend school in spacious, technology rich, inviting buildings" (p. 21). Although I see inequity as systemic in the same vein as, for example, Anyon (2014), I do think that schools are one area where inequities, including those in funding, are pervasive and representative of society at large.

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