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Leading for Justice: Examining Perspectives and Practices of Leaders
Within Teacher Residences

By

Alexandrea Kahn

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor T. Sengupta-Irving, Chair

Professor J. Mahiri

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Spring 2026

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By

Alexandrea Kahn

Abstract

Leading for Justice: Examining Perspectives and Practices of Leaders Within Teacher Residences

By

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Doctor of Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Tesha Sengupta-Irving, Chair

This dissertation study explores how leaders within social-justice-focused teacher residency programs conceptualize quality clinical placements and the perspectives and practices leaders embody, to design and enact clinical placement experiences for teacher candidates. Through narrative inquiry, informed by critical bifocality and boundary spanning leadership as methods and frameworks for analysis, this study examines the experiences and stories of leaders within teacher residency programs. Findings reveal that leaders conceptualize quality through adherence to state credentialing policies, alignment between institutional and placement contexts, and hold varied goals for teacher candidate development. This research illuminates how leaders leverage their awareness of systemic inequities to engage in practices such as creating intentional partnerships, maintaining strategic placement and mentor selection processes, and responding to program misalignment. Implications of this study suggest changes to state policy guiding clinical placement criteria, investing in the leadership development of teacher educators, and advocacy for resources for TK-12 schools to strengthen school-university partnerships.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Teacher preparation as a field is as dynamic as it is vast. Over the past century, teacher preparation in the United States has evolved to reflect the shifting attitudes, expectations, and needs of a diverse populace. Over the last few decades, teacher education reform has sought to close various real and perceived gaps, supporting teachers in developing concrete pedagogical skills and centering on contemporary educational research and theory. Traditional university-led preparation programs have been critiqued for failing to ensure that preservice teachers possess the knowledge and readiness to support the most vulnerable students and families (Wasburn-Moses, 2017). Amidst ongoing and current tensions in perceptions of adequate teacher preparation and the realities of teacher shortages, alternative pathways toward teaching have emerged to varying degrees of efficacy.

While alternative certification pathways like Teach for America or intern credential programs have made efforts to remedy workforce labor gaps, research suggests teachers with these alternative certifications not only were less prepared to teach vulnerable populations of students but teachers also left the field of teaching at much higher rates than traditionally certified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). More significant systemic concerns emerge when holistically examining the teacher preparation continuum, particularly its preparation of teachers of color. The literature about teacher preparation and retention among teachers of color highlights the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Still, it provides a limited exploration of the contexts of learning that teacher candidates engage in beyond their coursework.

Within California, alternative pathways for teacher certification include internships, apprenticeships, and teacher residencies. Similar to university-based teacher preparation programs, alternative pathways typically include coursework and a minimum of 600 hours of clinical preparation. In recent years, internship programs have also come under scrutiny for inadequate preparation and lower long-term teacher retention rates. Research suggests that teachers participating in internship pathways need to be better prepared to teach vulnerable student populations and that they leave the teaching field at significantly higher rates than traditionally certified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

A growing approach for increasing the qualified and diverse staff for high-need schools is teacher residencies. A significant feature differentiating teacher residency programs from other pathways is the substantial time spent in clinical settings, the emphasis on quality mentoring for teacher candidates, and the preparation for a full-time role in the specific contexts in which teacher candidates are trained. Teacher candidates in residency programs typically spend up to four days a week at school-based clinical placements, resulting in a total of 900 hours spent at their school sites. As teacher residencies become more widespread only over the past decade, limited research exists on the ideal residency model, program design, and the nuances of preparing teachers in this “third space” (Zeichner, 2010); what research does exist suggests that teacher residency programs offer opportunities for a more diverse teaching workforce and support longer teacher retention (Guha et al., 2017) and preparation within the contexts (ex. grade level, school) may positively impact student achievement (Ronfeldt, 2021).

As a leader in teacher residency models, the state of California has invested over \$600 million since 2018 through grants called the Teacher Residency Grant Program (Brannegan & Hirschboeck, 2024). Institutions of higher education and local education agencies also

leveraged federal funding through the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2023) to effectively prepare teachers, particularly teachers of color and Teacher Quality Partnership grants (TQP). In 2025, the federal government, through emergency order through the Supreme Court, canceled most of the grants falling under the federal SEED and TQP grants as they were perceived to be in “conflict with the department’s policy of prioritizing merit, fairness, and excellence in education” (U.S. Department of Education, 2025) and arguing that such grants to diversify the teaching force promoted diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and therefore were unlawful. The shift in the federal socio-political landscape regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and subsequent loss of funds for residency programs focusing on diversifying the teaching workforce continues to evolve with changes in access for teacher candidates and impact on program enactment.

A significant feature differentiating teacher residency programs from their traditional university-based counterparts is the amount of field placement time. For example, preservice teachers must complete at least 600 clinical hours at school sites to become certified teachers in California. Preservice teacher residents typically spend up to four days a week at school-based clinical placements, leading to 900 total hours spent at their school sites—300 more clinical hours than what is required for California state credentialing requirements. Another hallmark of the residency model is high-quality mentors who teach residents and serve as a critical resource for learning and development. Finally, the very purpose of a teacher residency is to prepare teachers for the contexts in which they ultimately will teach, which research suggests may positively impact student achievement (Ronfeldt, 2021).

High-quality student-teaching placements offer numerous opportunities and necessitate several key considerations. In a seven-program study of public and private teacher preparation programs, researchers found that program features of high-quality student teaching placements reflected a shared vision for effective teaching, ensuring curriculum and practice coherence, clear standards, extended clinical experiences, use of case methods, explicit approaches for preservice teachers to examine and respond to bias critically, and effective relationships with site-based and university partners (Darling-Hammond, 2014). The field holds consensus around the significance of student teaching in advancing the learning of preservice teachers (Zeichner, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2014) and its potential, when situated in community contexts, to interrupt deficit beliefs about students (Hallman & Burdick, 2015; Hollins & Warner, 2021). In contrast, poor clinical experiences lead to inert practice (Zeichner, 1986) or, worse, the perpetuation of bias and racism (Cross, 2005). Student teaching is a complex enterprise that reflects the ecological interactions between preservice teachers, their placement environments, and the ways in which ecosystems interact (Zeichner, 1986). Many factors contribute to this complexity, including the quality of mentor teachers, school quality, and first-year teaching placement (Ronfeldt, 2021).

Teacher candidates in residency-type programming frequently spend 50% more time in site-based clinical learning experiences than their traditional pathway counterparts (Guha et al., 2017). Given the practice-based focus of teacher residency programs, the implications for having high-quality clinical experiences and mentor support are paramount. A recent mixed-methods study of Black teacher residents highlighted the promise teacher residency models hold for reducing barriers in the field and the potentially damaging effects school climate

conditions have on teachers of color (Shand et al., 2023). These effects include experiencing microaggressions, limited access to leadership of color, and conflicts between supportive residency programming and challenging school contexts. Racially hostile experiences during clinical residencies are not dissimilar to the experiences of traditionally prepared teachers of color (Kohli, 2018).

Problem Statement

This dissertation seeks to fill the gap in literature around how leaders in teacher residency programs conceptualize justice in their design and enactment of quality clinical programs. A closer examination of teacher residencies yields a complex picture with implications for the conditions necessary to facilitate learning amongst a diverse teaching workforce within clinical sites. While teacher residencies hold much promise, there are questions concerning their efficacy in preparing preservice teachers within quality placements enabling candidates to acquire the pedagogical knowledge, practices, and orientations needed to become effective and critically reflective practitioners.

Leaders of teacher education programs are heavily involved in shaping the vision, design, and implementation of student teachers' experiences, and they engage in critical decisions that influence the learning context for preservice teacher candidates. Michael Fullan described system leaders as those who "work intensely" in their own contexts "and at the same time connect with and participate in the bigger picture" (Fullan, 2006, p.114)." Leaders of teacher residencies focusing on justice centered institutional aims, play a critical role in navigating across contexts to facilitate programmatic coherence and congruency between contexts and to situate learning for preservice teachers. Emerging literature characterizes these leaders as "boundary-spanning teacher educators" (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE] Clinical Practice Commission, 2018) who lead across TK–12 and higher education contexts to create and enact a shared vision and goals. While leaders within traditional teacher education collaborate with schools and local contexts, leaders within residency spaces, by design, facilitate integrated coursework and placement learning experiences, necessitating close collaboration across community partners.

Overview of Research Design

My research study employed a narrative research method to explore both the personal and institutional narratives of institutional leaders as regards high-quality clinical placements in teacher education. Leveraging critical bifocality as a theory of method allowed me to situate leader narratives within a larger macro, meso, and micro policy context, particularly as they navigate across boundaries of higher education and TK-12 education. A focal point of my research will be to examine the varied leader stories to identify findings as they emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Methods

Narrative research methodology involves developing a deep understanding of the stories people tell (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In effort to effectively design a narrative research study, I am intentionally selecting participants, capturing participant stories, and situating their stories in the personal, cultural, and historical contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given this, my methods will include the following parameters: location, participant selection, data collection, data collection tools, and data analysis procedure.

Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative research study is to understand (1) how leaders of social-justice-centered teacher residencies conceptualize high-quality clinical placements in relation to institutionally espoused aims (2) perspectives and practices guide the work of leaders within teacher residency contexts, My research focuses on leadership within teacher residency programs as a unique opportunity to better understand the tensions and implications of this preparation approach for models that privilege practice and context-based learning. My research aims to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How do leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize clinical placements for teacher candidates?
- RQ2: What perspectives and practices guide leaders' decision-making as they design and enact clinical placements within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Key Terms

- **Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)** - The term "institution of higher education" refers to universities hosting teacher credentialing programs that issue credentials and additional degrees (e.g., masters degree).
- **Local Education Agencies (LEA)**- Local education agencies refer broadly to public districts, schools, and charter management organizations employing credentialed teachers in the state of California.
- **Teacher educator** - The term "teacher educator" as referred to in this text refers primarily to faculty and program staff who are formally in charge of overseeing the programmatic design and/or evaluation of and oversight of teacher candidate development. This includes faculty employed through IHEs or LEA staff within residency programs who oversee lead residency programming directed for supporting preservice candidate development in connection with institutions of higher education.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, with appendices and works cited. Chapter 1 introduces the study, followed by a problem statement and statement of purpose, outlines the research questions, offers a rationale and significance, and concludes with key terms central to this dissertation. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature, including relevant empirical and theoretical scholarship that frame the study of leaders of teacher residencies within social justice-focused institutions, and concludes with an articulation and rationale for the theories applied in this study – critical bifocality and boundary spanning leaders. Chapter 3 defines the methodology employed in this study, including the research paradigm, research design, site and participant selection, data collection methods, the process used for data analysis, and the formulation of the final findings. Chapter 4 and 5 display the findings through the stories of participants, and Chapter 6 concludes this dissertation study with a discussion, implications, and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter situates this dissertation study within the context of related empirical literature, scholarly material, and theoretical frameworks used to ground this research. The chapter concludes with the specific ways this dissertation study contributes to gaps in the current literature. The review is organized into three parts: (a) research on teacher residency programs with an emphasis on the clinical programming; (b) the historical role of teacher educators, their competencies, and social justice dilemmas; and (c) the evolution of social justice teacher education and ongoing dilemmas for teacher education.

This literature review examines what is known about extended clinical placement experiences within teacher education, how they intersect with institutional clinical placement relationships, and the role of teacher education program leaders. I seek to understand better considerations for how teacher educators within residency contexts negotiate across ecosystems while advancing institutional and programmatic social justice aims. Given the increase in teacher preparation models centering extended clinical experiences for preservice teacher preparation, I explore the facets of how leaders intentionally identify, select, and negotiate such spaces within preservice teacher learning. Centering teacher residency programs offers a unique opportunity to understand better the opportunities, affordances, and implications for leaders within teacher preparation program models with extended clinical experiences.

In exploring this topic, I use three domains of work within education: clinical placement contexts within teacher residencies, teacher educators, and social justice teacher education. For each domain, I used search terms and identified core articles connected to the topic, elevating the historical context, current dilemmas, and implications for research. To that end, my research explores the following questions:

- RQ1: How do leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize clinical placements for teacher candidates?
- RQ2: What perspectives and practices guide leaders' decision-making as they design and enact clinical placements within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Conceptual Framework

In approaching my literature review, I use two theoretical frameworks to analyze the findings. For all three domains, I utilize Weis and Fine's theoretical framework, critical bifocality, which allows me to understand how global, structural, and local forces influence how program leaders enact perspectives and practices in facilitating high-quality clinical learning contexts for preservice teachers.

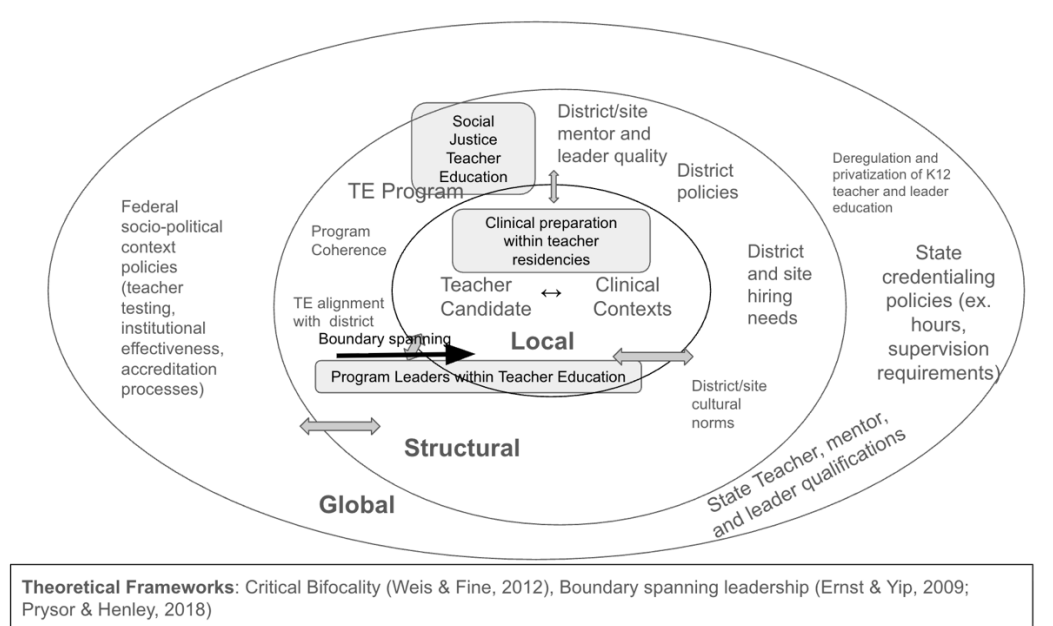
Weis and Fine describe *critical bifocality* as making "visible the sinewy linkages or circuits through which structural conditions are enacted in policy and reform institutions as well as how such conditions come to be woven into community relationships and metabolized by individuals (2012, p. 174)." Leveraging this theoretical framework creates opportunities to explore what possible inequalities surface regarding extended clinical preparation within teacher residencies, given its positioning as a more accessible pathway for teachers of color and its contribution to solving teacher vacancies in hard-to-staff schools. This is particularly true given that teacher education has long been criticized for centering whiteness and struggles to center the needs of teachers of color (Kohli, 2018) or prepare teacher educators for leading and

teaching for social justice (Goodwin et al., 2014). With growing national and policy interest in hiring a diverse teaching workforce in light of an increasingly diverse public educational system (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019), it is essential to examine the contextual factors that create and perpetuate conditions preservice teachers of color experience to support teachers, students, and families of color ethically. Critical bifocality offers a lens to trace the global and neoliberal macro influences across contexts, how globalization and neoliberal policies influence teacher educators and the embodiment of socially just leadership and teaching, and the opportunities and unintended consequences of extended time in clinical placements on teacher development. This lens facilitates examining the broader ecosystem of preservice teacher preparation to investigate barriers to producing a diverse and equity-minded teacher workforce.

The second interpretative framework I utilize in interpreting the literature on teacher educators is boundary-spanning leadership (Yip et al., 2008). *Boundary-spanning leadership* reflects an orientation toward establishing a “direction, alignment, commitment in the service of a higher vision and goal” (Yip et al., 2009) while bridging relationships (Weerts & Sandman, 2010) and mobilizing and transforming relationships (Yip et al., 2008). This framework provides a critical lens to understand the opportunities and points of tension in teacher educators navigating multiple contexts between higher education and TK–12.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Leading across boundaries and contexts



This conceptual framework captures how critical bifocality and boundary-spanning leadership intersect. Critical bifocality and the concentric circles reflect how federal, state, and local policies influence local contexts (classrooms) and, therefore, teacher candidates. Boundary-spanning leadership cross-sects the global, structural, and local contexts as teacher educators negotiate various policies, structures, and practices within higher education institutions and local settings to facilitate the development of teacher candidates.

Domain 1: Teacher Residencies

In this domain, I examine existing research to understand the origins of teacher residencies, what defines a teacher residency, and early indicators of the effectiveness or impact of teacher residencies within the United States. To identify relevant articles, I used the search terms *teacher residency*, *practice-based teacher education*, *teachers of color teacher residencies*, and *clinical preparation*. I reviewed over 60 peer-reviewed articles, selecting articles focusing specifically on residency contexts and revealing critical research around the rise of practice-based teacher preparation and high-quality clinical experiences.

The Rise of Shifts in Teacher Education Preparation Models

Shifts in teacher education began in the 1980s in response to the Carnegie Report *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, published in 1986. This report ushered a new wave of sweeping changes in teacher education, raising the alarm about the ability of the United States to compete globally, raising urgency around education as a mechanism to prepare the larger workforce, and creating significant shifts in education policy and teacher education to raise standards for how teachers were trained. The report initiated a series of policies that substantially changed how teachers are prepared by introducing standards for the teaching profession, shifts in certification requirements, and resource preparation for new teachers in their first years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Contextually, the momentum created by the Carnegie Report and research generated to support the merits of high-quality teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010) in response to early entry-teacher preparation programs spurred the emergence of so-called “hybrid” programs (Zeichner & Bier, 2015)—a departure from traditional university-based teacher preparation programs. To combat rising political, moral, and labor concerns, teacher residencies were conceptualized in the early 2000s in Chicago and Boston due to dissatisfaction from school-based leaders around teacher preparation (Zeichner & Bier, 2015) and compounding factors around teacher shortages.

Research on Teacher Residencies

The primary aim of early teacher residency programs was to support high-need schools in urban areas (Papay et al., 2012). Over the past two decades, teacher residency programs have grown significantly (Silva et al., 2014) to serve many states and varied contexts. The residency model, both practically and aspirationally, hinges on solid partnerships between institutes of higher education and high-quality mentors, a rigorous selection process, and stable and supportive school placements (Guha et al., 2017). A hallmark of the teacher residency model is creating the “third space” (Bhabha, 1994; Zeichner, 2010) of teacher preparation, in which preservice teachers experience deeply integrated coursework and clinical experiences (Klein et al., 2013) and university-school partners move beyond the traditional archetype of university (first space), school (second space), to “communal” school and university partnership third spaces in which partners center justice meaningfully and across all spaces (e.g., university, school, partnership) (Hill-Jackson, 2024). With at least eleven states not requiring teachers to have clinical experience before becoming a teacher of record (AACTE, 2018), and ongoing critiques of traditional programs persistently feature disconnected experiences between coursework and clinical experiences (Zeichner & Bier, 2015) teacher residencies offer a structural alternative to facilitating the integration of theory and practice.

Existing research and data reporting on teacher residency models suggest that a teacher residency pathway holds promise for attending to many issues plaguing school systems. Research suggests teacher residencies possess the potential to advance academic achievement (Berry et al., 2008), diversify the teaching workforce, and reduce staffing shortages for high-need schools. While teacher residency models vary to some extent (Silva et al., 2014), they typically involve teacher candidates earning their teaching certification by engaging in coursework and spending four days a week placed within a mentor or expert teacher classroom (Guha et al., 2017). Early studies highlight teacher residencies offer a stronger pathway for teachers of diverse backgrounds through intentional and supportive recruitment approaches, teachers embodying social justice programmatic aims, and ensuring financial assistance (Shand et al., 2023). By some measures, 58% of teachers of color enter the teaching field through teacher residencies, in contrast to 17% of traditional teacher preparation programs (NCTR 2020; Hill-Jackson, 2023). While residencies remain viable, they represent a small margin of teachers earning credentials. In the 2023–2024 annual report from the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR, 2024), the organization’s members produced just over 2,000 credentialed nationally prepared teachers across 26 states compared to over 17,000 teachers credentialed in the state of California in 2018–2019 (Brown, 2020). Still, more research is needed on the experiences and programmatic implications of supporting teacher candidates with diverse identities.

Although teacher residencies offer a unique and innovative approach to creating a pipeline of diverse and prepared teachers (Shand et al., 2023), tensions still need to be resolved between the aspirational aims of such programs and the actual impact. For example, early evidence from Boston teacher residencies suggests positive effects on student achievement after four years (Papay et al., 2012) and higher retention rates (Guha et al., 2016), but a report from a 30-teacher residency program study by the Department of Education (Silva et al., 2014) suggested the outcomes are more mixed. In contrast to some reports about teacher residency programs generally promoting stronger retention, in 2014, teacher residents and teachers entering the teaching profession through other traditional preparation pathways had similar retention outcomes (Silva et al., 2014).

Opportunities and Limitations for Extended Student Teaching

In contrast to coursework as a mainstay for teacher preparation, expectations for clinical placement learning experiences vary across states (Putnam & Walsh, 2021) and teacher preparation programs. Residency-focused models leverage clinical learning experiences as central to preparing teacher candidates to connect theory and practice. Guha contended that extended clinical experiences provide teacher candidates more hours with expert mentors, accelerating skill development (Guha et al., 2016). Zeichner argued that this arrangement may resolve the disconnect between coursework and school-based clinical learning experiences (K. Zeichner & Bier, 2015). Still, challenges persist in ensuring high-quality clinical experiences, including facilitating effective co-teaching, recruiting experienced mentors, program inconsistencies, and reconceptualizing teacher education's “third space” to account for a shift toward inquiry (Klein et al., 2013). Complicating matters, research has suggested that context plays a significant role in ensuring teacher preparation produces teachers equipped for the schools they will enter (Hammerness & Craig, 2016). Therefore, extended clinical experience

offers a critical opportunity for additional learning and practice for preservice teachers, and there are significant implications for the criteria and quality of clinical experiences.

This literature review underscores teacher residencies as an innovative approach to creating a new pipeline of invested and diverse teachers. It also reveals essential considerations regarding creating context-specific measures to ensure teacher residency programs are positioned, led, and partnered with local districts and schools to deliver on the aims they aspire to achieve. With the critical diversity of a new wave of teachers also comes the responsibility for teacher education programs to change program models to attend to the quality of experiences that teachers of color experience.

Literature Review Themes and Implications

In this domain, the following key findings emerge:

- Teacher residencies create pipelines for teachers of diverse identities to enter the profession.
- The program's nature and design afford more opportunities for alignment among theory, coursework, and applications. Contributing causes include significant time spent at field placements.
- Context plays a significant role in the development of an effective teacher.
- Inconsistent data exists on teacher residency preparation and its effect on student achievement.
- Emerging evidence suggests frustration with school climates in contrast to the supportive nature of the teacher residency among teachers of color.

A significant gap in the research concerns how teacher residency programs are or are not intentionally structured to attend to social justice aims and are culturally and linguistically responsive for diverse teacher candidates. Much of the existing research centers on the aims of teacher residencies as a combination of addressing teacher shortages in hard-to-staff areas and diversifying the teaching workforce.

In considering the global forces, when researchers position their gaze using a neoliberal perspective—in that this teacher preparation program aims to solve a labor issue—they discount the genuine implications of moving teachers of color toward systems plagued with whiteness and systemic oppression (Kohli, 2018). While many factors negatively affect teachers of color in entering and completing professional teacher training pathways, including teacher recruitment and institutional barriers such as testing and pathway access (Gist et al., 2019), much work needs to take place to understand better what structures or supports foster the development of teachers of color.

Further, given the higher turnover rates among teachers of color and the historically disproportionate labor distribution within schools for Black and Latinx teachers, more research is needed to reimagine teacher residency experiences to center the wellness and learning of teacher residents of color in the service of TK–12 student success. Critical areas for further exploration and research should include examining the lived experiences of teachers of color in teacher residencies to inform policy, leadership practices across the residency systems, and residency-specific teacher education programs.

Domain 2: Teacher Education

Teacher Education: A Historical Perspective

In this domain, I examine existing research to understand the origins of teacher education, what defines teacher educators, pathways to the field, and essential competencies. To identify relevant articles, I used the search terms *teacher educators, history of teacher education, and issues within teacher education*. I reviewed over 50 peer-reviewed articles, selecting articles and resources focusing specifically on uncovering the complex dimensions of the teacher educator role, the role of professionalization, and how the role is situated in the larger context of advancing socially just aims within teacher education programs or a societal context. This exploration reveals essential insights into the status, preparation, and vulnerability to complex forces.

Teachers are one of society's most essential resources, and subsequently, well-prepared teacher educators are critical. Despite this, teacher education has long been viewed as a low-status field, and simply having experience in teaching satisfies the requirement for entry into the field of work (Zeichner, 2005). Unsurprisingly, there is yet to be a defined pathway into teacher education as a field. Some teacher educators become introduced initially through supporting teacher candidates as a part of their doctoral financial aid packages (Ludwig et al., 2010), while many others fall into the field through "happenstance" (Goodwin et al., 2014).

The conversation about the diffuse nature of teacher-educator definitions and pathways can only happen with the historical context of the evolution of teaching and teacher preparation and the standards reform movement initiated by the report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. The teaching profession remained largely unregulated through the mid-1920s (Schneider, 2018). As a field, teaching was not viewed as a profession until the late 1800s, and even then, the significant qualifications for teachers included "moral and intellectual status" (Warren, 1985). During the late 1800s through the early turn of the century, teacher preparation schools became more common but were not required, as they would limit the pool of available teachers (Schneider, 2018). Early preparation schools reflected low standards and age requirements, some even as young as 16 (Schneider, 2018).

The 1920s ushered in a new era of policy accountability by introducing training and licensing requirements across multiple states. This led to a significant increase in the number of teachers with at least four years of college experience (Schneider, 2018). Despite these shifts, there was growing discontent with what university-based teacher education programs should be and how they should prepare teachers. By the early 1980s, two forces collided, leading to increased scrutiny of teacher education programs and increased deregulation of teacher preparation programs. In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* was published, arguing that American schools were failing. Three years later, the Carnegie Task Force report (1987) was released, advocating for specific recommendations for teacher preparation programs, including increasing prerequisite education, introducing standards for the teaching profession, and developing an intentional curriculum.

The release of both reports ushered in an era of accountability, standards development, and neoliberal reform for K–12 and teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). In 1992, general standards for teacher educators emerged when teacher education was heavily scrutinized, particularly university-based teacher preparation programs. Still, more stringent accountability measures for teacher education programs started in the 1990s and continued through the Obama administration era. While these reforms emphasized teacher preparation programs that improved student achievement, they also led to alternate pathways for teacher

certification that questioned the validity of university-based teacher preparation and licensing (Schneider, 2018).

Despite intentions to prepare 21st-century students effectively, the deregulation of the teacher preparation structures and increased privatized pathways strained an already under-resourced and underprepared system. With an ever-increasing diverse profile of students in the nation's public schools, the deskilling of U.S. teachers and teacher educators exacerbated the pairing of underprepared teachers with the most under-resourced communities. The rise of programs like Teach for America has contributed to the "production and reproduction of privilege" and inequality (Weis & Fine, 2012), in which the vast majority of students of color in metropolitan areas attend public schools, while the majority of White students attend private, independent schools. These alternative pathways failed to "address issues of racism, power, and whiteness" in the TK–12 ecosystem or inherent in the teacher preparation programs themselves; new teachers must understand how to navigate these issues in the classroom to become effective teachers (Cross, 2005; Carlson, 1995).

Defining Teacher Educators

While there is much consensus in the literature on whom teacher educators work with (pre-service teachers), there is less alignment on who a teacher educator is by definition and how a person becomes a teacher educator. Some define teacher educators as "personnel responsible" (Association for Teacher Educators [ATE], 2024) for supporting preservice teachers, others as "someone who provides instruction or gives guidance and support to student teachers" (Koster et al., 2005), and some define them solely as faculty located in university-based teacher preparation contexts (Cochran-Smith, 2003). To expand the definition, the Association for Teacher Educators defined teacher educators as "all personnel responsible for teacher education from pre-service preparation to programs that support the continued education of teachers from initial employment to later years in their career."

AACTE standards were constructed in 1992 and have been revised continually to account for shifts in the field. These standards attempt to delineate who teacher educators are in contrast to other roles supporting teachers in the field. While the standards are superficially expansive, they reflect an orientation toward higher education with scholarship-oriented activities, including engaging in research, contributing to or leading program development, or participating in accreditation policies. The standards domains include teaching, cultural competence, scholarship, professional development, program development, public advocacy, and the teacher educator profession. The connection to higher education is predictable, considering that much of the ATE membership consists of the leadership of colleges of education (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2018). Connected, most contemporary research has bounded the scope of inquiry of teacher educators to individuals working in the context of university-based teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2014), despite an acknowledgment that there are various other roles involved in preservice teacher development, including cooperating teachers, clinical supervisors, and even site-based professionals such as principals (Hord, 1988). While AACTE has developed some criteria for teacher educators, in the state context of California, the Commission for Teacher Credentialing (CTC) does not provide specific guidance on the roles of teacher educators. What does exist within the standards and guidance issued by CTC reflects the teacher performance standards, program standards institutions of higher education are expected to adhere to, or the clinical

criteria to which teacher education personnel should adhere for compliance. Little exists concerning the competencies of teacher educators outside of stipulations regarding the credential qualifications of supervisors who oversee preservice teachers' student teaching (California Teacher Credentialing, 2022).

Teacher Educator Competencies

In the past 20 years, researchers have continued to study how teacher educators view their roles, the competencies of their roles, how teacher educators prepare for these roles, and, indeed, what their roles ought to be. Frequently, teacher education is viewed as a "self-evident" activity primarily driven by the assumption that learning is facilitated through the transmission of knowledge (Zeichner, 2005). Several scholars have attempted to understand the various competencies (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013), central tasks and professional identity (Koster et al., 2005; Richter et al., 2021), transition from classroom teacher to beginning teacher educator (Williams et al., 2012), and teacher identities (Boyd & Harris, 2010) teacher educators need to have to serve teacher candidates best. Much of the existing literature comes from teacher educator self-studies, with some qualitative and quantitative research given the limited research base. Finally, few studies exist exploring the competencies teacher educators need to have to facilitate the move from "espousing" to "enacting" social justice in their own teacher education practices (Goodwin & Darity, 2019).

In his seminal self-study, Ken Zeichner argued that all teacher educators must be better equipped to understand the issues and debates inherent in teacher education and orient toward professional self-examination to develop and prepare teachers effectively (Zeichner, 2005). Others have argued that identifying the professional profiles of teacher educators will help them grow, develop, and become more effective. Rather than standards that can be perceived as narrow, professional profiles offer holistic insight by broadening the definition of teacher educators, capturing nuances around how professional work manifests based on context (Koster et al., 2005). In one study, researchers found that teachers and educators reflected through qualitative interviews three overlapping competency areas: working on their development, providing a teacher education program, and participating in teacher education policy and development (Koster et al., 2005). To better understand how teacher educator identity influences how teacher educators effectively engage in their work, a small empirical study on German teacher educators found that teacher educators perceived their tasks in two dominant ways: as a "facilitator" and as a "transmitter" (Richter et al., 2021).

Teacher Education and The Problem of Injustice

Limited attention to teacher-educator competencies, professional identities, or orientations is paid to disrupting inequity. In the United States context, in which students of color vastly outnumber teachers of color (Ingersoll et al., 2019) and educational disparities persist, teacher educators need the tools and skills to be facilitators of learning and have a responsibility to ensure teacher candidate learning aligns with a justice-oriented mission. Cross argues, "The primary challenge to teacher educators . . . is to develop the skills and knowledge to combat the root causes of racism, whiteness, and power rather than affirming them through either field placements or knowledge taught" (Cross, 2005). Yet contemporary studies have revealed that many teacher educators lack the conceptual understanding and tools to enact culturally responsive practices (Goodwin et al., 2014). While teacher educators of color are disproportionate in the teacher education field, research suggests they possess perspectives

about centering a moral stance or advocacy stance, knowledge of societal issues, and a commitment to community and cultural knowledge in contrast to their European American peers (Goodwin, 2004). In a survey of higher education faculty within teacher education, Olson and Buchanan found teacher educators encountered a “two-world paradox” or a duality of two contexts in which they navigated different constraints and affordances in different spaces. Such navigation surfaces that teacher educators benefit from and need standard preparation to mitigate personal experiences and training; without training, they are susceptible to “structural and workplace influences” and experience the challenge of balancing theory and practice as a contributing factor to struggling to focus on anything well (Olsen & Buchanan, 2017). Compounding these factors, Bristol highlights the incongruence between stated district commitments and actualized policies and practices to support a diverse teaching workforce (Bristol et. al, 2024), complicating the work of teacher educators.

Despite clinical placements' potential to reinforce racist or problematic perspectives of students and families, a new generation of teacher educators is willing to and interested in confronting deficit views they see or experience in their student-teaching placements (Yeigh, 2020). Further, in a study examining the experiences of veteran teachers of color, researchers found that teachers reflecting on their teacher preparation expressed experiences of contradictions between espoused teacher preparation programmatic aims of social justice and the environments they navigated within coursework and clinical experiences. These teachers expressed the need to support teacher candidates in cultivating racial literacies necessary to support their practice and provide support with navigating racialized climates within their clinical placements (Kohli, 2019).

The pathway into the professional role of teacher educator is uneven, inconsistent, and not coordinated intentionally to support the development of a group of individuals charged with training the next generation's teaching force. Further, for public education in the United States, which primarily serves students of color and is charged with reducing educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006), the teacher-educator workforce is not positioned to prepare teachers to support this aim. Listed below are specific themes that surfaced from the literature review.

Literature Review Themes and Implications

This domain reveals the following findings:

1. There continues to be a consensus among researchers around the lack of codified frameworks or collectively accepted sets of competencies for teacher educators.
2. Teacher educators would benefit from specific training and support, including pedagogical approaches for developing teachers, spaces for ongoing learning and development, and specific development in supporting the needs of diverse learners.
3. There is limited insight into the experiences of teacher educators who do not occupy traditional positions within higher education institutions.
4. Teacher educators, particularly working across “two-worlds”, may benefit from training in leading and negotiating complex relationships and conflicting policies amongst the higher education and TK–12 ecosystem.

Employing the lens of critical bifocality, the lack of coherent approaches within teacher education that center anti-racism and equity at their core reflects a lack of historical

prioritization for investing in those preparing teachers to serve all learners. This ongoing gap creates space for maintaining the status quo for teacher preparation, which has been long challenged for its Whiteness concerning the representation of diverse groups within the United States and for the beliefs, practices, and orientations it enacts. While some governing bodies, such as the AACTE, incorporate some language around cultural responsiveness, limited research exists on how teacher educators might embody anti-racism, equity, and social justice in their practice. Complicating this matter, organizations like the National Council of Teacher Quality use strategies to lobby for privatizing teacher education and accountability-based measurements (Aydarova, 2022), undermining other equity-informed success metrics for teacher preparation programs. With the emergence of boundary-spanning educators, individuals in the field of teacher education need more support in developing culturally responsive frameworks and pedagogical skills to facilitate impactful and culturally responsive learning experiences for preservice teachers, thus preparing them to serve the most marginalized students and families.

Domain 3: Social Justice Teacher Education

In the final domain of this literature review, I review contemporary research to examine how the purpose of schooling influenced teacher preparation, the shift of teacher education programs centering on social justice, and the tensions and dilemmas in fulfilling that aim. In identifying relevant articles, I used the search terms *social justice teacher education*, *social justice education*, and *social justice issues in teacher education*. I reviewed more than 30 peer-reviewed articles, focusing on social justice pedagogy and dilemmas within the field related to the structural ways teacher preparation programs navigate enacting espoused programmatic rendering visible critical opportunities to clarify definitions for social justice teacher education and considerations for programmatic structures and leadership.

Historical Influences on Teacher Preparation

In American society, schools have served various purposes ranging from “securing Democracy” by becoming an intellectual equalizing mechanism, “preservation of American culture,” supporting the development of the American workforce, and maintaining American supremacy in global economic contexts (Oakes et al., 2018). In the early 19th century, compulsory schooling was created to reduce alleged societal ills by creating “productive citizens” whose families were perceived as lacking interest or possessing knowledge or skills (Cuban, 1989). Much of the discourse for the past two centuries on the purpose of school and supporting diverse populations is grounded in the deficit ideologies that students of diverse cultural heritages or who do not have access to wealth do not have the support, ability, or dominant-culture knowledge to be successful (p. 781). Despite the intent of common schools and social movements such as desegregation in *Brown vs. Board of Education* or other Civil Rights educational movements, since their inception, teacher preparation programs have struggled to disrupt labeling students as “culturally deprived” or “disadvantaged” despite attempts to do so (Goodwin, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Historically, teacher preparation models have espoused varied ideological models ranging from traditional, social efficiency, developmentalist, or social reconstructionist (Zeichner, 1993). With the social change of the 1960s, teacher preparation programs struggled to determine how to shift to accommodate what was referred to then as multicultural education. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the AACTE audited teacher preparation programs

for their ability to provide coursework to support teachers in developing the skills to support multicultural education. This led to new standards for school accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education in poorly implemented areas with limited direction and maintained the status quo of practices pre-desegregation (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

The Rise of Social Justice in Teacher Education

In the late 1990s, several programs engaged in the work to move beyond multicultural education coursework to more squarely focus on integrating “social justice” education as woven throughout the program (Ladson Billings, 1999). During the beginning of the early 2000s, teacher education preparation programs began embracing social justice as a term and focus (North, 2008). Zeichner shared, “It has come to the point that the term social justice in teacher education is so commonly used now by colleges and university teacher educators that it is difficult to find a teacher education program in the United States that does not claim to have a program that prepares teachers for social justice” (Zeichner, 2006). Yet, at the same time, many scholars lacked consensus on the true definition or manifestation of social justice education or the ability to measure candidate progress (North, 2008).

Several scholars have worked to define better what social justice means in the context of teacher education. One dominant frame in the field is Lynch and Baker’s (2005) *equality of condition* framework, which consists of five tenets: resources; respect and recognition; love, care, solidarity; power; and working and learning. This framework emphasizes that the aforementioned tenets combined will facilitate K12 student choice and access within their environment. Kumashiro offers a different perspective on enacting social justice within teacher education, exploring four common perspectives of *anti-oppressive education*: educating for the other, education about the other, education that is critical to privileging and othering; and education that changes students and society (Kumashiro, 2000) arguing that no one perspective is sufficient to engage students in anti-oppressive educational experiences.

Dilemmas in Enacting Social Justice Teacher Education

Cochran-Smith critiques the ambiguity in social justice education as a barrier to teacher-candidate learning and finds that it invokes “false dichotomies between social justice and knowledge/learning” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Several scholars (American Educational Research Association, 2018) have introduced various pedagogical orientations around integrating social justice into teacher practice, such as critical reflection, centering social justice in practice-based teacher education (Kavanagh & Danielson, 2020), or advocating for the integration of social justice in practice-based teacher education (Doherty, 2022). What remains clear is that there is no shared understanding or collective framework guiding what social justice enacted in teacher education should look like, irrespective of the programmatic element.

While social justice education literature aims are admirable, little research has explored the macro considerations around navigating the domination and oppression (Beck, 2020) found in teacher preparation programs between higher education and TK–12 spaces. In Darling-Hammond’s call for a new model for teacher preparation, she has spoken to the importance of high-quality clinical experiences integrated with theory and practice and coupled with exceptional models. The literature on how to ensure these spaces come to fruition is scant.

Moreover, in a recent UCLA report on the experiences of preservice and in-service teachers of color, teacher candidates continually comment on the negative racialized experiences they endure as they prepare for full-time teaching (Mathews et al., 2024). In considering these dilemmas, while some states offer guidance on technical criteria for teacher educator leadership actions to support preservice teacher candidate placement, guidance that centers on candidate teacher identities and needs should be present. Recent research has suggested that preservice teacher candidate and mentor pairing may affect long-term teacher retention (Ronfeldt, 2021). Yet researchers have found the teacher candidate placement process to be a “complex, culturally mediated and dynamic activity” (St. John et al., 2021) for varied reasons, including a lack of shared criteria for effective cooperating teachers and placements and resource constraints. While imperfect, social justice as an aim for schooling and foundation for pedagogy has a presence in teacher education, yet in spite of some scholars the field lacks clarity around how social justice intersects with the role of teacher educator.

Literature Review Themes and Implications

This domain reveals the following findings:

1. There is no common definition of enacting social justice in the context of teacher preparation.
2. Limited research exists on embedding social justice in central processes to facilitate high-quality learning experiences in third spaces.
3. Teacher education programs experience dissonance between stated social justice aims and the enactment of the conditions or institutional or pedagogical structures to facilitate these aims.
4. With the evolution of schooling, there are significant implications in building capacity for teacher preparation to train teachers capable of enacting socially just practices.

In considering the negative experiences of teachers of color, teacher educators in all contexts and, in particular, extended clinical placement contexts have a responsibility to develop a social justice framework for approaching decisions and actions to ensure they enact equity-minded decisions that provide safe and affirming contexts for learning for preservice teachers of color. Without intentional and critically conscious choice-making, teachers of color can be placed in settings that negatively affect their learning and efficacy. Examining this issue through a global, structural, and local lens, leaders within teacher preparation programs need to navigate the conceptualization of social justice within their programs and negotiate the various policies and context-specific practices to create opportunities for preservice teachers to develop as teachers for social justice.

Summary

This literature review attempts to better understand the considerations leaders within social justice teacher education programs should hold as they design and facilitate student teaching experiences for teacher candidates and surface the opportunities and issues that arise in effort to provide high-quality clinical experiences. Prior research, as limited to what is reviewed within this literature review, suggests that social justice teacher education programs espouse commitments to social justice and yet reflect dissonance between aspirational and enacted social justice practices. In teacher residency contexts where preservice teachers spend extended time, clinical spaces have the potential to amplify inequality through uneven preparation quality. This primarily manifests as a result of lack of intentional consideration to

creating the conditions that ensure teacher candidates develop orientations and pedagogical practices that facilitate justice. Further, preservice teacher candidates of color, training within clinical spaces that center Whiteness, experience barriers to learning through microaggressions and other types of harm. The conceptual framework, (see Figure 1), renders visible the various state and local policies, district and teacher education structures, and classroom contexts that invite opportunities for equity-informed systems design and decision making that promote clarity around moving from social justice statements to embodied practices. Leveraging the theoretical frameworks of critical bifocality and boundary spanning leadership, systems leaders must possess a complex view of the ways in which policy influences the various structures creating opportunities that support social justice pedagogies and equitable experiences within high-quality clinical experiences, and how to work across contexts to bridge potential tensions. As leaders consider opportunities to better facilitate high-quality clinical experiences, specific actions include developing systems for such as in delineating and operationalizing site and mentor selection centering social justice, ensuring there are clear pedagogical approaches and practices that guide clinical work, and criteria for TK-12 clinical placements. Systems leaders within teacher education themselves also must have the preparation to enact such perspectives given the limited support teacher educators experience before and during their work within the teacher education sphere.

Leaders within teacher education have an opportunity and responsibility to design clinical placement experiences that center on the whole adult learner, embody spaces that disrupt the status quo for TK-12 students, and are sites of learning and affirmation for prospective teachers, particularly prospective teachers of color. As cited earlier in research (Mathews et al., 2024; Shand et al., 2023), prospective Black teachers, in particular, are vulnerable to clinical learning spaces that replicate the racist ideologies in their embodiment with school contexts and the violence perpetuated by pedagogical practices that are not grounded in notions of social justice. With an overwhelming majority of teacher educators identifying as White Americans, and with limited knowledge and pedagogical approaches to enact culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies, teacher educators are ill-equipped to prepare the next generation of teachers leading for transformational education for the most at-risk and underserved.

Complicating these matters are the significant challenges (e.g., mentor quality) presented in extended clinical placements and for leaders who are translating across the boundaries of teacher education programs into classroom-specific contexts as reflected in the conceptual framework capturing these dynamic interactions. The overwhelming presence of Whiteness embedded in the educational system, coupled with the lack of research on how leaders within teacher education actualize high-quality clinical placements centering equitable learning conditions and facilitate social justice practices, exacerbates the challenges inherent in supporting preservice teachers in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Leaders within teacher education must hold the moral, and ethical commitments to ensure programs are designed to facilitate social justice pedagogies and the leadership capacities to lead across boundaries, ensuring programmatic structures, processes, and community partnerships ensure social justice pedagogies are contextualized and are enacted in contexts free from ideological or other barriers.

Given the impact and influence teacher educators and placement assignments potentially have on long-term teacher learning, retention and teacher skill, the field would benefit from more research in exploring this area through case studies, mixed-method analysis, or other research methodologies to better equip teacher educators in developing the leadership skills and competencies to capture the placement site characteristics better and leadership approaches that promote learning in the service of social justice and ensure the learning experiences of teachers of color are effective and humanizing.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology I employed. In framing the research approach, I begin by situating my conceptual framework and methodological approach. Following this, I describe my procedures for data collection, analysis, and conclude by discussing my positionality.

Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative research study is to understand (1) how leaders of social-justice-centered teacher residencies conceptualize high-quality clinical placements; (2) how leaders' perspectives and practices inform the design of, or conditions of high-quality clinical placements for teacher candidates within residency contexts. My research focuses on teacher residency programs as a unique opportunity to better understand the tensions and implications of this preparation approach for models that privilege practice and context-based learning. My research aims to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How do leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize clinical placements for teacher candidates?
- RQ2: What perspectives and practices guide leaders' decision-making as they design and enact clinical placements within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework draws on Weis and Fine's (2012) critical bifocality, offering a theory of method for illuminating the global, structural, and local forces that shape how program leaders enact perspectives and practices. *Critical bifocality* makes "visible the sinewy linkages or circuits through which structural conditions are enacted in policy and reform institutions as well as how such conditions come to be woven into community relationships and metabolized by individuals" (2012, p. 174). These considerations create opportunities to explore potential inequalities that may arise regarding extended clinical preparation within teacher residencies, given its positioning as a more accessible pathway for teachers of color and its potential to help address teacher vacancies in hard-to-staff schools. This is particularly true given that teacher education has long been criticized for centering whiteness and struggles to center the needs of teachers of color (Kohli, 2018) or prepare teacher educators for leading and teaching for social justice (Goodwin et al., 2014).

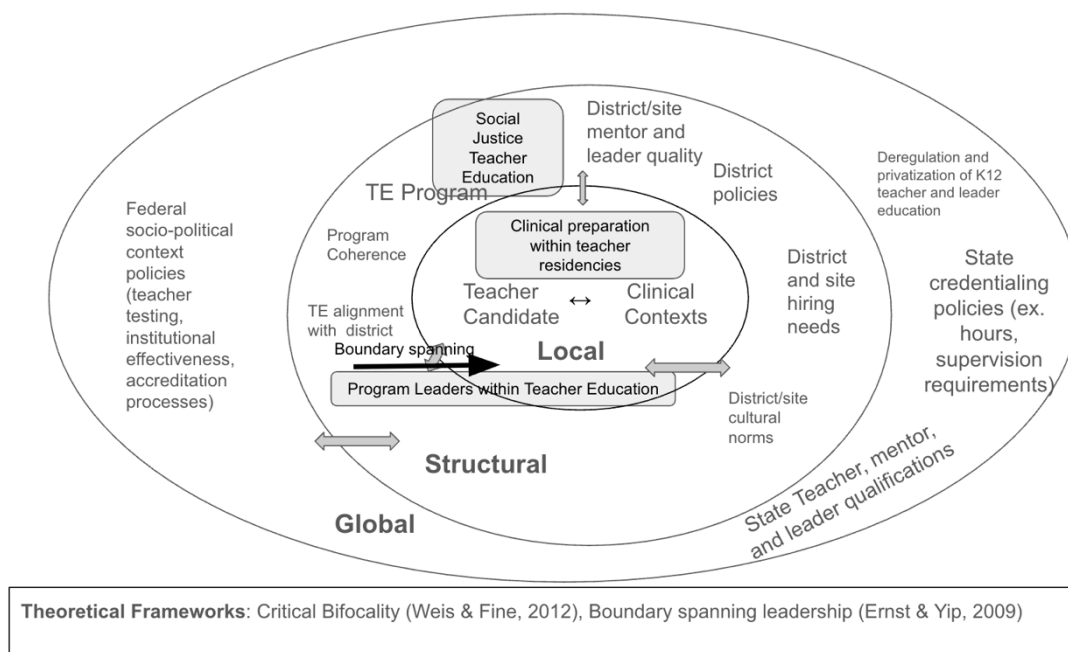
With growing national and policy interest in hiring a diverse teaching workforce in light of an increasingly diverse public educational system (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019), it is essential to examine the contextual factors that create and perpetuate the conditions preservice teachers experience. Critical bifocality offers a theory of method for examining the global and neoliberal macro-influences across various contexts, including the impact of globalization and neoliberal policies on teacher educators and the embodiment of socially just leadership and teaching. Additionally, it explores the opportunities and unintended consequences of extended time in clinical placements on teacher development. This lens facilitates an examination of the broader ecosystem of preservice teacher preparation to investigate barriers to producing a diverse and equity-minded teacher workforce.

Boundary-spanning leadership (Yip et al., 2008) offers another dimension through which to interpret leaders' perspectives. The framework reflects consideration of how leaders work across contexts to establish a "direction, alignment, commitment in the service of a higher

vision and goal” (Yip et al., 2009, p. 2), while bridging relationships (Weerts & Sandman, 2010) and mobilizing and transforming possibilities (Yip et al., 2008). These considerations provide a critical framework to understand the opportunities and points of tension experienced by teacher educators navigating multiple contexts between higher education and TK–12.

Integrating theories, this conceptual framework (see Figure 31.1) illustrates how critical bifocality and boundary-spanning leadership illuminate the layered complexities in designing experiences for teacher candidates within the clinical context. Critical bifocality and the concentric circles reflect how federal, state, and local policies influence local contexts (classrooms) and teacher candidates. Boundary-spanning leadership crosses the global, structural, and local contexts as teacher educators negotiate various changing socio-political contexts, policies, structures, and practices within higher education institutions and local settings to facilitate the development of teacher candidates.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



Note. Figure created by author

These frameworks stem from a commitment to the notion that we are part of a larger interconnected ecosystem. To that end, developing a conceptual framework grounded in critical bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012) and boundary-spanning leadership (Yip et al., 2009) serves to surface the complex macro-, meso-, and micro-level forces influencing leaders' decisions, while revealing opportunities for critique and possibilities, at its core, critical theory, which as a lens seeks to attend to the race, class, and gender dynamics inherent in society, and to propel future action. Critical bifocality, as a mechanism to inform my methodology, has been leveraged to understand historical contexts and structures of power, and used in tandem with boundary-spanning leadership to comprehend how these dynamics exist across various contexts.

Given my conceptual framework and desire to gain insight into leader perspectives and lived experiences within teacher education regarding their role in supporting high-quality clinical placements, my methodology was grounded in narrative research. In my study, I sought to explore the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize clinical placements for teacher candidates?
- RQ2: What perspectives and practices guide leaders' decision-making as they design and enact clinical placements within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Methods

My research study employed a narrative research approach to explore both the personal and institutional narratives of institutional leaders with regards to high-quality clinical placements in teacher education. Leveraging critical bifocality as a theory of method allowed me to situate leader narratives within a larger macro, meso, and micro policy context, particularly as leaders navigate across boundaries of higher education and TK-12 education. A focal point of my research was to examine the varied leader stories to identify findings as they emerged (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Narrative research methodology involves developing a deep understanding of the stories people tell (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In an effort to effectively design a narrative research study, I intentionally selected participants, captured participant stories, and situated their stories in the personal, cultural, and historical contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given this, my methods included the following parameters: location, participant selection, data collection, data collection tools, and data analysis procedure.

Research Context

The study was conducted via Zoom with participants drawing from four urban teacher residency programs located in metropolitan areas of California. I selected residency programs connected to institutions of higher education that are located within metropolitan areas. The programs are similar in terms of the TK-12 student demography in the area, their approach to school systems support, and in terms of their stated institutional stance toward social justice.

I used purposeful sampling, with an emphasis on a criterion-based selection process, to facilitate quality assurance (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and to best inform me about the issues central to my research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2013). To align with institutions and residency organizations in a similar policy ecosystem, I used the list of 26 approved institutions of higher education on the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing website. From there, I used the following criteria:

- 1) California Commission on Teacher Credentialing-approved institution of higher education and residency;
- 2) The institution of higher education has a stated mission that aligns with social justice teacher preparation.
- 3) The residency program and/or district partner also have a mission aligned with developing teachers to facilitate social justice efforts for TK-12 students; and,
- 4) The program prepares teachers to serve students of color in urban areas.

In preliminary reviews of the 26 listed programs, 13 qualified for my study. I reached out directly to leaders within urban residency programs in the Bay Area and Los Angeles regions of

California who met the above-stated criteria. Given the qualified programs, I sought to focus on four residency programs with two leaders interviewed at each, with an ideal number of 8-10 participants in my research study.

As noted in Table 1, residency programs in this study are offered at both private and public universities. Of the four institutions studied, three had more than one teacher preparation pathway, self-described as “traditional,” “intern,” and “residency” programs. In institutional documents, each institution included descriptors associated directly or adjacent to social justice, as well as programmatic features. Finally, each institution listed their 2024-2025 number of issued teaching credentials (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, n.d.). Credentials issued include multiple preparation pathways as listed above.

Table 1
Institutional Contexts

University	Descriptors	Type	Pathway	Size
Green State University	Just, opportunity, community	Private	Single	500-600
Central State University	Transformational, inclusive, community	Public	Multi	500-600
West Coast University	Social justice, equitable, inclusive	Private	Multi	200-300
Ocean University	Equity, excellence, transformative	Public	Multi	600-700

Participants

In this study, I focused on leaders of social justice-oriented teacher education residency programs. This included two levels of leaders within higher education (e.g., deans, associate deans, program leaders, department leaders). The second group was composed of leaders from higher education who work to support teacher preparation, are based within TK-12 districts in California, and are primarily responsible for program implementation. Interviewing two levels of leaders within each institution enabled me to collect data at both the system level and the program implementation level,

Participants (leaders in the teacher residencies with responsibilities in clinical site placement selection, mentor training and assignment, and/or candidate oversight to facilitate high-quality clinical placements) were selected based on the criteria of: a) currently working within one of the selected teacher education residency programs, or b) be former or current leader within one of the selected teacher residency programs. With the goal of conducting research at four institutions with residency programs, I interviewed two leaders at each research site, representing a “level 1” leader who is a dean, department chair, or programmatic lead and a “level 2” leader who is directly responsible for the daily implementation of the clinical program with the exception of Central University. This resulted in an informant pool of 7 leaders in total, comprising 4 “level 1” and 3 “level 2” leaders.

Leaders within the teacher preparation programs reflected a range in experience, identity, and roles in teacher education. Teacher preparation leaders reported a range of experience in teacher education, from 0 to 5 years, with four of the seven interviewed leaders having 15+ years. Leaders also expressed a variety of self-selected social identities, including

race/ethnicity (e.g., “white”, “Black of Multiracial background”, “Hispanic”), age (e.g., “middle-aged”), religion (e.g., “Jewish”), disability status (e.g., “able-bodied”, “physically disabled”), gender identities (e.g., “queer”, “cis-gender woman”), sexual orientation (e.g., “heterosexual”), role (e.g., “advocate”, “educator”), caregiving status (e.g., “parent/caregiver”), class status (e.g., “middle class”) and geographic location. To facilitate anonymity, only racial and gender identity markers are listed in Table 2. Of the participants studied, four out of seven possess a doctoral degree in addition to their credentialed teaching and/or administrative education. Of the seven participants, two had formal K-12 leadership training prior to entering teacher education.

Table 2

Participant Profiles - Demographics, Leader Level, Experience

Name	University	Leader Level	Identity Markers	Years in TE	Credentials/ Education Attained	Interview Date
Stella	Green State University	Level 1	AA/F	15+	Doctoral degree	9/29/25
Heidi	Green State University	Level 2	W/F	0-5	Credentialed K-12 administrator	10/9/25
Ivy	Central State University	Level 1/2	His/F	10-15	Credentialed teacher	10/6/25
Anne	West Coast University	Level 1	W/F	10-15	Credentialed K-12 administrator	10/27/25
Dana	West Coast University	Level 2	W/F	15+	Doctoral degree, credentialed administrator	12/23/25
Nicole	Ocean University	Level 1	AA/F	15+	Doctoral degree	10/20/25
Raquel	Ocean University	Level 2	AAP/IF	15+	Doctoral degree	11/7/25

Participant Profiles.

Stella, Green University. Stella is a Black woman leader with over 15 years of experience in teacher education. Stella oversees the academic program within her institution of higher education, including the clinical program. Stella’s work experience includes teaching in TK-12 and holding various teaching and leadership roles in higher education before ascending to an institutional leadership position. Stella entered education due to the impactful teachers she had and the challenges she had navigating school. Stella believes in “justice-centered” education, ensuring students have the “opportunity to learn,” and is committed to teacher education in light of her own experience as a teacher and “wanting to do right by our teachers so they are prepared to do the work they want to do.”

Heidi, Green University. Heidi, a White woman residency leader, comes to teacher education as an experienced teacher, site, and district leader in TK-12. Heidi works directly with the clinical program, implementing her residency program in partnership with Green University and local education agencies (LEAs). Heidi counts her experience working in varied roles across diverse metropolitan districts in the Bay Area and Southern California as shaping her lens on “equity” and informing her approach to working with teacher candidates whose identities mirror those of her previous students.

Ivy, Central University. Ivy is a Hispanic woman with over 10 years of experience in teacher education and residency-specific work. Prior to working in higher education, Ivy, a first-Gen college student, worked as a teacher in TK-12 and as an instructional coach. Ivy currently works as a faculty and residency leader, facilitating the clinical program across multiple preparation pathways. Ivy shares that a priority for their program is promoting “a sense of belonging, no matter what,” and for clinical classrooms to feel “safe” for residents.

Anne, West Coast University. Anne is a White woman with over 10 years of experience in teacher education. She comes to teacher education with previous teaching experience and as a former assistant principal. In her role in higher education, Anne directs the institution’s traditional teacher preparation pathway and teacher residency programs. Anne initially entered education to “make a difference.” Her experience as a district intern, commitment to “reducing teacher turnover,” and desire to ensure that teacher candidates are in “environments that are supportive of new teachers” were among her reasons to transition into teacher preparation.

Dana, West Coast University. Anna is a White woman with over 15 years of experience in teacher education. She comes to teacher preparation as an experienced teacher, instructional coach, and assistant site leader. Anna works to direct a teacher residency program partnered with West Coast University. In leading the residency program, Anna designs clinical program structures and processes and provides field supervision to candidates. Dana believes, “our students need and deserve to have educators who both mirror their life experiences and are committed to being ... responsive to...our students' identities as they evolve, and who they are.”

Nicole, Ocean University. Nicole is a Black woman with over 15 years of experience in teacher education. Nicole comes to higher education from a teaching background. She works as an institutional leader and director of the school’s teacher preparation programs (traditional, intern, and residency). Nicole’s scope of work includes “faculty scheduling,” “hiring,” “community partner bridges,” and “anything that relates to the clinical program.” Nicole believes that candidates should experience “belonging and inclusion,” to have experiences that promote long-term teacher sustainability, and “our students are well prepared to meet the needs and work with the students that they will encounter.”

Raquel, Ocean University. Raquel is an Asian-American woman with over 15 years of experience in teacher education. Raquel comes to teacher education as a former teacher and instructional coach. Raquel transitioned to higher education and now coordinates two teacher preparation pathways, including one of the institution’s residency programs. A central influence for her work and program is “making sure that all students, especially Black and Brown students, whose identities, narratives, and histories are constantly erased, and languages that are being erased are able to be centered and celebrated.”

Data Collection

My data collection occurred at two levels. As part of my narrative research methodology, I recruited informants through outreach via recruitment emails to leaders within residency programs. Once interested parties were identified, I sent a form to obtain consent. After I received consent, informants were asked to complete the demographic information form. This data was used during data collection, not for screening. Data was stored in the university's secure cloud and destroyed after participants were assigned anonymous individual identifiers.

For each scheduled interview, informants were invited to participate in one interview. Participation in individual interviews was dependent on participants' preferences. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to discuss their leadership experiences within the context of teacher education. The interview followed a semi-structured interview guide [see [Appendix A](#)] and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The scripted protocol provided an overview of the study and reviewed informed consent. Through the interview protocol, I sought to surface the "specific beliefs...and the actual contexts in which they are situated" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 79) and learn how teacher educators perceive the context of teacher residencies and how they navigate them. The semi-structured interview protocol was bounded by framing the context, followed by 11 open-ended questions organized into three themes aligned with the research focus. The semi-structured interview protocol is outlined in my approved IRB (see [Appendix B](#)).

Using this interview protocol and recorded format afforded opportunities to revisit the interview and to have a structured yet free-flowing forum for collecting data that was transcribed and used for inductive coding upon completion. All the interview sessions were audio-recorded after getting the verbal consent of the participants. The video option was disabled on the Zoom platform. All the audio recordings were transcribed word by word using the transcription software Otter.AI and were verified by me. Audio recordings were deleted within four weeks.

In addition to interviews, I collected and reviewed a variety of documents reflecting the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis central to critical bifocality. I created folders for each level and sub-folders for each specific research site. Documents for the meso level included state policy and guidance documents (ex., credentialing guidelines, program standards), publicly available reports, and programmatic documents such as accreditation reports (ex. WASC, California Commission Teacher Credentialing). In the table listed below (Table 3), I show how my research questions align with my semi-structured interview protocol, and the associated documents I collected in alignment with the interview protocol informed by critical bifocality as a theory of method.

Table 3

Document Collection Grid

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	<i>Documents</i>
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Research Question 1 1b, 2a, 2b Institutional - Program documents (ex., WASC Accreditation, website, handbooks)

Research Question 2 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3a, 3b

State - CTC Clinical Placement Guidance
 Institutional- Accreditation reports, institutional policies
 Local - Mentor agreements (MOUs), websites

Data Analysis Procedures

Before interviewing informants, I reviewed the institutional vision and mission. Immediately after each interview, I added an entry to a reflective journal, capturing impressions, reflections on my own biases and lens, and any questions that arose. I revisited my reflective journal once data analysis was complete to identify any issues with my interpretations of the data. Once the transcription was complete, I uploaded the verified audio transcript into MAXQDA. Once uploaded, I read each transcript twice and used analytic memoing to capture initial ideas and reflections. In an effort to support consistency in capturing reflections after each interview, I kept a record of my analytic memos regarding the alignment of the informant's responses to the mission and vision of the institution and/or the relevant policies and the degree to which their responses may deviate (see Table 4 below).

Table 4

Analytic Memo - Post-Interview Transcript Review

Participant	Aligned to Institutional Descriptors	Deviates from Institution Descriptors	Researcher Conjectures about the Reason for Deviation
Ivy	One is all about equity, and it's something that we want to infuse more specifically and strategically in our programming. We are a high Hispanic serving institution. Our candidates typically are Hispanic. I'm Hispanic. The kids we serve are Hispanic, typically. But that doesn't mean we're all the same. I think some of this, the most specific would be the fact that we really started work in diversifying who we were bringing in as residents, so that they were matching who they were going to serve in the classrooms.	So having our residents come in and be bilingual in languages like Spanish that our students are speaking or might need support in is really helping balance the equity of maybe having a Caucasian, probably female teacher who does not speak Spanish and would not know a dang thing about cognates or anything like that. So bringing in our residents to show and we've had mentors push back with like, this is an English only classroom and blah, blah, blah, but we step in smoothly and say, Gosh, can you let us?	I was surprised there wasn't as much articulation around coursework though it does seem like there was a strong emphasis on leveraging tasks or things that work tasks that folks might be using in their work setting when they are hired but not necessarily thinking about like what are the things what are the social justice pedagogies that drive the types of practices there was kind of consistent references towards maybe mentors who are not a good match and just the steps that were taken to correct that or steps that were taken to alert administration or involve folks who who were involved and so that there are ways in which this individuals the informants spoke to the importance of safety for the resident safety for their learning and awareness of the importance of the context in which they're learning to teach

Raw memo data was entered into MAXQDA and reviewed for identifying emerging codes. Once transcription was complete, I reviewed transcripts for internal patterns and used deductive codes grounded in my conceptual framework to analyze the data. Through a previous

pilot study (see Table 5 below), I identified seven deductive codes that I reviewed in the transcripts as a first pass. I engaged in a second round, using the inductive codes aligned with the research question, and organized the data to distill subcodes using MAXQDA. Using inductive and deductive coding allowed me to analyze the data from multiple angles, establishing the specific meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I started the coding using initial coding categories developed from my pilot study (perspectives, practices, and policies) and embedded in my research question. After each interview, I wrote analytic memos, and themes emerged across the memos. The themes relevant to this chapter include alignment and cohesion, social justice and equity, and programmatic implementation.

Table 5
Research Codes

Finding	Definition	Codes
Perspectives	Mental models or conceptualizations inform a person's thinking and/or professional work.	• Histories • Critical Consciousness • Systems Awareness (Macro, Meso, Micro) • Alignment
Practices	The coordinated actions or routines, enacted by program leaders	• Creating and Sustaining Partnerships • Bridging • Placement • and Mentor Selection • Responding to Misalignment • Capacity Building
Features of Quality Placements	Articulated characteristics participants name that facilitate the positive learning and support for teacher candidates	• Alignment • Models of Equity • School Climate • Mentors, Leaders • Candidate Safety and Inclusion

As I began the process of inductive coding, larger categories for the second research question shifted to become high-quality clinical placements, practices, and perspectives. Policies, as a category, became embedded in both perspectives and practices, as revealed by participants' interviews. Considering the themes from the analytic memos, I coded transcripts inductively, then re-coded them with those themes in mind. What emerged in my coding efforts were more specific codes.

For document analysis, I began developing a summary for each document source and categorizing it based on the three levels of analysis. I applied a framework for initial document review, as outlined in Table 6, and used both initial deductive codes and surface inductive codes.

Table 6*Transcript and Document Analysis by Macro, Meso, and Micro Levels*

Level	Interview Protocol Question	Documents
Macro	3a, 3b	CTC Policies (ex. CTC Clinical Guidance), CTC Accreditation Requirements for Clinical Work IHE Policies for Clinical Work
Meso	2a, 2b	IHE Website, Accreditation Reports, Program Outcomes
Micro	1b, 2c, 2d	Training Modules for Mentors/Supervisors, Observation Tools, Handbooks

As the codebook was revised, I established final codes using illustrative participant quotations and document excerpts. Creating a codebook enables the creation of both the label and, more importantly, establishes the specific meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To reduce potential researcher bias, I established inter-rater reliability through working with a colleague to practice a similar process on 1-2 documents and transcripts to assess code integrity.

For document review, I recorded memos of my document review using voice recording as another part of my data collection process. I used a consistent framework to analyze documents, identifying the level of the ecosystem (e.g., macro, meso, micro), key mentions of clinical placement policy or practice, and capturing any references connected to the institutional aims for social justice.

Finally, to develop my findings, I reviewed and compiled each set of coded data using the coded data (transcript and document) and analyzed it grouped by each research question set (see Table 5) to identify themes within each story set and across stories.

Positionality

Leveraging an inquiry approach creates an opportunity to focus less on the researcher's interpretations and more on the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my study, I aimed to uncover the “specific beliefs...and the actual contexts in which they are situated” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 79) to understand how program leaders within teacher education clinical contexts that espouse social justice orientations enact these beliefs in their work. As an African-American woman of multi-racial heritage and the first in my family to go to college, my perspective is shaped by the ways public schools fulfill and fall short of their aim to create access and opportunity to marginalized students. I bring to this work my identities as a former secondary teacher and administrator of color, a current practicing teacher educator supporting teachers of diverse backgrounds, and a mother of children in the public TK–12 school system. As an individual who taught and led in my community, these identities and perspectives inform how I think about the goals of teacher preparation and my commitment to contributing to the research to developing teacher educators by continuing to elevate the complexities, opportunities, and practices that can serve leaders within teacher education to center their work for social justice and equity and thus ensure teacher preparation serves communities who are most vulnerable. As a professional, working at all levels of the educational system, K-16, gives me a unique vantage point in discerning the ways ideologies, theories, policies, and practices work in concert and conflict.

Chapter 4: Findings for RQ1

This chapter reports findings from an exploration of leaders' conceptualizations of clinical placements in social-justice-focused residency programs. It asks and answers the question, *How do leaders of social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize quality clinical placements for teacher candidates?* The chapter will first present a summary of findings, which will be elaborated on later in the text. Second, I present relevant information on the California State teacher credentialing policy context. Third and finally, I present each of the findings that emerged from analyses of participant interviews.

Summary of Findings

Leaders within social justice-centered programs conceptualize quality clinical placements as adhering to California state credentialing policies and regulations and aligned between institutional and clinical placement contexts to support teacher candidate learning and development.

Finding 1.1: Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residencies adhere to California credentialing policies to enact programs with respect to

- a. ensuring candidates experience diverse school settings reflecting evidence-based experiences for teacher candidates to practice
- b. ensuring candidates have qualified mentor teachers and site placements

Finding 1.2: Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residencies consider alignment across IHE and local LEA contexts support teacher candidates' ability to;

- a. observe effective school and classroom models and enact practices aligned to coursework
- b. develop within supportive environments modeled by mentor and site leadership

Finding 2: Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residencies hold varied goals for teacher candidates' development.

California Statewide Teacher Credentialing Policy Context

All leaders of teacher credentialing programs, regardless of pathway, operate within a larger state-driven policy context that articulates program standards, foundational credentialing requirements, and candidate competencies. Foregrounding the findings, is a synthesis of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing's (CTC) clinical placement guidance and program standards, which outline the programmatic requirements all teacher credentialing programs must adhere to. CTC was formally established in 1971, as the nation's first "independent standards board" as a result of the Ryan Act of 1971 (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2011, p. ii). This influential Act, sought to "professionalize" teaching, find balance between academic preparation with placing limits on coursework, and introduced performance-based candidate metrics and subject matter requirements. The Ryan Act also reorganized the credential structure in an effort to reduce the number of credentials and address teacher shortages due to perceived high standards as a result of the Fisher Act of 1961 (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2011). Important to note, that while the Ryan Act established the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, guidelines governing state teacher credentialing are established through the state legislative process.

California state teacher credentialing policies and guidance are designed to establish an accreditation foundation that facilitates a baseline of preparation across teacher preparation programs within the state. Throughout credentialing requirements and program standards,

limited direct language is used with respect to teacher candidates advancing social justice. This foregrounding serves to render visible the requirements governing teacher credentialing programs and the gaps that appear between programmatic aims for social justice and the credentialing requirements as outlined by the California Teaching Commission.

Statewide clinical practice policy and guidance documents (e.g., Program Standards, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Guidance on Clinical Practice and Supervision) attend to the characteristics of clinical placements that should afford teacher candidates the opportunity to learn in and the considerations for the supervision and support they receive. Program standards and documents articulate considerations for:

1. the **clinical placement setting and learning opportunities** in which a teacher candidate is placed which include the,
 - a. **diversity of learners** they encounter and support,
 - b. **range of instructional practices or pedagogies** they observe and opportunities to develop **learn, practice, and demonstrate** competencies
2. the **qualifications** required of mentor teachers, site administrators, and program supervisors responsible for guiding and assessing the candidate's development.

With respect to **settings and learning opportunities**, program standards include qualitative considerations to the **placement context that supports** the candidate's ability to support all students, observe, and develop research-based practice. Program standard language includes candidates who should "observe a variety of classrooms," and students who exhibit "typical" and "atypical" behavior (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC] Guidance, 2022, p.10) and articulate a priority for candidate placements that serve in a "diverse school setting" reflecting California's public schools (Clinical Practice Guidance, p. 5), and allow for "least restricted environments," (CTC Guidance, 2022, p.11-12). Placement sites are expected to "be selected that demonstrate commitment to collaborative evidence-based practices (CTC Program Standards, 2024, p. 2)." Moreover, documents clarify the range of students' teacher candidates must have access to. The term "all students" found in some guidance documents is elaborated in the passage below.

"Throughout this set of TPEs, reference is made to "all students" or "all TK–12 students". This phrase is intended as a widely inclusive term that references all students attending public schools. Students may exhibit a wide range of learning and behavioral characteristics, as well as disabilities, dyslexia, intellectual or academic advancement, and differences based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, and/or geographic origin. The range of students in California public schools also includes students whose first language is English, English learners, and Standard English learners." (CTC Guidance, 2022, p.2)

In this excerpt from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Program Standards, teacher candidates are expected to be placed in school settings, providing them with access to students of diverse backgrounds and learner profiles. While Commission guidance is explicit around the population of students, teacher candidates are to serve; guidance does not go farther to explain how teacher candidates the perspectives, orientations, or practices should hold for students who are frequently marginalized by the educational system.

State policy and guidance documents also communicate the characteristics of **learning experiences** candidates are engaged in. Documents indicate teacher candidates should be

exposed to subject matter practices that are “developmentally” and “culturally appropriate” (CTC Program Standards, 2024, p. 22), ensures candidates observe “collaborative relationships with families,” experiences “integrated coursework,” and the candidate is be able to “implement research-based strategies” (CTC Program Standards, 2024, p. 17). All of these considerations are designed with the aim for candidates to “develop pedagogical knowledge” of “high leverage practices in subject matter areas”, and to be able to “administration of assessments” (CTC Guidance, 2022, p. 10). As shared above, state guidance identifies the population teacher candidates are expected to observe and have learning opportunities and the guidance describes the practices teacher candidates should observe or adopt with language like “culturally appropriate” or “evidence based” and yet not delineate the aim or purpose of these approaches.

With respect to candidates experiencing **qualified mentor teachers and site placements, state** documents delineate the expectations for the **type of support candidates receive** when in the clinical setting. This support ranges from the qualifications of teacher candidate supervisors, mentors, and site administrators to the modality of support (e.g., video observations, observation frequency, types of learning support activities) and the amount of time spent in the clinical setting. In state guidance, mentor teachers are referred to as “District-Employed Supervisors” and the criteria, for their selection includes holding a Clear credential, having three years of experience, and demonstrating “exemplary teaching practices as determined by the employer and the preparation program” (Preliminary MS/SS, pg. 3). All clinical sites are expected to have a site administrator who is “fully qualified” which is defined as holding a California Preliminary Administrative Credential (Preliminary MS/SS, pg. 3).

Important to note, credentialing regulations and guidance outline specific and broad considerations that all credentialing program leaders must adhere to. These guidelines offer very specific programmatic requirement adherence other areas require interpretation that may lead to gaps in alignment with preparation program aims. For example, candidates' clinical placement hours, have a specific stated minimum (e.g., “The 600 hours of supervised clinical practice is required of all candidates, regardless of pathway and occur throughout each candidate’s preparation program across the arc of the program” (CTC Guidance, 2022, p. 10). An contrast, state guidance offers requirements requiring program leader interpretation. An example of this is the clinical placement requirements for mentors and site administrators, which are less defined. The criteria for these roles include being “fully qualified” or demonstrating “exemplary teaching” and are subject to interpretation. Language such as “fully qualified” or “exemplary teacher” leave the discretion of these judgments to the program leaders, LEA officials, or others connected to the implementation of candidate clinical experiences can be in tension with the aims of facilitating a preparation program centering social justice.

Notably, in California policy documents, criteria for placements that delineate considerations for clinical settings, learning experiences, and supervision vary in their specificity. In critical areas, such as making decisions about placement criteria, program leaders are called on to interpret what constitutes “exemplary” or “qualified” for mentor teachers beyond the required years of teaching and the possession of a teaching credential. Further, across multiple placements, the criteria emphasize “research-based” practices, establishing boundaries for what they include and what they do not. For residency programs with an explicit

focus on social justice, as I am studying here, there is limited guidance on what that entails in placement contexts. Ultimately, program leaders are left to make critical judgments based on their own leadership knowledge or institutional practices to ensure placement contexts for learning that allow teacher candidates opportunities to learn how to teach in ways that facilitate just outcomes for students and center social justice pedagogies.

Conceptualizations of Clinical Practice

Finding 1: Focal Leaders Follow California State Credentialing and Accrediting Policies and Expectations to Enact Clinical Programs

In California, teacher credentialing programs undergo cyclical reviews to maintain accreditation with the California State Teaching Commission (CTC Preconditions and Standards, n.d). Trained evaluators engage in site visits to review the ways in which preparation programs meet established program standards. Upon reviewing accreditation reports for recent accreditation visits, all four institutions in this study met the criteria for general accreditation standards and for areas specifically connected to program standards aligned to the enactment of the fieldwork and clinical experiences for candidates (Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice), all institutions all met satisfactory criteria. Meeting accreditation standards is important as teacher institutions must adhere to regulations outlined by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing in order to implement their programs.

Table 7, *Institutional Alignment to State Credentialing Standards for Fieldwork and Clinical Practice* illustrates excerpted areas within Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice aligned to the foregrounding with respect to state guidance connected to the scope of this research study. The selected program evaluation standards reflect the guidance referenced earlier regarding the 1) **clinical placement setting characteristics and learning experiences** and 2) **qualifications and requirements** mentor teachers, placements must adhere to. As a part of the accreditation process, visiting committees evaluated teacher preparation programs across several standards, reviewed multiple data sources and constituencies, and provided program recommendations. To anonymize findings, institutions were assigned a letter (A-D), and the letter “C” denotes consistently and “I” denotes inconsistently. For context, three of four institutions studied offered multiple preparation pathways, including “traditional” teacher preparation, intern programs, and administrative and counseling preparation programs. While institutions underwent accreditation visits, ratings provided do not focus exclusively on teacher residency programs.

Table 7

Institutional Alignment to State Credentialing Standards for Fieldwork and Clinical Practice

Institution	Accreditation	Criteria 1: Candidates have clinical experiences that offer “ experience issues of diversity that affect school climate and to effectively implement research-based strategies for improving teaching and student learning. ”	Criteria 2: Candidates have “field experiences... allows candidates to learn, practice, and demonstrate competencies required of the credential they seek.”	Criteria 3: Site-based supervisors must be certified and experienced in teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential.	Criteria 4: The process and criteria result in the selection of site-based supervisors who provide effective and knowledgeable support for candidates.
	Standard 3: (Met/Not Met)				

A	Met	C	C	C	C
B	Met	C	C	C	C
C	Met	C	C	C	C
D	Met	C	I	C	C

This table illuminates the language used to describe clinical placement settings and qualified supervisors as neutral, broad, and open to interpretation. With respect to **clinical placement settings and learning experiences**, the language used connects to experiences being connected to coursework and to develop competencies without delineating the scope of the competencies. For teacher candidate supervisors, the language includes the criteria that should be certified, experienced, and knowledgeable, without clarity around what that means. Each program demonstrates their ability to meet state criteria while state accreditors also may have their own perspectives of what these criteria mean. Therefore while it is important that institutions meet state-driven standards for issuing credentials, significant gaps remain in supporting programs in defining clinical setting quality. Standards language delineating quality criteria for clinical programs does not include language that extends alignment with each institution's social justice mission and vision, underscoring that individual institutions must translate state-based criteria into institutional and programmatic ways of preparing teacher candidates to enact social justice pedagogies and practices.

Finally, while all leaders expressed comments in relation to the credentialing and accrediting processes, L1 leaders tended to speak about credentialing processes, both with a consideration for how state policies inform programmatic design and implementation, as well as ways in which they as leaders participate in the construction of policies through engagement with California Commission officials, or leverage the other standards (e.g., Teacher Performance Expectations) to serve their institutions program focus. In contrast, L2 leaders tended to discuss accrediting processes or guidance as constraints to adhere to and implement as they worked directly with candidates.

The next set of findings in this chapter move from a view of the institution as relayed through accreditation documents to the voices of L1 and L2 leaders in relation to their vision of social justice. Similar to (but also different from) the tenets of accreditation in the first section, talk of social justice includes talk of settings, the quality of candidates' experiences, and rigorous opportunities for them to develop their craft. In fact, much of what undergirds leader conceptualizations is the belief that alignment between institutional and clinical placement contexts supports teacher candidate learning and development. Within this, I find that leaders can articulate specific features of alignment between the institutional and clinical placement that matter most.

Finding 1.2: Leaders Perceive Alignment Between Institutional and Placement Contexts as Supporting Teacher Candidate Learning and Development

Participants from three of the four institutions spoke to the importance of clinical experiences aligning with the institution's programmatic, philosophical, and pedagogical aims. This alignment, as perceived by residency leaders, affords candidates the opportunities to make connections between coursework and placements contexts and characterized by leaders' perception of social justice as mediated by institutional or programmatic (e.g., coursework) instantiations. Further, leaders expressed placements that provide candidates opportunities to observe aligned models and practices as a sign of quality placements. Finally, placements that demonstrated positive learning conditions for graduate students were also identified as important components of the clinical-based student-teacher experience.

In Table 8, *Conceptualizations of Features of Clinical Placements*, findings are listed alongside their category, parent codes, and sub-codes. The column "representation in the participant sample" refers to the number of participants in the total sample who were coded as holding a particular viewpoint. Given the sample size, this was done to help readers understand the weight of a particular code as it was expressed across the seven leaders. As part of the interview protocol, participants were asked about the essential features of a quality clinical program that advance social justice pedagogies in their teacher candidates (Appendix A).

Table 8

Finding 1.2 - Conceptualizations of Clinical Placement Codes and Representation within Sample

<i>Category</i>	<i>Parent Code</i>	<i>Sub-Code</i>	<i>Representation in Sample</i>
<i>High Quality Clinical Placement</i>	<i>Candidate Learning Conditions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	5/7
		<i>Contextualizing Practices</i>	2/7
		<i>Models of Equity for TK-12 Students</i>	4/7
		<i>Site Leaders</i>	3/7
		<i>Mentors</i>	3/7
		<i>Classroom</i>	4/7
		<i>School Climate</i>	4/7
		<i>Candidate Safety and Inclusion</i>	5/7

The findings and codes reflected in this table highlight the themes emerging from participant interviews around how leaders conceptualize the features of a high-quality clinical program that advances social justice pedagogies. In general, participants indicated a desire for teacher candidates to experience settings that modeled what they perceived as effective practices. Notably, amongst participants, there was variance around qualitatively what specific

features made clinical experiences of quality. One L1/L2 pair of the four institutions studied exemplifying alignment within the institution aims and clinical features and structures. This table reveals the varied ways leaders in teacher education conceptualize the enactments of social justice-focused work within clinical settings.

Finding 1.2a: Institutional Alignment with School and Classroom Models Facilitate Candidate Practice Opportunities

Participants were asked about the features of clinical placements advancing candidate practices advancing social justice pedagogies, and leaders expressed their interpretations for various features clinical contexts reflect. Participants from three of the four institutions spoke to the importance of clinical experiences aligning with the institution's programmatic and pedagogical aims. Within alignment, participants expressed a desire for clinical placements to reflect an equity-centered approach to teaching and learning, as reflected in classrooms and school climates, and for strong adult models of justice-centered approaches, primarily mentor teachers and site administrators. In considering alignment between institutional ideals, and coursework content and placement contexts, participants highlight the importance of placing candidates in contexts that reflect consideration and value of students' assets (e.g. background, identities), model teaching practices aligned to coursework, and mentor teacher alignment to institutional or programmatic aims.

Stella, from Green University, offers a perspective on alignment that includes candidates having practice experiences aligned to the knowledge they are cultivating in coursework. She shares,

In our clinical program, I think ideally, we would have some of that work that happens, and it could happen in multiple places. I think it should happen in multiple places. And so both in the actual areas of practice, or sort of like physical locations of practice, but also in the coursework that accompanies that. I also think that a part of what's really important is to have a knowledge base, both of the content area you're teaching and of the diversity of students that we serve, we will not be able to 100% completely understand every single student in their background and their family and the unique kinds of assets and needs that each student will bring. And it is really important to really deeply understand as much as you can so that you have the ability to see students and academic challenges or their academic trajectories through a lens that helps you make important pedagogical decisions, that propels them into their success. So I think knowledge, having a deep knowledge base should be a really important part of a successful justice oriented... clinical program. And then I think also opportunities to practice and to see that practice modeled or mentored are really important.

In considering the features of clinical work that advances social justice pedagogies among teacher candidates, Stella shares her belief that holding deep, content-specific knowledge base from coursework, holding asset-based understanding about students and families to inform pedagogical decisions, and having practices modeled and opportunities to practice all comprise critical features of a social justice oriented program.

Heidi, an L2 Leader, also from Green University builds on the considerations raised by Stella regarding coursework to placement alignment and the opportunity to practice, saying, I think that what's most important is that those ideas don't live in isolation... Oh, we take our first course and we think about identity... We think about...the history of

education and racism, how that all plays out in our schools, and then now that we've taken that class, let's brush our hands off and move on to the next thing. I feel like that can't be the case. And so I think that's first and foremost, a really important part of the program. I think that another important element is partnering with schools that even if they're not doing it perfect, because I don't think any of us are doing anything in education perfectly, there's always something we can do better. But I do think it's important in a clinical space to be partnering with schools where the school leader is committed to serving diverse students and working with their staff and advancing practices and mindsets and ways of being that are asset based and are always working towards serving students well and better than we have in the past.

Heidi's reflection underscores the importance of both the value of coursework in shaping the perspectives of teacher candidates, as well as having opportunities for candidates to see ideas as translated by school leaders into the school contexts in which they are placed.

Similarly, Raquel, L2 Leader from Ocean University, shares, "my specific program is centered in equity and cultural responsive and sustaining practices. So we need to ensure that our pre-service teachers are put into classrooms and schools where they can practice that, where that is still centered, where all students' identities are centered." Raquel shares her program's focus and having a context that models these beliefs and ensures candidates have the opportunity to practice.

In reflecting on the development of teacher candidates within the clinical placement setting, Dana, L2 from West Coast University shares that candidates can "superficially" understand concepts and theories from their coursework but "applying what you may learn in coursework to your actual students is really important" and therefore having "structured time and professional learning about all the populations of students who are in our classrooms" is a priority for clinical placements.

Anne S., from West Coast University, specifically speaks to mentor practice alignment. She shares,

I think that that speaks to what changes outcomes for student teachers, in that if they have a mentor teacher who is modeling and talking about and bought into this idea of advancing social justice pedagogies, then they are that much more likely and able to execute in real time with real students what it looks like to do that."

Anne's reflections highlight a nuanced consideration for mentors in that instructional practices are aligned to social justice but also modeling their way of thinking and commitment to the ideals of social justice pedagogies.

Finally, Stella, of Green University, speaks to the value and importance of teacher candidates learning how to enact social justice pedagogies and being able to learn about discernment related to the unique space in which candidates are learning within a residency model. She shares,

I do think that part of the work becomes really important for the students in their own success, both in sort of a social justice orientation, but to think about what that means within their context, because that work is contextual. And so I do think to the degree possible programs, who can situate the learning of the candidates within the context where they plan to teach, allows for that continuity between their learning space and the implementation space once they're teachers of record.

Stella's insights reflect her view that teacher candidates benefit from developing a social justice orientation or framework that is cultivated within the specific space and subsequently as preferred in the residency model, enables teacher candidates to translate their learning to settings consonant to their placement.

Participants expressed the need for alignment in which the institutional aims were enacted through coursework and the subsequent alignment between placement contexts, mentor teachers, and site leaders. These features collectively among the participants were viewed as central and irreplaceable for the development of teacher candidates. School climates, as we know for TK-12 students and staff, have a profound impact on many facets of their experience in that context. Teacher candidates are no different. As mentioned across the three different institutions, placing teacher candidates in schools and classrooms enacting social justice pedagogies is critical to ensuring teacher candidates have the opportunity to bridge their coursework into their practice and see examples of the possibilities for how to enact social justice pedagogies within their own placement classrooms and contexts. Placement contexts are dynamic and offer rich and immersive spaces to learn about students, families, and the broader school community. Ultimately, candidate placement experiences need to be aligned, and contextual in order for candidates to apply their learning meaningfully.

1.2b Support for Teacher Candidates: Mentors and Site Leadership

Three out of seven participants named mentors and school leaders as playing a role in having a quality clinical placement. Participants expressed mentors' ability to model practices aligned to institutional and preparation program aims, support adult learners, and serve as effective instructional coaches. While mentors are viewed as important, the same participants also expressed the importance of mentor selection and provided ongoing professional development.

Dana shares her perspective on the importance of mentors,

"I've learned is that the mentor teachers, pedagogy and instruction is a really critical part of the residents, clinical learning and so both vetting for and then also supporting our mentor teachers, because some of them may be really strong teachers in their own right...building a common reference points and framing for all of us, and in some cases, making up or supporting gaps in mentor teachers has been really important too. So I think that mentor teacher thread is so foundational, and maybe I've taken it for granted in saying how important that is to the entire success of the clinical experience."

Dana's reflection captures her belief on the impact of mentors, a discernment with mentor selection and acknowledgement of mentor teacher instructional strength while building a common language to facilitate a "successful clinical experience" for candidates. Dana in other places of her interview reflects on the importance of candidates having the opportunity to apply their learning in placements which in this case is also facilitated by mentor teaching practices.

Resident Sensemaking through Mentor Modeling - Heidi's Story.

Participants expressed the importance of mentor alignment with programmatic aims. Heidi expands on the value of mentors and also the placement as a place of learning for teacher candidates in making sense of their coursework within their placement context, Heidi shares a story in which a teacher candidate observes her mentor teacher's practice and initially feels it does not align with the coursework she is taking. The candidate is paired with a teacher who

has been in the classroom for 10 years, a longtime community member, and is a first-time mentor. The Latina mentor was recently named “Teacher of the Year,” had strong academic results, and was perceived by Heidi as having “very strong classroom culture” and sharing the same racial/ethnic identities as half of her students. One day, the teacher candidate came to Heidi expressing difficulty understanding their mentor’s approach to being a “warm demander.” Heidi recounts the candidate bringing the dilemma to her, sharing:

I think my mentor is amazing, but I'm not jiving with the way that she's ...setting expectations with students... and I think that was one that was really great, because that resident was being really reflective about this is what I'm learning about in my courses. This is what I'm hearing. This is also like the values that I...wrote in my philosophy of education this summer.... I know who I want to be as a teacher, and now I'm here in this space, and ...think this person is probably a really great teacher, but I'm seeing things that feel misaligned. And so because she was able to tell me that in the first visit... I was able to actually watch the mentor teach a little bit and be able to pick up on, okay, what is it about the way this person is delivering and creating classroom culture that might feel misaligned for the resident. I was able to talk and do that observation with the resident. Talk to the resident about that. Debrief it together. Help the resident realize, like, okay, wait, actually, my mentor is doing X, Y and Z, and when I hear her, what feels really stern to me, it's, here's how it aligns with the ideas that we've shared. And also here's, how maybe that's how she's going to do it, and I'm not going to do it that way. But so I think the coaching cycle has allowed me to be able to help the resident, just put on a different set of glasses on to be able to take a different lens on what she was seeing.

Heidi’s story highlights the way the candidate is engaging in their coursework and placement contexts, interacts with the mentor teacher to sensemake around the ideas and philosophies embedded in coursework, and works to think about ways they want to be in alignment with their vision of themselves within the context of creating a classroom culture resonate with what they aspire to teach based on what they are learning through coursework.

For site leaders, Heidi shares the impact of site administrators on teacher candidates' clinical placement experiences. In quality cases, Heidi shares principals, connects with teacher candidates, offers consistent feedback, and learns about what they are exploring in classes.

Heidi, shares that these leaders are “so committed to our programmatic ideals, and they lead their school in ways where they focus on the whole child and the whole adult, and they're really thoughtful about the school culture that exists... not surprisingly, this principal doesn't have a lot of turnover at his school.”

In this case, Heidi’s story anecdote reveals her perspective of the alignment between the leadership approaches of the principal connecting with topics candidates learn and their practice of connecting with teacher candidate relationally and through offering feedback and learning about their coursework as supportive to teacher candidate’s experience

A Case of Misalignment: The Effects of Power and Privilege in Clinical Settings.

In contrast to examples of strong mentor and site alignment facilitating candidate safety and learning, Heidi goes on to share an experience in which there was a challenging experience with a site leader. She shares,

“Some of the most challenging experiences I've had with supporting a resident is when the school leader is someone who is not aligned with those beliefs, and then as a result, I think what we see is that the mentor isn't aligned with those ideals and beliefs, and then it becomes really difficult for the residents to like, apply their learning and feel a sense of belonging in the space.” And I guess a story that I think of with, well, sorry, before I share the story, I think like another element there is, especially in a clinical program that serves a really diverse set of teacher candidates. We also need those school leaders and the mentor teachers and the other staff to like, have a lens on inclusion and belonging, and think about how if their staff isn't currently representative of the teacher candidates who we're bringing into the space, what are the ways in which they're trying to understand and uplift and nurture the teacher candidate so that the kids at that school, ultimately have a really strong teacher who probably more closely reflects some of their identities. So I think about a time when that hasn't happened, at an elementary school that I've worked with where I had a black male resident and the principal who was a woman who, I think, on the surface, would talk a lot about, she was really, quote, unquote, excited to bring have, an elementary Black male teacher on her campus. And throughout the course of the year, it became very apparent that there were a lot of microaggressions that the candidate was experiencing. His relationship with the principal, was really honestly non existent, and when he finally started to get feedback from her late into the year, the feedback was really negative and was very, well, you haven't been doing this all year, so obviously we don't want to, we're not even going to give you an interview at the school. She didn't say it exactly like that, but that was sort of the tone of the way that the feedback was received. And I just think that that, and then on top of that, like his mentor, who was a woman who had been teaching at the school for a long time, and, for all intents and purposes, on paper, a very good teacher, right? Like National Board Certified, really caring, but also not aware of the experiences that this resident was facing with the school leader, and also not aware of how her interactions were causing these challenges to persist. And so ultimately, that candidate didn't even get an interview at their placement school, which is almost unheard of unless there's not an opening, and obviously, didn't end up staying within that district. And didn't then, as a result, the kids didn't get what we had, really hoped would be true for them at that school. He's now luckily thriving at a different school where he had a prior relationship with a school leader. And is feeling a sense of belonging.

Heidi's story highlights an example of misalignment in support from both site leaders and mentor teachers. Heidi raises a value around teacher candidates experiencing belonging and inclusion in their placement and centers an experience a Black male teacher candidate. In Heidi's recounting, the teacher candidate experienced what she perceived to be microaggressions, a lack of relationship, and limited support. Heidi contrasts the placement experience with the teacher candidates experience in their current school with a presumably more aligned school leader. Heidi mention the mentor teacher possessed requisite credentials and name the National Board certification as an additional feature the teaching field values as an indicator of highly effective teaching, and yet the candidate's experience was inadequate due to perceived leader and mentor

skill gaps or misalignment with the program or consideration for the identities of the teacher candidate.

Having strong and aligned mentors and principals in the placement context supports teacher candidates in their growth as teachers, their sense of connection to the school community, and their learning in what were described as inclusive spaces. In a residency context, teacher candidates spend as much as four days a week in placement contexts with the goal of learning to teach and ultimately earning a position within the context in which they have been placed. Power and privilege dynamics are present in school spaces among administrators and teachers, and are also present within mentor/teacher candidate spaces and amongst site leaders and teacher candidates. Uneven or inequitable practices place teacher candidates in unique and challenging situations that require them to confront or counter what they notice (and are expected to practice) without appropriate ideological, pedagogical, or cultural support. When mentors and site administrators share aligned beliefs, there are opportunities for teacher candidates to see exceptional models and to deeply learn what social justice looks like in a lived, dynamic way. In situations where the school climate, site leaders, and mentors are not aligned, L2 leaders, in particular, have shared circumstances in which teacher candidates have needed to be placed in alternative assignments or endure conditions that impact the well-being, learning, and future employment of candidates. Teacher candidates learning in a misaligned context with gaps in support not only impacts the teacher candidate's learning process but ultimately has implications for their ability to become effective teachers for TK-12 students.

As participants shared their conceptualizations of the characteristics defining quality placements, a new finding emerged around the goals leaders held for teacher candidates. The goals leaders hold suggest ways in which they shape or inform leader conceptualizations of quality within clinical programming.

Finding 2: Leaders Hold Varied Goals for Teacher Candidates within Social Justice Focused Residency Programs

In the semi-structured interview protocol, participants were asked questions about the clinical placement characteristics they considered essential for developing teacher candidates who can serve students of diverse identities and advance social justice pedagogies (Appendix A). Participants use varied language to express their understandings of goals and pedagogies in relation to the clinical placement context or for their programs. These variations include the intended goals for teacher candidates or for the programs, learning experiences and practices teacher candidates should cultivate. Leaders described goal for candidates in varied as a larger, transformative societal or systemic aim (e.g., replace "hegemonic" and "harmful... teaching traditions"), and for specific populations (e.g., teach "multilingual learners"), or pedagogical (e.g., "culturally sustaining pedagogies") or programmatic foci (e.g., "diversifying who we are bringing in").

Three of the seven participants expressed goals for teacher candidates in ways as moving beyond traditional teaching practices. For example, Nicole, from Ocean University, expressed her perspective on social justice as moving away from "hegemonic traditions" and "the ways we were taught to teach...accepting assets and bringing that in to allow students to be themselves and to feel that they have a voice in the classroom," and replacing "traditions of teaching" that could be "harmful." Additionally Of the four participants, representing three of

the four institutions, the purpose of social justice for supporting candidates reflects an opportunity to ensure candidates develop an awareness of societal and school-based injustices, “critical” self-awareness, and the ability to reflect and connect these pieces as a way to inform their thinking and practice in their pedagogies as teachers.

Visions for Centering Identity, Positionality, and Transforming Traditional Teaching.

Within the sample, some participants expressed goals for teacher candidates focusing on the ways teacher candidates embody transformative teaching practices that center identity, reflect on positionality, and challenge traditional teaching methodologies that are not considerate of the diverse needs and identities of the students they teach. Stella, L1, African-American female leader, from Green University shares her considerations in relationship to the orientations she believes candidates to develop. She states,

We, in the coursework, ask our candidates to think about their own positionality and the ways in which their identities are situated within the larger social system, and how that contributes to the ways that they show up in their classrooms than the ways in which they teach their content areas. And so there is that ask of candidates through our coursework to have some self awareness and to think about deeply about their social identities, in addition to that, we ask them to think the same about their students and the ways in which that interfaces with the content in the classroom. So the coursework work is really set up to support that orientation. We have courses that are specifically about culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy.

Stella’s reflections about candidates illuminate the considerations she holds around the value of candidate knowledge, reflection, in relationship to their positionality and the intersectedness that has with society. Her comments capture a desire to cultivate an understanding of self and of students as a lens to think about their teaching practice within their content areas.

Nicole, African-American, female teacher from Ocean University, offers considerations for candidates to move away from traditional forms of teaching through recognizing student assets, identities, and creating space for voice.

Right. Trying to find the correct words, we have to get away from the traditional hegemonic ways that we were taught to teach, or that we're expected to bring into a classroom. What I mean by that is recognizing African American vernacular as a language, right? Accepting assets and bringing that in to allow students to be themselves and to feel that they have a voice in a classroom, right? So regardless of who they are, where they you know, or what they represent. So I think that kind of covers that whole space. So also thinking about in our clinical programs, how do our teachers learn how to do that? Some of them may not know how to bring in those engaging strategies to encourage their students to be themselves. Many of us were taught a certain way, just like you know, you raise your kids the way you were raised, et cetera, et cetera. So we bring on these traditions of teaching, and they can be harmful. They can be harmful. And so thinking about what that looks like, recognizing harm, recognizing us, self reflection is huge, and that's been a component that has been missed in teacher education in the past. I think that strong clinical programs include that. We include self reflection, we include goals professionally to ensure that we are giving our students those spaces to be and to thrive, right?

Nicole's comments surface her perspective on the type of experiences TK-12 students have in the classroom and the dispositions, self-reflection, and criticality teachers candidates should embody.

Raquel, L2, a Korean American female leader from Ocean University shares some commonalities with Nicole regarding teachers prioritizing identity-affirming practices. Institutionally she shares there is a programmatic focus on culturally and responsive pedagogy and expects placements to reflect that. When considering holistic programmatic influences she shares,

Yeah, so I think that's it, that's what influences us, is making sure that all students, especially a Black and Brown students, whose identities, narratives, histories are constantly being erased, and languages that are being erased are able to be centered and celebrated.

Raquel's reflection reflect similarities with her colleague Nicole from Ocean University in emphasizing the shared perspective of affirming student identities as a central consideration for teacher candidates to develop.

Taken collectively, these perspectives suggest a desire for teacher candidates to develop orientations that reflect a knowledge of self in relation to larger social conditions, an understanding of teaching experiences both prioritize student identities and are culturally responsive, and possess reflective practices allowing for noticing when teaching practices are harmful to students.

Aspirational Equity: Developing Candidates Amidst Clinical Misalignment - Ivy's Story

In section participants above, participants expressed goals for teacher candidates focused on transformative teaching practices and steps they engage in to support this alignment. Ivy's story below, as a leader she expressed explicit goals for candidates regarding equity and offers a story highlighting the challenges with implementing such a vision.

Ivy, Hispanic, female L1 leader from Central University, offers a consideration for developing teacher candidates connected to reflecting on personal biases and beliefs and knowledge of the issues that exist in education. Ivy shares,

But how are we mindful, just in the process and beyond that, no matter what we come in, whether we as humans are going to come with our own cultures, beliefs, biases. So what are we doing? Inside of our coursework, we really try to infuse a lot of just like awareness, even in our class management course, specifically, it seemed like the most logical place to sort of embed and invest in just responsive teaching practices a lot of but also awareness of just what, what are the issues in education that we need to be aware of so that we're in our own classroom, we can let go of those biases and teach in a more fair and just way. I know that our political climate is very sticky, so I'm already feeling nervous even just talking about this. And I hate that I do, and I hate that that's even like a thing for me to say. I think another place that you'll see this like equity come through. And it sounds small, but we have a lot of our English language population in this school district. I would say, probably in the 80s, 90s. So having our residents come in and be bilingual in languages like Spanish that our students are speaking or might need support in is really helping balance the equity of maybe having a Caucasian, probably female teacher who does not speak Spanish and would not know a dang thing about cognates or anything like that. So bringing in our residents to show and we've had

mentors push back with like, this is an English only classroom and blah, blah, blah, but we step in smoothly and say, gosh, can you let us? Let us show you what this could look like. We're not trying to be a dual immersion classroom. We get that. We want this student to feel successful in both languages. Let us show you.

Ivy's reflections capture a desire for teacher candidates to reflect on areas such as biases and beliefs along with some consideration integrating practices the program perceived as "responsive" and the vignette renders visible varied conceptualization of the goals of candidates in that candidate diversity and alignment with student populations alone is viewed as a driver for equity even when placed in a context in that shows signs of gaps in inclusive linguistic practices that are also not in alignment with evidence-based practices or culturally responsive.

State Guidance as a Driver for Candidate Development - Anne and Dana

While some participants expressed goals for candidates to prepare candidates aligned to ideas connected to identity, bias, knowledge of systemic oppression, some leaders shared perspectives reflecting a focus on preparing teachers to teach specific populations of candidates (e.g., "multilingual learners"). Two out of the seven participants predominantly conceptualized goals for candidates through specific language from the California Teaching Commission guidance.

Consider, for example, Anne S., White female from West Coast University, who shared:

To earn a CTC credential, you have to have all of these different types of experiences, experiences with students with autism, experiences with students with, you know, specific learning disabilities, all these different eligibilities, and you're supposed to do this in a variety of different environments, from inclusive, you know, fully push fully inclusive settings, to pull out kind of individual classroom settings. And the truth is, you really can't get to all those settings and all of those different types of possibilities in one year of preparation. But what we are trying to do is get them to think like a teacher and to ask the right questions and to reflect and own their own, you know, kind of learning process, so that once they you know, even if they don't have a student with autism, for example, in their year of preparation, if they leave, you know, and they go get a job in their first year, and they do have a student that they know who to ask, where to go to, what data to try to excavate from their files, you know, the right kinds of questions to ask, the right kinds of thinking to employ when they're trying to come up with interventions for that particular student.

Anne's comments mirror Nicole's in that she also desires for candidates, in this case a teacher candidate seeking an Education Specialist credential to serve student with Individual Education Plans, to possess the orientation and skill of reflection and much of her goals are rooted in California Teaching Commission language of what experience requirements are essential from the state. Her goals for candidates reflect a goal for candidates to have exposure to varied settings and develop a network of to ask questions to create plans for students. They do not extend to considering the host of systemic barriers students who participate in Special Education experience nor the competencies candidates may need to have in response to those barriers.

Dana, L2 from West Coast University, offers two perspectives reflecting a desire for teacher candidates to have the skills to meet the needs of learners of diverse backgrounds saying,

What I learned is going through the motions of like the edTPA, there are a lot of social opportunities to look at student equity, issues of equity for students. And what I what I've learned is there's ways in which candidates can do that really superficially and then there's ways I've learned that my residents that I have supported have benefited from slowing down and really taking time to unpack a lot of what is meant by, you know, like, what are English Language Learners and multilingual learners? What are the strengths and areas of need that they have? What is language acquisition? So these are stuff that should be in coursework, I believe, and I've seen over time that my residents maybe have had less applying what you may learn in coursework to your actual students is really important. So I think an essential feature of a high quality clinical placement is structured time and professional learning about all the populations of students who are in our classrooms, and so for us, that's meant developing an intentional focus on multilingual learners and EL students over time.

Similar to Anne S., Dana invokes credentialing requirements, in this case the edTPA, a performance assessment, as a vehicle to discuss what candidates have an opportunity to learn - in this case, perceiving this as an opportunity to examine issues of equity. She goes on to express specific programmatic and classroom for supporting teacher candidates in supporting "English Language Learners" and "multilingual learners."

Dana goes on to say that it is important for candidates to develop orientations in which "students are not problems ever. Students have strengths and needs and gifts, and it's our job to understand them and figure out how to meet them similarly with families..." and her role is to attend to an "undoing any sort of stuckness around problematizing students and families and really rooting into strengths, you know, all the things you know, making sure we read and live, what it means to have an asset based mindset, read and live, what funds and knowledge can look like."

Different from Anne S., Dana expresses goals for candidates seemingly responding to deficit beliefs about students and wanting teacher candidates to view students and families in an "asset-based" way.

Summary

How leaders interpret the goals of developing teacher candidates reflects how social justice becomes actualized within their respective clinical programs. Leaders from Ocean and Green University, who espoused approaches to candidate development focused on positionality, reflection, and creating identity-affirming spaces sought for clinical spaces to reflect opportunities for these to be modeled and practiced with the expressed hopes of coherence and alignment across learning and practice spaces. In contrast, leaders at West Coast and Central Universities held goals for teacher candidates with some attention to bias or deficit ideologies with less specific approaches (e.g., responsive practices in classroom management courses, having different types of experiences, knowing the strengths and needs of English Language Learners).

Within the sample, it is notable that the two Level 1 Leaders at Ocean University and Green University, respectively, are two African-American women, with significant experience in

teacher education, held visions for teacher candidate practice centering identity, reflection, and candidate positionality, and communicated the ways courses were designed to facilitate the learning of those ideas, and considerations for the enactment in the clinical spaces. Their corresponding L2 leaders, also reflected an understanding of that vision and desire for aligned practice opportunities within clinical spaces.

The findings of this chapter reveal pivotal decision points for leaders of social-justice-focused residency programs as they design clinical program experiences for teacher candidates. Leaders are tasked with interpreting and translating broad, often opaque, credentialing standards into specific, philosophically aligned programmatic requirements for quality clinical program implementation. This process results in varied conceptualizations, particularly between leaders whose visions seek to center on critical dispositions and identity (e.g., Ocean and Green University) and those whose goals are more aligned with state-driven criteria. While these decisions inform essential programming and structures—such as mentor selection and placement context—that support candidate development, the existing analysis is limited to the leaders’ conceptualizations of quality clinical spaces. Chapter 5 will build on these findings through examining the perspectives and practices of leaders amidst these gaps in alignment for programmatic decision-making and for advancing a justice-centered approach to teacher preparation within residency contexts.

Chapter 5: Findings for RQ2

This chapter reports findings from an exploration of leaders' perspectives and practices for clinical placements in social-justice-focused residency programs. It asks and answers the question, *What perspectives and practices guide leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?* The chapter will first present a summary of the findings followed by a presentation of findings for two parts of the research question: perspectives and practices, which emerged from analyses of participant interviews (n=7). Understanding leaders' perspectives and practices gives us a window into understanding the ways their conceptualizations about quality clinical programs are connected to institutional and leader-centered visions of social justice as enacted in practices informing the design of or the conditions of the clinical program space. For the purposes of this findings chapter, the definition of practice draws on Cook and Brown's definition of practicing being the "coordinated activities of individuals and groups in doing their real work as it is informed by a particular organizational or group context (Cook & Brown, 1999, p. 386)". Limited research exists regarding the work of leaders within teacher education, and particularly within residency programs. Examining the perspectives and practices will help to shed increased understanding around the ways leaders make decisions and enact their work across the boundaries of institutions of higher education and local education agencies, and the considerations that surface in relation to this work. Finally, as a newer approach to developing teacher candidates, leading within residency spaces surface not yet explored dilemmas that may privilege teacher candidate development and create unintentional barriers.

Summary of Findings, RQ2:

Leaders within Social Justice-Centered Programs Hold Perspectives Reflecting

- a. Awareness of social inequities within schooling systems in TK-12 and higher education as informed by individual histories, and knowledge of federal, state, and local school contexts greatly orient them as leaders.
- b. Specific practices that influence the enactment of quality clinical spaces facilitating candidate learning such as;
 - i. **Creating and sustaining partnerships** that facilitate coherent candidate practice experiences across learning contexts.
 - ii. **Placement and mentor selection processes** that support candidate learning experiences and supportive environments
 - iii. **Developing the capacity of teacher educator practices** across contexts to support coherent candidate experiences capacity building
 - iv. **Engaging in leadership actions** that respond to systemic and acute issues of program misalignment impacting candidate experiences in clinical spaces

Perspectives and Practices of Leaders in Social Justice Focused Teacher Residency Programs

Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residency programs shared many overlapping characteristics in their approaches to teacher education. Leader perspectives reflected a use of individual histories as a lens to inform awareness of social inequities in TK-12 and higher education school contexts, and knowledge of policies and issues across various

domains that impact clinical practice. In interviews, participants' perspectives illuminated two categories that influenced or informed them. These include awareness and responsiveness to social inequities in TK-12 and graduate school spaces, and knowledge of the macro, meso, micro systems and their influence on the clinical program.

Awareness of Social Inequities in TK-12 and Higher Education Contexts as Informed by Leaders Histories

As leaders charged with facilitating institutional priorities around social justice, participants shared how their **awareness of social inequities** were informed by their own histories. Residency leaders shared individual histories (e.g., personal experiences in school, as TK-12 teachers/leaders) that shaped their approach to teacher education. Five of the seven participants also explicitly shared their social identities (e.g., “person of color”, “White”, “privileged”) as points of reflection as they approached their work. These considerations were situated in how they conceptualized themselves, their work as teacher educators, and the spaces the possibilities and visions they had for teacher candidate learning and contexts of development (e.g. clinical spaces). For leaders, their **histories** shaped how they see themselves in relation to teacher preparation.

Participants expressed a consistent commitment to addressing responsibilities of **preparing teacher candidates for diverse TK-12 student populations**. This perspective reflected the need to ensure candidates possessed adequate knowledge and dispositions to support students and maintain asset-based views. Holding perspectives informed by an **awareness of social inequities in TK-12 school systems**, shapes the competencies an institution or leader wants to cultivate in teacher candidates and subsequently has implications for the characteristics for the types of clinical placements teacher candidates need to be trained in.

Awareness of TK-12 Social Inequities and Placement Selection - Green University

Green University is an institution that holds a mission espousing “just, community, and community (Table 1). Stella, a Black woman of mixed heritage, is the primary leader of the teacher education program and oversees the academic program. Stella works with Heidi, a White woman, who is one of several program leaders whose responsibilities primarily lie in leading the clinical program through placement selection, oversight, and mentor development. Both leaders share how their histories inform their awareness of social inequities in TK-12 spaces, how it informs their work. To begin, consider what Stella shared:

I was an Ethnic Studies minor, so really understanding the history of our country and ethnic groups really helps to think about the ways in which families are situated within society, and the way that schools play a role in the success of kids based on those experiences...So thinking about the ways teachers play a role in how kids come to see themselves racially and ethnically, in the importance of that work, and having an extraordinary amount of experience in teacher education at a top tier research ...has given me a lot of foundation and think in understanding what goes into teaching adults and also teaching teachers. So all of those things together...influences my perspective and my mentors have definitely contributed to my own orientation towards considering the macro and meso levels of society and the ways in which those things impact and show up in the work that we do as teachers, and also train teachers to show up for kids and families.

Stella goes on to say she believes teacher candidates must develop a “critical self-awareness” and candidates in clinical spaces should be able to “reflect and think about the ways in which what they did was really successful for whom, under what conditions and in what ways they need to make shifts or change for the future.” Stella offers that candidates need to “deeply understand as much as you can so that you have the ability to see students and academic challenges or their academic trajectories through a lens that helps you make important pedagogical decisions, that propels them into their success.”

Stella’s perspective illuminates a perspective centered around understanding the historical context in which families and schooling are “situated” in the broader context of how students and families experience schooling. Her experiences inform a desire for candidates to possess contextual and historical knowledge of the kinds of experiences students and families face and to possess the ability to be critical of those understanding and be able in the clinical space to interrogate what supports students and what to change.

Heidi, also a leader at Green University, shares her experiences, how they supported her awareness, and subsequently how they inform her work which is more located within the clinical space. Heidi shared:

I think that having worked in...schools that served primarily students of color... and now serving like working with teacher candidates who are also primarily like many of them came from the same type of schools and neighborhoods that I have worked in...many residents are first gen like I feel I see within them, my students who I've worked with in the past, and so I think just that provides me a perspective on their own experiences, especially since...I don't share very many identity markers with my residents.

Heidi’s reflections signal an awareness of her own identity markers and a window into understanding the experiences of candidate experiences in relationship to the communities that she has worked in previously. Heidi went on to say:

I do think it's important in a clinical space to be partnering with schools where the school leader is committed to serving diverse students and working with their staff and advancing practices and mindsets and ways of being that are asset based and are always working towards serving students well and better than we have in the past.

Heidi’s comments reflect an understanding of her previous experience working in TK-12 environments and a recognition for the type of spaces that benefit TK-12 students and for teacher candidates. Her expression of “working towards” and “better than” reflect a desire to continue to advance opportunities for TK-12 students and candidates being immersed in spaces aligned with those values and practices.

Stella and Heidi’s histories and understanding of inequities facing students within the TK-12 system suggest a collective orientation toward schools needing to continue to do work to create access and support for TK-12 students. They both speak qualitatively to the types of clinical experiences that candidates subsequently should participate in to learn how to practice in ways that are congruent with their beliefs which are in alignment with the institutional aims. Finally, Heidi speaks more specifically, to the decisions she makes as a leader to directly impact the teacher candidate’s experience in their clinical placement by selecting placements that are in alignment with the institutional mission, the lead of the academic program (Stella), and that of her own leadership.

Awareness of TK-12 Social Inequities and Mentor Selection - West Coast University

West Coast University, as an institution, espouses the ideas of “social justice, equitable, and inclusive” (Table 1). Anne, a White, female L1 leader at West Coast University overseeing traditional and residency-specific credentialing programming across the teacher preparation program and Dana, a White female, L2 leader is the program director for a residency program in which teacher candidates take courses through West Coast University. Both Anne and Dana share experiences of how their work within the education system shaped their understanding of the system inequities impacting TK-12 students.

Anne’s awareness of larger systemic inequities surfaced in her encounters as a former teacher and school leader. Anne shared she grew frustrated with the impact of teacher turnover and perceived it to be a barrier to providing high-quality instruction to students. Anne recounts,

And I just kept thinking to myself, like, there's got to be a better way to do this. I know we have teacher shortages, and like we need these people in the classroom yesterday, but I watched time and time again, people leaving their positions because ... they just didn't have the tools necessary to be successful. And we're kind of placed in schools and in positions that either didn't match their like, subject area, background, or they just had a major learning curve coming in. So that also was incredibly impactful... and then... I kind of figured a lot of this turnover is related to the conditions at the school and, so what does it mean to create a school environment that is supportive of new teachers, and is it possible to create schools that have teaching interns that don't leave the classroom.

Anne’s reflection captures an awareness of systemic inequities within TK-12 schools and the realization that teacher education could be a lever to address larger concerns within them. Anne also shared that her experience as an underprepared intern teacher with limited training also informed her commitment to training teacher candidates in deliberate ways.

Similarly in Dana’s case, she recounted critical dissonance between her upbringing and early encounters with the TK-12 system. Dana grew up in what she labeled as less racially diverse settings as informing her perspective on social inequality within society. Dana shared that she grew up in a “middle-class background” and moving early in her educational career afforded her the opportunity to reflect on “how sheltered” her experiences were growing up and in new, racially and ethnically diverse spaces, how more of her friends and colleagues had a more “political social consciousness” than she did. Dana shares that she learned about “really looking at systemic both the strength and beauty of identity and systemic structural racism, was a really important part of my early educational perspective.” Dana’s account highlights an ability to situate her multiple histories, critically examine them, and consider the ways in which those experiences shaped her perspective as an early educator.

As Dana considers the ways she perceives her role and positioning to support quality clinical experiences for teacher candidates, she shared:

...there can be greater alignment between the coursework and the application practice in a clinical setting, and part of my unique role is trying to bridge those to make sure that my candidates still get the social justice both learnings and then application, and yeah, as you know, like turning theory into practice takes a lot of intention and time, and it means that our mentor teacher candidates need to be that.

Dana noticed that an important component of teacher candidate development lies in strong preparation and the critical task of matching candidates with mentors in order to enact social justice practices.

Stella, Heidi, Anne, and Dana's reflections capture sentiments expressed by all participants in that preparing candidates was rooted in the understandings of the kinds of learning experiences they sought for students in TK-12 environments, whether that might be in affirming them in academic or identity-specific ways, or having teachers possessing the knowledge and skills to teach students effectively. With that in mind, the enactment of aligning clinical experiences with the consideration of placement contexts as sites to counter systemic issues are uneven in comparison to one another. This finding highlights the gaps that can exist between social justice perspectives and the aligned leadership choices impacting the ways candidates experience placement conditions.

As a whole, participant perspectives largely reflect an awareness of social inequities that exist and persist in TK-12 and higher education contexts, which impact the teacher candidate's experiences of clinical placements in positive and negative ways. Leaders' awareness, and iterative criticality, informs how they think about the enterprise of preparing teacher candidates (e.g., the dispositions and skills to facilitate equitable experiences for students) and the structural, programmatic, and leadership decision considerations (e.g., program design, placement selection, and oversight) to disrupt systemic inequities, whether they exist in the TK-12 space or in higher education.

As a group, participant interviews reflected individual histories which were influential in shaping their perspectives on developing teacher candidates and influencing the decisions they make with respect to clinical placement. Participant interviews reveal that leaders do not enter their work as blank slates. Their rich, complex experiences inform how they see their role and shape their ideas around how to envision and approach their work within teacher education. Important to note, all seven leaders, in their descriptions of their individual histories, revealed how their perspectives or worldviews were challenged and how that confrontation with beliefs became a resource they continued to draw on to develop their perspectives over time.

Awareness of Social Inequities and Graduate Students

In graduate-level contexts, all participants expressed a range of considerations for supporting graduate students in meaningfully engaging with their studies. All seven participants cited considerations such as financial accessibility for graduate school, barriers to credentialing, such as passing state credentialing exams, socio-emotional student supports, and unique supports for historically marginalized students (e.g., "Black and Brown students"), and considerations for the nature of teachers in which some teacher candidates are paid by the local education agencies (LEAs). Most participants, six out of seven, expressed an explicit desire for candidates to be in clinical placements that supported their learning through placement modeling of effective teaching practices or by supporting adult learning. As participants shared their desire to support the success and well-being of graduate students during their residency years, interviews revealed a desire for candidates experiencing quality learning contexts and experience, and the resources (e.g., financial, self-care, support with state credentialing exams) to complete the program successfully and in ways that supported overall well-being and long-term retention in the education field.

Awareness of Teacher Candidates' Needs -Nicole, Ivy & Anne

Teacher candidates enter graduate school with their own needs as learners. Leaders must design experiences that center TK-12 students and disrupt systemic inequities and barriers to academic success and program completion graduate students themselves also face. Leaders need to understand the structural and personal barriers candidates experience that can impact the clinical experience.

Nicole spoke of the need to attend to the socio-emotional needs of teacher candidates when they encounter graduate school and cope with graduate school burnout before transitioning to full-time teaching. She shared, “Academia requires you to say, write, and speak a certain way. But that doesn't mean that at every single moment we have to be that.” Nicole speaks to the broader learning context that candidates confront in graduate schools and the interplay with clinical spaces. Residency programs, by design, recruit students of diverse backgrounds with the intention of mirroring the social identities of the communities they serve. Teacher candidates of color often experience discrimination in placement settings, however, and the conditions they experience within the graduate school can amplify those feelings. Within Ocean University’s focus on teacher candidates learning culturally responsive practices that affirm their identities, candidates themselves must also experience identity-affirming experiences. As Nicole explained:

I think that's been very important for our new teachers in clinical practice, also thinking about their burnout, we know it's a thing. So, minimizing that helping them feel comfortable, confident, excited about teaching, right? How can we keep that love and passion even within the first couple years?

Nicole’s comments in the context of sharing characteristics of a quality clinical experience, focus on the lived experiences of teacher candidates and the potential impact of stress within extended placements on future teaching. These reflections elevate the multiple factors affecting teacher candidates’ experiences and the importance of attending to their needs holistically to ensure teachers are brought into the field with resilience and confidence.

Similar sentiments connecting candidates’ clinical experiences and long-term sustainability were shared across all participants. For example, consider Anne and Ivy:

Teachers need and deserve to be brought into the profession and supported in very intentional ways, both so that they can learn to be the complex and outstanding teachers that our students deserve, and so that they can sustain and thrive in the field. (Anne)

We were having a lot of just kind of toxic behavior from the mentor. As far as talking ill about the residency program, talking ill about the school side of the district. Some stuff was on social media. They were just unhappy in general, and it was really starting to freak the resident out... And...I'm two hours away. My district partners got there first, and their first M.O. is to like, side with their teacher, or to not ask questions. So my resident felt very scared, unprotected. So I just said, pause, get away, get out of the class. So we reconvened, and it was a really difficult situation, because we try so hard not to be in that lane of like, I protect the residents and you protect the mentors. But that has been a challenge that we've had to sort of balance and overcome, and we're working toward that. I think the littlest thing is we always copy each other on an email. Even if it's the stupidest question a resident sends my district partner about her

paycheck or her whatever it's, please copy me just because I want to protect them and they have student rights. (Ivy)

Both Anne's and Ivy's statements illuminate the desire to ensure graduate students experience positive and intentional conditions. As a former intern teacher witnessing consistent turnover, Anne brings a perspective and desire for graduate students to get the support they need to be effective teachers. Embedded in Anne's student-centered comments are the belief in teaching's complexity and candidates deserving time and support in order to develop. Ivy's story, in particular, illustrates the multiple considerations she holds regarding ensuring the candidate's rights are "protected" and the candidate's emotional well-being centered in light of how additional staff (mentors or district individuals) may exercise their power in addressing the dilemma. In clinical placement settings, most teacher candidates have the status of a volunteer. In Ivy's depiction of the incident teacher candidates can be subjected to treatment as an employee and the expectations without the employment protections. When candidates experience challenging placement environments, this can impact the candidate's ability to engage in credit-bearing coursework, subject them to unsafe working conditions, and experience reprimand without employment safeguards. Ivy's story elevates her belief in her role in supporting teacher candidates and protecting their status as students, mental health, and considering the larger structural opportunities with the partnership to ensure the teacher candidate is treated with dignity and fairness.

Nicole, Anne, and Ivy each share the ways they center the needs of graduate students within extended placements. Extended clinical placements require teacher candidates to spend much more time within the clinical placement in comparison to other programs. While that creates opportunities for job embedded learning, there are additional implications for exposure to how teacher candidates encounter the settings, are supported, and have safeguards given their student status. Leaders must demonstrate a keen awareness of these barriers and responsively attend to them to facilitate teacher candidate success within clinical space.

Awareness of Macro, Meso, and Micro Influences on Clinical Program Implementation

All participants' interviews reflect an expansive awareness of how federal, state, LEA, and institutional policies influence the candidate experience in the residency program and manifest in the clinical placement experience. At the macro level, recent shifts in federal policy and funding have impacted teacher residency programs. Leaders expressed understanding of and consideration for the impact, both in providing financial support for prospective teacher candidates and in how social justice practices are centered and actualized. Leaders also expressed awareness of state frameworks that support clinical program implementation and of state-level funding processes that influence the program.

Macro Systems Awareness

As shared above, at the macro level, four of the seven participants identified the impact of recent shifts in federal funding and the general political climate on preparing candidates of color and on the content candidates are prepared to address. Notably, participants expressed some discomfort sharing their perspectives on this topic. In discussing the importance of candidate awareness around current issues in education and how candidates need to respond, Ivy, L1 leader from Central University shares, "I know that our political climate is very sticky, so I'm already feeling nervous even just talking about this. And I hate that I do, and I hate that that's even like a thing for me to say." Ivy's hesitancy reflected her awareness of the current

political climate and also concern with expressing her full opinions about the work her institution was doing aligned to the questions around social justice and clinical placements.

Nicole, from Ocean University acknowledges the importance of state policy in light of federal policy shifts. She credits the California Teacher Performance Standards and state mandates for supporting programmatic design aligned with her institution's mission and vision. She states,

We're very lucky that we're in a state where we're not fired for having LGBT curriculum. You know, it's a policy that we should have it. We're very lucky, and that hasn't been removed yet, you know, but those are the types of policies that are here, where we are, that supports our actions, where in other states we're not, we wouldn't be protected. And so I think that we are privileged regionally, you know, or even, geographically, we are privileged in a lot of ways, and because of that, we're able to continue to have high-quality clinical practice."

Nicole acknowledges the federal shift and expressed how being with the state of California with different policies allowed for her to enact a clinical program in alignment with her institutional aims. While the state clinical guidance and program standards may not articulate explicit connections to social justice, Nicole believes existing legislation and Teacher Performance Standards allows her to be able to ensure there is coursework and clinical practice alignment ensuring a high-quality experience for teacher candidates.

Raquel, also from Ocean University, speaks to the broader federal political climate and its impact on the enactment of clinical placement programs. She shared,

And so there are some districts that we can't, we just can't go to anymore, you know, because of the political climate. And then, you know, even within the districts that or schools that we say, okay, they seem to be, you know, still open to supporting all students in all different ways.

Raquel's reflection highlights a consideration for the institutional aims, the impact of the shifting socio-political context and its impact on districts, and a consideration for alignment with her institution. Raquel's description of "supporting students in all different ways" hints at recent legislation aimed at various student groups targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Nicole, Raquel, and Ivy's remarks all reflect an awareness of the broader macro-political climate, the interplay with state policies, and the implications for program development within the clinical space. While they share an awareness as leaders, how they feel or operationalize those sentiments vary. Nicole, as a Level 1 leader, within a metropolitan area, is in a role to select partnerships and participates in state level spaces expressing a sense of empowerment and clarity enacting her institution's vision in a manner aligned to her perspective. Raquel, Level 2 of the same institution, and lead for the residency program, expressed more hesitancy in discussing issues pertaining to social justice. Finally, Ivy, as a L1 leader in a politically mixed area, expressed the most hesitancy in speaking about issues of social justice reflecting leaders' dissonance in her desired commitment to social justice and what they felt comfortable sharing.

State credentialing policies and funding models can both support and complicate the implementation of a clinical program. Participants expressed awareness of primary considerations for California credentialing requirements and funding contexts. Six out of seven

participants acknowledged subject requirements for teacher candidates as both an important requirement and a barrier, particularly for teacher candidates of color. Anne S. shared,

I'm even now continuing to brainstorm how to work with what's possible to get people through the door, past their subject matter, and really avoid taking the exams that have a terrible pass rate, and especially for that impact, especially teachers of color, and that, to me, is a real social justice issue.

Anne's comments reveal the longstanding disparities with teachers of color passing state credentialing exams (Policy Analysis for California Education [PACE], 2024). While over the last several years legislators have worked to remove some examinations and provide options for demonstrating subject matter competence (e.g., Assembly Bill AB310), many candidates of color continue to struggle with the credentialing exams. With an explicit charge of diversifying the teacher pipeline, candidates risk losing entry to programs or being forced to leave credential programs after paying tuition. While subject matter competence is important for teacher candidates to possess to be effective teachers, Anne's comments highlight the conflict of policies and programmatic efforts at the state level.

Participants also named recent state residency funding as a consideration that supported teacher candidates and also came with new program requirements. Participants reported that new funding supported the financial viability of earning a teaching credential but also introduced unexpected complications. Heidi, for example, recounted an instance involving a teacher candidate whose mentor was not present. While her typical process would be to change the candidate's placement, and while she thought state officials ("residency grant folks") would support this decision, she expressed "there would have been more regulations in place to be able to or more like, quote, unquote, hoops I would need to jump through to be able to change his placement in that situation." Heidi's comments speak to the considerable requirements connected to residency funding which include clinical placements mandated for a year and with the same mentor. Once mentors are assigned and initial funds are distributed, candidates must be in their placements at least 50% of the week and mentor changes require state-level notification thereby making it more challenging for program leaders to change clinical placements should there be a need to do so. While yearlong placements as a model might be ideal, placements with poor conditions are also not compatible with ensuring teacher candidates experience high-quality clinical placement conditions.

Another participant shared that state credentialing policies and new priorities, such as those focused on expanding transitional kindergarten, can be felt on the ground. Dana, from West Coast University, shares the complications of training a resident in a transitional kindergarten yearlong placement. A yearlong placement, a signature feature of the teacher residency model, and a requirement of the residency grant, and long-term implications. Dana shares,

We have TK resident...really amazing, super evolved...But that candidate's placement in TK does not mean they're going to get hired in TK. So all of the foundational literacy and all the other subject matter, literacy and numeracy work that can happen a K-8 classroom or based on their credential...they're not getting exposure to so because their classified work is subbing one day a week, they will get that experience and the principal has created a pathway, an onboarding process, where they've observed at each grade level, so they're learning the site, both bell schedule and routines. And then, you know,

a pretty snapshot, but superficial version of this is what literacy looks like. This math looks like. This is SEL time of the day and so forth. So I guess I'd say niche credentials, like a TK like niche placements. So the credential is not niche, it's a multiple subject credential, but in it that residency placement. TK, they're getting a very particular type of training, which ultimately needs to be able to be transferable to other grade levels.

Dana's story captures the difficulties of interpreting state placement guidance, residency grant stipulations, and a commitment to ensuring a teacher candidate receives the preparation their credential expects of them. In the case of Dana's TK candidate, the candidate's learning context must be with that specific group of students even though they are earning a credential qualifying them to teach students from TK through 8th grade. As transitional kindergarten expands in the state of California, so does the demand for teachers. Dana expresses a real concern about the teacher candidate not getting opportunities to practice learning varied facets of teaching that are developmentally appropriate for older students that reflects its own form of structural inequity compounded by residency grant stipulations.

Leaders reflect a significant awareness and understanding of the federal and state landscapes in effort to enact clinical programs in alignment with their institutional and programmatic aims. Participant reflections capture the complexities involved with negotiating within various policy contexts and the strategies they employ to meet credentialing standards, expectations of the LEA, as well as ethical considerations they may hold in relationship to developing teacher candidates.

Meso System Awareness

All participants' interviews reflected an awareness of the ways systems at the institutional level (e.g., institutions of higher education (IHEs)) interacted with district-level systems within which residencies engage. Participants revealed many insights and places of alignment or incongruence between institutions and district systems, including mentor selection processes, candidate placement protections, and agreements on development processes and hiring processes.

As noted earlier in the findings, participants reported that one feature of a quality clinical experience for teacher candidates is an effective mentor. While there appears to be alignment across contexts of the value of a quality mentor, navigating the systems requires knowledge and intention. Raquel, Level 2 leader from Ocean University, shares,

“And one of the things that you mentioned about what's considered a high-quality mentor, it is so different from in IHE and school district, you know. And the reason why I say that is a lot of, so the list of teachers that we receive are have been like approved by the principals at their school sites, but the principals have a different lens of what an effective teacher is, right? Then, how we want to train our teachers.”

Raquel's reflection highlights the potential dissonance between district context and institutions of higher education, as governed by internal processes. In some cases, mentor selection is driven by factors beyond the scope of principal recommendations and is governed by local bargaining units with specific stipulations around how mentor teachers are selected.

Ivy, Level 1 Leader at Central University, speaks to the considerations regarding policies and expectations that ensure teacher candidates, as graduate students, maintain that status throughout their program. Ivy shares that implementing memoranda of understanding for candidate hiring processes helps ensure that teacher candidates complete their residency year

before stepping into their full-time teaching positions. This contrasts with other credentialing pathways (e.g., intern pathways), in which teacher candidates work full-time while completing coursework. Ivy shares upon receiving pressure from the district regarding early hiring when a mentor teacher is unable to continue.

“And just like, nope, we're not doing that. Each of our programs has now built into the MOUs. You cannot hire a resident before they complete the program. You can, like, interview them for the next school year, but they aren't cooks. They're not ready. So, like, then we're in. The main reason is, hey, let's look at the mission and vision we have for this program. And it's not to hire halfway there teachers. It's highly qualified teachers entering your district. Give us a little more time, like, find someone else for the moment, but we need this resident in the classroom with a mentor teacher for the remainder of their one-year clinical practice.

Teacher residencies, designed to address teacher shortages, may be misconceived as distinct from other credentialing pathways, and district and state teacher residency funds supporting teacher candidates can affect districts' perceptions of how to protect candidates' clinical experiences. In Ivy's account, she names the specific mission, vision, and goals of her institution and residency and the rationale for having an approach that is different from other job-embedded teacher preparation pathways that are commonly confused. Viewing teacher candidates within residencies as a labor source, Ivy leans on the institutional mission to construct agreements that increase protections for teacher candidates.

Micro System Awareness

A final finding related to systems awareness is the placement of the classroom itself. Throughout interviews, participants expressed an understanding of the multiple considerations that inform how rules or guidance beyond the classroom context manifested within the classroom.

An example of this understanding surfaced at the intersection of the expectations of the teacher preparation program, specific practice-based opportunities to facilitate candidate development, and the structures and policies within the district or site context. Consider Stella's reflection:

“There have been other times where the misalignment has been more at the partner level, where the partner, or someone, an administrator at the partner level, disagrees with the content of our work and has become a barrier to residents practicing particular strategies in their clinical placement.”

Teacher residencies by design are structured to facilitate context-embedded learning opportunities. When, as in the case described by Stella, an L1 leader, local context conditions remove opportunities, candidates do not have the opportunity to develop pedagogies as the program is designed. These gaps signal a broader misalignment between the preparation programs and partner districts, as well as uneven opportunities for teacher candidates to connect coursework to practice.

In Table 9, findings are listed alongside their parent codes and relevant sub-codes. The column “representation in the participant sample” refers to the number of participants in the total sample who were coded as holding a particular viewpoint. As reflected above, participants' perspectives reflect two key findings; awareness and responsiveness to social

inequities in TK-12 and graduate school spaces, and knowledge of the macro, meso, and micro systems.

Table 9

Perspectives of Leaders in Social Justice-Focused Teacher Residency Programs Codes and Representation in Sample

<i>Parent Code</i>	<i>Sub-Code</i>	<i>Sub-Code</i>	<i>Representation in Participant Sample</i>
<i>Ethical Leadership</i>	<i>Histories</i>	<i>Personal Professional</i>	<i>5/7</i>
<i>Ethical Leadership</i>	<i>Critical Consciousness</i>	<i>Awareness of Inequality</i>	<i>7/7</i>
		<i>Student Centered</i>	<i>7/7</i>
		<i>Justice</i>	<i>6/7</i>
		<i>Vision</i>	<i>5/7</i>
<i>Systems Awareness</i>	<i>Systems Awareness</i>	<i>Macro, Meso, Micro</i>	<i>7/7</i>
	<i>Alignment</i>		<i>3/7</i>

Practices of Leaders within Teacher Residency Programs

In the previous section of this chapter, I presented findings related to the perspective leaders shared, which mattered for how they designed and enacted clinical placements. In this section I turn my attention to the practices they use to design and enact high-quality clinical experiences for teacher candidates in residency programs. As means to bridge ecosystems and to enact quality clinical programs, participants engaged in four core practices: creating and sustaining intentional partnerships; placement and mentor selection processes; noticing and responding to institutional misalignment; and building teacher educator capacity for quality placements.

A central finding from participant interviews was the intentional practice of bridging across institutional (IHEs) and TK-12 (LEAs) contexts. By design, teacher residency programs are agreements between IHEs and LEAs to address teacher vacancies in that employment ecosystem. I found participants, as a practice, engage in strategies to create and sustain partnerships by establishing intentional partnerships and sustaining them through effective communication and positive relationships. Through these interactions, leaders in residency programs can bridge policy contexts to implement clinical programs that adhere to accreditation and credentialing standards, align with institutional programmatic aims, and meet policy expectations or resource demands within the LEA ecosystem.

Creating and Sustaining Intentional Partnerships

Creating and sustaining partnerships between two entities is complex, as depicted in candidate interviews. Three themes emerged from the practice of creating and sustaining partnerships: intentional partner engagement, trusting relationships, and ongoing communication.

Intentional partnerships. For the first area, intentional partnerships, this work lived primarily in the realm of Level 1 leaders. Level 1 leaders tended to be responsible for or participate in a set of activities that included grant writing, facilitating the creation or completion of memorandums of understanding, and addressing issues that surface within the partners. Nicole, Level 1 Leader at Ocean University, shares, “Partnerships with districts can make or break a program that we’re doing.” She goes on to say that “minimizing” partnerships with districts that do not share the school’s mission of social justice is important to “ensure we are on the same page” regarding the needs of TK-12 students and teacher candidates. Nicole explained:

We don't advertise for campuses that are not supporting what we believe in. That's hard to do. It makes it harder for us. Because then, do we have enough teachers in other spaces willing to take on another student? We are a large program, so standing our ground, providing space and examples, minimizing our own barriers, and providing opportunities for students to get the maximum experience possible.

Nicole’s account reflects a leadership practice of intentional partnering through understanding partner characteristics that align with the IHE’s programmatic emphasis and applying discernment when establishing agreements to implement the teacher residency program. Her reflections capture a practice of having knowledge of the anticipated partner context, commitment to programmatic aims, and taking action to facilitate conversations to establish alignment. The reflections also highlight making decisions not to pursue misaligned partnerships and creating alternative arrangements to address the enrollment and financial implications of those decisions. Therefore, partnership misalignment characterized by misaligned missions creates barriers to clinical placement learning opportunities that center on IHE-aligned practices.

Similarly, Stella, L1 Leader of Green University, expresses the importance of shared alignment within partnerships and the role of the institution in clarifying their stance on social justice and how it intersects with programmatic implications:

One of the things that we have gotten better at over the over time is trying to be very clear with our partners about our pedagogical stance, so that partners can opt to partner with us, or maybe choose not to, if it's not something that they that is in alignment. I think that's that's one, and I think being really clear about what that stance is, because especially within the current social context, saying certain words like equity or social justice can be seen as in a way that is actually misaligned to the work that we're doing. That it just means that it's only about race, or it's only about something in particular, when it's about race and it's about other things, but it's really, about what's in the best interest of serving all students so that folks get what they need. So I think making sure there is alignment with partners is something that we've gotten better at, and not perfect, but better.

Stella's remarks illuminate the importance of intentional partnering at the beginning of establishing partnerships, clarity of the institution's stance, and helping to bridge the goals of the IHE and the LEA.

Dana, L2 Leader from West Coast University, shared another perspective, considering community partners within the LEA. As a leader working on the ground overseeing the candidate's placement and experience with mentor teachers, she recalled:

And so I have, we have learned now just a how important...really strong partnership relationship with the principals, and then to really listen to the principals and not place residents if there's any concern connected to a mentor teacher."

In Dana's case, having strong relationships with principals provides an additional layer of insight into a mentor teacher's practice that classroom observations or recommendations may not reveal.

Nicole, Stella, and Dana's account reveal the practice of intentionally partnering with LEAs at the organizational level to support alignment in shared vision and approach, and interpersonally to ensure there is alignment between residency leads and site leaders to support mentor quality. Their stories illustrate creating alignment for social justice must live across levels of organizational decision making in order to facilitate strong clinical placements for teacher candidates.

Relationships and Communication. Raquel, L2 leader from Ocean University, shares the ways her institution has structures to facilitate ongoing relationships and consistent communication. Raquel shares,

"Our university and that local, large district that we work with, we had an exchange where we had faculty members like course instructors from our university, and the teachers, curriculum leaders, administrators from the district. We all met one day. We do this once a year, where we meet and we collaborate and we align our vision and our goals. And so that's why I feel like our policies do align pretty well, because we're constantly in collaboration with that district."

Raquel's account matches descriptions shared in her institution's accreditation report citing consistent structures to facilitate communication between the LEA and the IHE. The mention of constant collaboration is also reflected in leaders expressing an appreciation for teachers candidates being prepared in the "Ocean University" way amidst opportunities to connect with IHE staff.

Heidi, an L2 leader from Green University, shares her experience building relationships with staff liaisons within the LEAs she works with and how she offers feedback when a placement site is not a fit for the residency program. Given the relationships with the liaisons and the programmatic alignment, Heidi believes she can provide concrete feedback on placements that support teacher candidates' learning. Heidi says liaisons are

very aligned with our programmatic goals. I think we've done a good job of selecting partners, and I think they really trust and understand, and they know their schools well enough so if I say we're not going to place someone there, I have yet to experience pushback.... I'm able to communicate that in a way that is asset-based. It's important to stay asset-based. It's important to have concrete data about why, the why it's not the right fit, and to create space for my liaisons or the partners to be able to ask questions and for us to kind of work through it together.

Heidi's reflection captures an assessment of alignment among the LEA community partners she supports as a residency leader supporting multiple LEAs (in contrast to a single district), relational capital to share feedback and advocate for effective placement conditions for residents, and the attention to using data strategically and in ways that facilitate positive dialogue and invite further collaboration.

Ivy, L1 Leader from Central University, offers another consideration for developing relationships with community partners. She shared,

Clarity of like roles and responsibilities is something I know it sounds so basic, but if there is not a really clear path for both the mentor, the resident and the university supervisor and whoever the heck else is like involved in this thing, there's going to be confusion. Some are going to succeed, some may not. So I would say a particular strategy that works well for us specifically is having a very it's living, but we have really clear communication.

Ivy's account highlights the varied individuals supporting teacher candidates and the importance for ensuring alignment across parties for candidate success and to provide additional support as needed.

In their reflections, Raquel, Heidi, Ivy highlight the importance of maintaining a consistent practice of structured opportunities to align around vision and goals, maintaining intentional touchpoints (e.g., meetings, liaisons), and making sure to create clarity around specific areas of the program to facilitate proactive communication that yield successful outcomes for teacher candidates.

Placement and Mentor Selection Processes

All seven participants described considerations for placement settings and for ensuring candidates engage in their clinical work as expected. Level 1 leaders, of whom there were 4 participants, typically did not offer detailed insight into this practice, as their roles and work tended to be more structural and systemic (e.g., faculty support, partnership establishment, strategic planning). I found that, for L2 leaders, participants consistently engaged in practices such as assessing site contexts, collaborating with key community partners (e.g., human resources and principals), selecting mentor teachers, and establishing structures to oversee the candidate experience throughout their development. Most frequently, L2 leaders were the individuals who created mentor selection processes or engaged with district personnel on internal policies. With respect to site selection, L2 leaders had a varied degree of autonomy in site selection, ranging from the ability to create a mentor application and engage in site visits for mentor selection to principal presentations in which principals recommended mentor teachers, and local bargaining units had policies that governed which teachers were eligible for mentoring. In the case below, a leader shared the complex steps they engage in to identify future mentor teachers.

Raquel, L2 Leader from Ocean University, shares,

"They have a pretty straight, like, straightforward protocol of, before we put students into schools. I have to present to all the principals, give them, an info session about my program, and then they have to present it to their teachers, and then they have to get that the help, or then the volunteers. Then within that, we there's like, a district list of, who's approved and who's not approved, you know. So I have to go through that to get my student teachers in."

Raquel's account illustrates the district, interpersonal, and arbitrary ways mentors enter into a pool for selection. Raquel's story reflects a collaborative opportunity to engage principals and one influenced by district, bargaining unit policies and personal preference.

Dana, L2 Leader from West Coast University expresses similarities in principals being a part of the mentor selection process sharing,

"I would say principal recommendation for mentor teachers is really important because they know their staff well, and my experience so far has been that they tend to be really accurate, and so when and if a principal has a hesitation or a caveat connected to a mentor teacher, it's really important to either thoroughly vet that mentor teacher and or not select that person to be a mentor teacher."

Dana goes on to express concerns about the mentor teacher shortage in her context and partnering with principals is critical to prevent future issues with mentor-resident pairings.

Placement and mentor selection are complex processes governed by context-specific regulations, cultural norms, and policies. While some L2 leaders are able to introduce specific practices such as site visits, mentor applications, and engage in data-driven dialogue to interrupt misplacements, other L2 leaders work with placement contexts that use more structured, district-driven processes to select mentors, including presenting to local principals and using district-approved mentor lists to place teachers. This variance highlights the importance of relationships among leaders across contexts in TK-12 and IHEs, a shared vision for teaching practice, and the alignment of placement-selection structures and processes to mitigate bias and ensure that high-quality sites and mentors are identified.

Noticing and Responding to Institutional Misalignment

In the yearlong residency, a practice highlighted by participants was noticing and responding to systemic and acute misalignment between programmatic aims and implementation in the clinical space. The most common issues leaders encountered were gaps in shared agreements with LEA partners and placement misalignment, in which the site context or assigned mentor was not appropriate for the resident. In cases of misalignment, leaders often grappled with how to communicate with staff to create strong systems for mentor selection or to respond when mentor-teacher candidate pairings became untenable and required a placement change. A common issue that surfaces among LEAs is the existing staffing shortage in a particular credential area that teacher candidates are being recruited to fill, as well as the shortage of quality mentors. The pressure from the LEA to place a candidate in a site context to train with a less qualified mentor can be significant, requiring communication and intervention from leaders. Illustrative of this, Heidi, Level 1 Leader from Green University, shared,

Personally, I think the challenge is when we really want, I don't know, a single subject, math teacher. We really want to train someone. The only school where we have a potential mentor is this school that hasn't been the best fit in the past. And that's when I think it's a more difficult conversation. Well, I know you want a single-subject math teacher, but I just don't think that's the right fit. And I don't think we're ready to take that on yet, and feeling confident and being able to explain why.

Heidi's practice reveals knowledge about various placement sites, potential gaps in alignment with qualities that will support teacher candidate development, and willingness and clarity to

communicate with community partners regarding the mismatch between the LEAs needs, in this case a math teacher, and the appropriate training site to support a teacher candidate.

Raquel, a Level 2 leader from Ocean University, reflected on how leaders respond when a placement becomes untenable for a teacher candidate. She said:

It's easier for us to move the candidate to someone who is more responsive than to try to change the mentor teachers philosophy, you know, and approach to instruction. That's the biggest challenge for me. And we still have our like, come to Jesus moments, or like meeting sit down meetings where it's, you know, coordinator and the mentor teacher and the university rep and then the student teacher, but yeah, typically we end up having to move them, which is so disruptive, you know, because we know building relationships with students is like 80% of teaching. So when you have to redo that. it messes everything else.

Raquel's practice reflects an awareness of a mismatch between the desired qualities in a mentor and the strategies to address it, including creating opportunities for dialogue among community partners and, when necessary, moving a teacher candidate. Raquel's remarks also capture considerations regarding the impact of moving a teacher candidate and the broader impact on the candidate's experience.

In all, four participants shared practices around noticing misalignment preventatively in the placement process or reactively when the situation requires communication across community partners and ultimately placement changes as needed. The issues around misalignment and practices to resolve them signal larger systemic challenges around conflicting processes and goals among IHE and LEAs, and potentially unaddressed quality mentor shortages, requiring leaders in residency programs to be nimble and create solutions centering TK-12 and graduate student success.

Building Teacher Educator Capacity for Quality Clinical Placements

In all seven participant interviews, informants expressed the practice of investing time and resources into teacher educators as a mechanism for supporting the development of practices aligned to the social justice mission and programmatic aims of their work. In the findings, teacher educators are defined both as faculty teaching courses, faculty implementing clinical programming, and mentor teachers who are developing teacher candidates within placement contexts. Two of the four L1 leaders spoke to this work more broadly with respect to the development of faculty within the IHE and the remainder of L1 and L2 leaders spoke to the importance of mentor development toward this end.

Faculty Development.

Stella, L1 leader, from Green University, shares that her institution engages in a constellation of learning opportunities to promote alignment around social justice practices. Stella shares,

We have professional development opportunities for the clinical and content faculty members that help us to align around what it means to teach in more equity and just socially just ways, which then translates to us as a program being able to support our candidates even better. So we have retreats twice a year. We also have faculty symposia in which we invite speakers to kind of talk about important topics. So examples of those are things like, there was a speaker around African American Vernacular English and what that means in the classroom, and in helping us to think about what that means for

us, and in terms of multilingual learners, we have some folks who, right now we're focusing in on literacy and language, and we've had people come in to talk about about that. So topics that really center more socially, just sort of centered topics are what folks come in and speak about, and then we have important conversations around that. So there's professional development opportunities that we have there, in addition to others that people might seek outside of our program that we support so many things, it's really embedded to almost everything we do the person who is also in charge of, I'll say, evaluating whether or not the clinical faculty member is successful in their work.

Stella's remarks offers, a window into her IHE's practice of offering learning, centering social justice program priorities coupled with feedback opportunities to support alignment across the program and into the clinical space. In Stella's IHE context, faculty from both contexts engage in shared professional learning opportunities to support candidate experiences.

Similarly, Raquel, L2 leader, speaks to the ways her institution's leaders offer professional learning opportunities and has facilitated programmatic shifts with course revision in the service of culturally responsive pedagogy. She shares that in response to data collected from teacher candidate supervisors, systems leaders engaged the department to take steps to learn and revise course sequencing to support candidate development. The institution then implemented an aligned observation protocol to support supervisors within the clinical space. Raquel says,

Our department chair has done such a great job of ensuring that everyone is. I don't know how to say this without. I don't know how to say this. Hold on. She wants to make sure that people truly believe in the mission of preparing candidates who are responsive to all of our students, through meetings, through professional development, through revising all of our courses to make sure that they are all culturally responsive. We've revised, you know, major assignments to make sure that we are responsive to our candidates, and it centers equity and social justice.

Raquel's account reflects spaces created by her IHE to learn as a faculty, reflect on course design, and revise in ways to support alignment to support candidate development around social justice pedagogies. It is worth noting that at the time of the interview, amidst the federal budget cuts due to residency programs alignment to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, Raquel expresses some hesitancy in sharing fully the practices the institution engaged in to facilitate alignment between course and clinical spaces.

Mentor Development.

L2 leaders spoke consistently in participant interviews regarding the importance of investing in mentor teachers to develop their skills across a broad range of areas to support teacher candidate efficacy. Dana, L2 from West Coast University shares,

What I've learned is that the mentor teachers, pedagogy and instruction is a really critical part of the residents, clinical learning and so both vetting for and then also supporting our mentor teachers, because some of them may be really strong teachers in their own right, but haven't been in an educational setting knowing the name and the lingo of things for a while or or they may have had an untraditional path, but they just have been able to become really exceptional educators, and so building a common reference points and framing for all of us, and in some cases, making up or supporting gaps in mentor teachers has been really important too. So I think that mentor teacher

thread is so foundational, and maybe I've taken for granted and saying how important that is to the entire success of the clinical experience.

Dana goes on to share that she designs an intentional scope and sequence in which she convenes mentors monthly and also takes mentors to external professional development. Dana's practice reveals that she seeks to screen for a particular profile of mentor and also understands that mentor teachers may have gaps in knowledge, benefit from a common understanding, and having a deliberate and ongoing support is important to the mentor's practice while they are supporting a teacher candidate. Dana's account does not specifically connect the mentor professional learning to social justice pedagogies.

Heidi, L2 from Green University, also provides ongoing mentor development when conducting instructional rounds for teacher candidates, Heidi reflects,

I think another system that we have is the ways in which we give classroom like instructional feedback to candidates throughout the year, and so within our program, that looks like having the residency director or clinical faculty like myself going in and engaging in coaching cycles with the teacher candidate and the mentor because I think like the coaching and feedback that residents get comes from people in my role, but also is obviously coming every day from their from their mentor teacher. And so that system is very important because it allows us to, it allows me, as a residency director, to, like help refine my mentors' practices.

Heidi's account reflects that mentors benefit from job-embedded learning opportunities to support candidate development and views her role as someone who joins sessions to support teacher candidates as well as developing the capacity of mentors given the proximity and frequency mentors have with teacher candidates in a residency program.

Ivy, L1 leader from Central University echoes the importance of developing mentors. In response to "disgruntled mentors" with "lazy practices", and monthly meetings ended in "complaining." She realized that a change was needed. She reflected,

So we needed strategic mentor development, so I did step in and support, and now we have a program, like learning map of what our what are the things we need to see and hear from our mentor teachers. But how do we also build their capacity? Because I don't think that we were building that, and they're the most important player in this puzzle of, clinical practice and the component the residents seeing and hearing the most from so we needed to do work. We know these are great teachers, absolutely. We picked them for a reason. But are they great mentors? Maybe not. Some, yes. Some, absolutely not. So I think that was a particular like strategy. It wasn't going well for quite a while, because we were not focused on again, I think, probably one of the most important factors of programming, and that was the mentor teachers, capacity to be a coach, to be a mentor.

Ivy's account reveals a pattern surfacing around the difference between teacher efficacy and that of effective mentoring. She shares how their approach was in response to a perception of inadequate mentoring practices.

Comparing L1 and L2 accounts around professional learning, L1 leaders tended to discuss faculty development more explicitly around learning opportunities linked to social justice. Differently, L2 leaders expressed considerations for mentor development around a

more generalized topic, mentor practices or ensuring there was alignment between coursework and placement.

In Table 10, findings are represented highlighting the ways participants express practices that bridge across systems in the service of coherence. Listed on the far right are the representation of how consistently across the sample participant interviews were coded engaging in the practice

Table 10

Codes for Practices of Leaders in Social Justice Focused Teacher Residency Programs

<i>Parent Code</i>	<i>Sub-Code</i>	<i>Representation in Sample</i>
<i>Bridging Across Systems</i>	<i>Creating and Sustaining Partnerships</i>	<i>7/7</i>
<i>Programmatic Improvement and Coherence</i>	<i>Placement and Mentor Selection</i>	<i>7/7</i>
	<i>Responding to Misalignment</i>	<i>7/7</i>
	<i>Capacity Building</i>	<i>7/7</i>

Summary

In summary, the findings for the perspectives and practices for leaders within social justice focused teacher residencies reveal both deeply personal and complex, nuanced, and practices. Many of the stories revealed participants' commitment to TK-12 students and teacher candidates and desire to create opportunities to become effective teachers. In practice, leader interviews revealed systemic, structural, and candidate-specific considerations in effort to ensure candidates experienced quality clinical program experiences.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter synthesizes the findings exploring leader conceptualizations of quality clinical placements and the perspectives and practices they employ in social justice-focused residency programs. The chapter will first present a summary of study and findings. Second, I contextualize the findings through the literature and offer an interpretation of my findings. The third section will describe limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations.

Summary of Study

This dissertation research explored how leaders within social justice focused teacher residency programs conceptualized quality clinical programs and the perspectives and practices leaders engage to design and enact them. This study employed narrative inquiry. This study used critical bifocality as a theory of method in conjunction with the idea of boundary spanning leaders as a conceptual framework (see Chapter 3). The data for this study were interviews conducted through an online platform and publicly available documents related to each program. The following research questions guided my study:

- RQ1: How do leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize clinical placements for teacher candidates?
- RQ2: What perspectives and practices guide leaders' decision-making as they design and enact clinical placements within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Summary of Findings

This study found the following conceptualizations of quality clinical placements and the perspectives and practices informing the design of quality clinical placements:

1. Leaders conceptualize quality clinical placements as
 - a. **adhering to state credentialing policies** (e.g., diverse school settings, qualified mentors, and opportunities to practice evidence-based pedagogies) and
 - b. **alignment between institutional and placement contexts** allows candidates to observe effective practices and site climates and are supportive learning environments for teacher candidates.
2. Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residencies **hold varied goals for teacher candidates' development.**
3. Leaders within social justice focused residency programs hold perspectives reflecting their **awareness of inequities facing TK-12 and graduate students** by individual histories, and **knowledge of federal, state, and local school contexts.** This, in turn leads them to the enactment of several practices to support teacher candidates in experiencing a quality clinical placements. These practices include:
 - a. **creating and sustaining intentional partnerships** between IHEs and LEAs
 - b. maintaining **placement and mentor selection processes,**
 - c. **developing the capacity of teacher educators,** and
 - d. **responding to systemic and acute issues of program misalignment.**

Discussion

How do leaders of social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs conceptualize quality clinical placements for teacher candidates?

Conceptualizations of Quality Clinical Programs

Leaders within social justice-focused programs conceptualized quality clinical programs as being in alignment with state credentialing guidance, facilitating alignment between IHE and LEA expectations in the service of teacher candidate learning and support. As boundary spanning leaders negotiating opaque and specific state credentialing guidance to enact such spaces for candidates in the service of alignment, they encounter policy and contexts that support this endeavor and situations that require bridging to facilitate coherence and shared understanding.

The literature regarding the qualities of clinical programs emphasize the opportunities these spaces hold for context-specific learning (Hammerness & Craig, 2016) the importance of aligning coursework and clinical experiences (Zeichner & Bier, 2015), the potential for candidate learning to interrupt deficit beliefs about students (Hollins & Warner, 2021), and the impact of effective mentor teachers (Ronfeldt, 2021).

Adhering to Credentialing Policies and Guidance

A consideration in conceptualizing quality clinical placements, are the ways in which teacher preparation programs are situated in the larger ecosystem of teacher preparation governing systems. At a policy level, California accreditation criteria emphasizes that teacher credentialing programs ensure that teacher candidates experience opportunities to teach students of diverse backgrounds, observe a range of evidence-based practices, and have qualified teacher educators (e.g., mentors, site leaders). Participant interviews and document analysis revealed several areas of alignment with the literature with respect to the research findings surrounding alignment with state credentialing policies. Examples of alignment include opportunities for candidates to apply their learning within clinical placement (Zeichner & Bier, 2015) and opportunities to experience issues of diversity within school climates (Hammerness and Craig, 2016). Accrediting standards require institutions to place candidates in spaces that allow them to learn through contextualization to “learn, practice and develop teacher competencies” (Chapter 4). Each studied institution reflected adherence to standards which possess some alignment to what existing literature identified as effective for clinical programs particularly with respect to aligning coursework and clinical experiences and quality mentor (e.g. Table 7 in Chapter 4).

What is less clearly articulated in the research about clinical preparation are how clinical experiences are explicitly designed to enact social justice priorities. While research offers considerations around how clinical programs may manifest equitable teaching practices through context-specific teacher clinical preparation (Hammerness & Craig, 2016) or “third-space” approaches to bridge university-local school needs through extended clinical time (Zeichner & Bier, 2015), the state does not provide explicitly guidance regarding the unique considerations for residency programs. Leaders must leverage their own conceptualizations of what matters and works across boundaries to establish partnerships and agreements that allow

for collaboration to ensure basic adherence (e.g. mentor qualifications or site placements) leaving additional considerations to be left for interpretation by institutions or leaders. Recalling Heidi's reflection in Chapter 4, she shares the characteristics she seeks in a site leader (e.g., committed to diversity, asset-based, advancing mindsets and skills of staff) as how she interprets a site leader to be "qualified" as someone to host a teacher candidate (Chapter 4) in absence of clear criteria shared from credentialing bodies. As leaders engaging in works across contexts, the findings illustrate the ways they are realizing state criteria for effective clinical practices and work as a bridge across contexts including the California Commission Teaching Credentialing, the institution of higher education, and the LEA contexts.

Alignment between Institutional and Placement Contexts for Candidate Learning

A central feature of teacher residencies are the extended learning experiences teacher candidates engage in integrated coursework as a means to facilitate candidate learning and success. Several scholars speak to the importance of having integrated coursework and clinical experiences (Klein et al., 2013; Zeichner & Bier, 2015) to develop teacher candidates. Literature informing effective clinical placements include considerations for candidate learning as mentioned above and considerations for challenges teacher candidates may encounter. For example, several scholars have written about the Whiteness candidates' experience within clinical placement sites (Kohli, 2019), experiences of racial discrimination (Mathews et. al., 2024; Shand et al., 2023), and the adoption of deficit ideologies about students and families (Cross, 2005).

In the findings, there was agreement found in programs' adherence to credentialing standards and within the participants themselves, who spoke of the importance of coursework and clinical experience alignment. In supporting alignment, participants illuminated, however, the importance of several additional considerations regarding school climates, classroom practices, and mentor teachers and site leaders as models of equity to support TK-12 students and for candidates themselves.

In facilitating social justice program alignment between institutional contexts, participants offer a window into the ways their conceptualization of social justice drive the placement contexts they select as a means to support candidates in integrating justice-based coursework, observing varied adult models for justice (e.g., mentors and principals, school climates), and ways leaders worked to facilitate this alignment. Current literature frequently describes the problems or advantages inherent in clinical practice settings that support or detract from candidate learning without articulating what the structures, processes, or conditions that are explicitly contributing to these phenomena. The findings of this study extend existing literature bases to illuminate how policy, school contexts, site administrators, *and* mentor teachers each contribute to the dynamic conditions that facilitate institutional alignment for teacher candidates. Boundary spanning leaders work to establish clarity around what the alignment needs to look like for their individual institutions as aligned to social justice and to attend to the structures, decisions, or processes as a result.

The findings also surface important tensions rendered more visible through applying critical bifocality as a theory of method. This methodology calls on us to trace the ways in which history, power, and privilege travel through various levels of the macro, meso, and micro systems. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing was formally established in the 1970's due to the Ryan Act (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2011) after a

series of reform efforts designed to both increase clarity for teacher credentials and improve teacher quality. The Ryan Act led to new criteria (e.g., subject matter exams, performance assessments to demonstrate teaching proficiency), one of the most controversial being the limit of nine semester units prior to teacher candidates starting student teaching (California Teaching Commission, 2011). Before and since the Ryan Act, there have been legislative efforts seeking to increase requirements for practical application or for additional knowledge prior to student teaching (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2011). Teacher residencies represent a model that privileges a perceived balance between significant academic preparation and more time in context-specific spaces and is aligned to issues of teaching shortages given the emphasis on hard to staff areas (Guha et. al, 2017).

And yet, while legislative funding requirements were created to resource teaching residencies, CTC guidance has not evolved clinical placement criteria to be considerate of significantly increased time in placements and the implications for candidates. As found in the findings, high-quality placements with strong alignment between institutional and placement privileges candidate learning and when placements were not aligned serious consequences (e.g., barriers to employment, lack of psychological safety for teacher candidates) ensued. Residencies exist as an opportunity to cultivate effective teachers with knowledge of their communities while attending to critical labor needs. When candidates are placed in inadequate placements, the very policies designed to facilitate equity, lead to what Weis and Fine (2012) call “circuits of dispossession.” When teacher candidates, particularly candidates of color, who face many barriers (e.g. subject matter examinations) in their pursuit toward teaching are placed in clinical placements not in alignment with their institutions centering social justice, we risk exacerbating educational and economical disparities facing the very communities we are seeking to serve.

Leaders within social justice-focused teacher residencies hold varied goals for teacher candidates’ development.

A key finding within my study revealed leaders within social justice programs hold varied goals for teacher candidates’ development. While a common term, teacher education as a field lacks consensus on “social justice” teacher education (Zeichner, 2006) and this ambiguity is viewed as a barrier to teacher candidate development (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Further, teacher educators come to the field through “happenstance” (Goodwin et al., 2014) and with many lacking the knowledge and skills to enact culturally responsive practices (Goodwin et al., 2014). This, in spite research indicating one of the foremost challenges for teacher educators is having the competency to combat racism, Whiteness, and power in coursework and placement-based learning (Cross, 2005). This is particularly important In California, where students of color vastly outnumber teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2019).

Given limited state guidance, participants relied on previous individual histories to translate institutional and programmatic aims in their goals for teacher candidates. These goals ranged from focusing on transforming teaching, preparing teachers to teach diverse populations of students, or to diversifying the teaching pipeline (see Chapter 4). The findings reveal boundary spanning leaders attempting to leverage their own conceptions of social justice amongst the “two-world paradox” (Olsen & Buchanan, 2017) in which they worked to enact their conceptions of justice within the context of programmatic structures, processes, and decisions at the macro, meso, and micro level. The findings contribute to the literature in

illuminating how leaders conceptualize and enact perspectives of justice within the context of clinical placement. Some participants (e.g. Stella, Nicole, and Raquel), particularly leaders of color, consider the ways in which teacher candidates should counter “traditional” forms of teaching through knowledge of their own biases, positionality, and critical reflection in tandem with understanding socio-historical patterns that exist in society and within their placements. In contrast, other leaders (e.g., Ivy, Anne, Dana) suggested teacher candidates learn skills with respect to specific populations of students focusing primarily on the technical aspects of teaching or with respect to specific state guidance.

As boundary spanning leaders facilitating clinical learning across contexts, the perspectives of leaders have profound implications. This, coupled with the inconsistent preparation of teacher educators represented in the literature (Goodwin et al., 2014) and the participant sample (see Table 2), reflects important considerations for the way teacher educator leaders are prepared, how teacher educator leaders are supported, and how they are positioned to engage partnering LEAs to bridge complex processes ensuring candidates experience placements and clinical placement learning experiences congruent the mission and visions of the institutions and residency partners. This study would suggest for example, greater articulation of what clinical placement guidance should reflect as to avoid the candidate assignment such as those described in Ivy’s story (Chapter 4). California Teacher Performance Expectations require teacher candidates to reflect on their biases, in alignment with Ivy’s personal and institutional goals, and yet the clinical placement classroom reflects deep biases about the rich linguistic repertoires of students, preventing opportunities for teacher candidate or TK-12 students in the classroom, to engage in learning in a context that is psychologically safe and designed to build on existing skills TK-12 students or teacher candidates themselves bring to the learning environment. Greater guidance (e.g., mentor qualifications, program standards), among other supports, will support teacher educators in realizing the goals they have for teacher candidates in ways that are consonant with their institutional and programmatic aims, and the contexts of learning in which candidates spend the bulk of their learning within residency clinical programs.

What perspectives and practices guide leaders within social-justice-focused teacher education residency programs?

Perspectives and Practices of Leaders within Social Justice Focused Residency Programs

Leaders within social justice-focused programs held perspectives reflecting a critical **awareness of the inequities facing TK-12 students and teacher candidates in graduate school contexts**. These perspectives informed varied practices in the services of creating quality conditions for teacher candidates who develop competency to meet the needs of all learners. As leaders negotiating across contexts, several practices emerged across participants facilitating their ability to create quality conditions: **creating and sustaining intentional partnerships; placement and mentor selection processes; developing teacher educators; and responding to systemic and programmatic misalignment**.

At the time of this study, the socio-political context in which teacher residencies existed is complex. Prior to 2023, teacher preparation was experiencing pressure from organizations such as National Council on Teacher Quality for greater accountability and transparency for teacher preparation (Aydarova, 2022) and experiencing a wave of funding to support teacher residencies (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2023). With the transition to the Trump

administration in 2024, teacher residencies experienced greater scrutiny for representing alignment to “diversity, equity, and inclusion” initiatives, deemed discriminatory by government officials. Teacher residencies programs subsequently lost federal funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2025) due to this shift. These socio-political pressures have had financial implications for institutions of higher education as well as for teacher residency programs specifically, and was a broader context reflected in participant interviews - something that reflects the power of employing critical bifocality.

In examining the findings, I draw on literature related to teacher educator identities and skills, school-university partnerships, and social justice in teacher education. The literature contextualizing perspectives on teacher educators in research suggests the ambiguity regarding social justice teacher education is a barrier to teacher candidate learning (Cochran-Smith et. al, 2009), teacher educators have gaps in the proficiencies necessary to enact social justice practices to support teacher candidates (Goodwin & Darity, 2019) and teacher educators of color bring important assets to their work (Goodwin, 2004). We also know that within teacher residency spaces leaders within teacher education programs navigate contexts reflecting gaps in shared visions between IHE and LEA contexts (Beck, 2020), uneven district commitments to deeply implementing strategies to support the diversification and retention of the teaching workforce (Bristol et al., 2024).

Awareness of Inequities Facing TK-12 and Graduate Students

As shared in Chapter 5, participants demonstrated **awareness of the needs of TK-12 and graduate students** as informed by their varied **histories**. As boundary spanning leaders charged with realizing the goals of preparing quality teachers and as faculty within institutions of higher education, holding perspectives centering the needs of both groups help to inform leadership decisions as they design and enact clinical experiences for teacher candidates.

Some scholars (e.g., Shand et. al, 2023) discuss ways candidates experience support from teacher residency programs in the form of more welcoming faculty or financial supports, and yet experienced clinical programs in which school climates were not welcoming (Mathews et al., 2024; Shand et. al, 2023). State placement guidelines expect candidates to be placed in settings that reflect diverse groups of students, have “qualified” mentor teachers, and site administrators, but do not delineate the additional features central to ensuring teacher candidates are set up for success. The findings in the areas of the gaps between state-driven program and credentialing guidance and enacting social justice-centered clinical programs (see Chapter 5) highlight the ways leaders in teacher residency programs operationalize their awareness in the service of teacher candidates and TK-12 student success. When candidates do not experience quality clinical placement conditions, teacher candidates do not have access to the supportive learning environment they need to develop as teachers nor develop teachers prepared to support their opportunity to become effective classroom teachers for TK-12 students.

Notably, there were some patterns within the findings regarding individual leader awareness. In the findings, four leaders, three of whom identified as people of color, had broader visions and expressed significant commitments to conceptualizations of clinical practice. Their conceptions countered perceptions of “traditional” teaching and also engaged in systemic efforts (e.g., strategic plans, building capacity of teacher educators, revising program efforts) in order to fulfill these aims. While this can be due to positioning within the system

(two of the four participants were L1 leaders in charge of leading such change), Goodwin (2004) offers that teacher educators of color bring critical perspectives informing their work within teacher education. Goodwin highlights how the university-based teaching educator force is largely distant from the P-12 classroom contexts racially, with respect to age, and other social identity markers leading to a perspective distancing from TK-12 classrooms. As residency programs focus on diversifying the teacher pipeline, situated within institutions espousing aims toward social justice, the findings surface the importance personal, contextual, and socio-historical awareness has for how leaders think about their work. This awareness has implications for how boundary spanning leaders leverage and expand their perspectives and apply this lens to the contexts in which teacher candidates need to grow, develop expertise, and thrive within.

Awareness of federal, state, and local policies

Leveraging the method of critical bifocality, data revealed several examples of leaders encountering policies and practices that hindered or advanced their ability to create quality clinical placements for teacher candidates. Weis & Fine (2012) argue that global structures and policies manifest in the ways our daily lives are lived. In several instances, participants share how the political climate, subsequent policy, and shifts influence the clinical placement conditions. Alternatively, there are additional examples in which leaders must contend with conflicting policy and funding contexts (e.g. TK credentialing) in which state policies are created, funding sources are legislated, and the experiences of the incongruence are felt by teacher candidates, leaders, and ultimately by TK-12 students.

Leaders must possess a nuanced awareness of the federal, state, and local socio-political landscapes and policy contexts as it is critical to their abilities to enact clinical programs in ways that align with their social justice institutional missions and are essential. In the current time, leaders are navigating shifts at the federal level with respect to the language they can use in describing their programs and how they prepare teacher candidates to fulfill institutional visions of effective teaching and learning, while also leveraging California teaching standards and guidance to advance or sustain efforts around developing candidates with social justice pedagogies. Leaders must also attend to the broader funding contexts that provide financial resources for prospective candidates while contending with the stipulations that accompany them. Finally, participants are negotiating state credentialing policies and funding constraints designed to promote access, which can create unexpected difficulties in preparing a candidate holistically for the credential they will be issued, as in Chapter 5 of the candidate in a TK placement.

Ultimately, leaders within residency programs must possess a depth of policy and socio-political knowledge to make informed decisions when enacting a clinical program aligned with the social justice aims of their program, or with what they believe aligns with their values or vision for producing effective teachers. Notably, while all leaders possessed awareness of policies and systems functioning at the macro level, Level 1 leaders often spoke both about an awareness and positionality to influence those spaces as it pertained to sitting on policy boards, advocating for changes in policies at the state level, or collaborating with federal or state entities to elevate candidate needs.

Practices Guiding Leaders in Social Justice Focused Residency Programs

Leaders within teacher preparation programs engaged in a series of strategic and coordinated leadership efforts (e.g. **creating and sustaining intentional partnerships, placement and mentor selection processes, developing the capacity of teacher educators, responding to program misalignment**) to facilitate quality conditions within clinical placements. Although research focusing on characteristics of teacher residencies is limited, Valerie Hill-Jackson (2024) offers that teacher residencies should be “foregrounded in a commitment to equity” and as such their partnerships with schools should also center justice. Her work, in conjunction with other scholars (e.g. Zeichner, 2010; Beck, 2020) posits that creating “third-space” teacher preparation in which power and ideas shared will lead to more opportunities for integrated, community-centered, and effective clinical preparation. Limited research exists around how leaders within social justice teacher education programs facilitate such shared understandings or work to reconcile issues of injustice or pragmatically construct third spaces in which social justice is centered and decision-making is shared.

The findings from participants illuminate the various ways in which leaders work across boundaries to attend to the structural and policy gaps that exist between social justice perspectives and leadership choices ultimately impacting the ways in which candidates experience clinical placement experiences. While some gaps are constructed with individual judgment (e.g., principal recommendations of mentor teachers), frequently gaps are created through various policies (e.g., California Teacher Residency grants, mentor qualifications, bargaining unit mentor criteria) or structures (e.g., accreditation standards, program standards, employment agreements) that drive how institutions or LEA operationalize clinical placements. The practices illuminated by participants reveal the creative, yet at times imperfect ways, leaders within social justice residency programs seek to bridge across boundaries to create quality clinical placement conditions.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations inherent in the design and enactment of my research study. First, narrative inquiry is designed to elicit “thick” descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and therefore the study cannot be generalized to speak to the perspectives and practices for all leaders within residency programs or within teacher education. Also, as part of my sampling process, I recruited participants located within social justice-focused higher education institutions as indicated by their mission and vision statements and participants also held roles within teacher residences. As a part of my sample, five of seven leader participants led teacher preparation pathways in addition to teacher residencies. Given this, results may be challenging to delineate between what are considered solely residency leadership and leadership within teacher preparation generally. As such, while the topic focuses on teacher residencies, further research can include focusing solely on leaders enacting work in the residency context. The other limitation in my study was time and data triangulation. I had the opportunity to review accreditation documents, and a critical area of my study was tracing the ways in which policy influences the experiences of teacher candidates. Incorporating document analysis including legislative documents would add more insight regarding the evolution of policy shifts impacting clinical programs. In addition, using hour-long semi-structured interviews was not enough time to fully capture the perspectives of participants. As part of narrative inquiry, having interviews that extended for more time to surface participant stories would have added additional data. Finally, given the focus on social justice, my interview protocol would have benefited from an

additional question asking participants to share their explicit definitions of social justice teacher education as a way to inform the ways they conceptualized the ideas beyond that of their institution.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for policy and practice given my research study.

1. **Policy:** Policy guidance governing clinical placements is updated to reflect the realities and considerations present in existing research to protect teacher candidate learning, welfare, and development. This includes guidance for clinical placement, more delineated expectations for mentor, candidate placements, and qualifications and training for the teacher educator continuum.
2. **Practice:** Institutions of higher education invest in their leaders to provide appropriate support necessary to ensure they have the tools, competencies and resources to enact the social justice missions and visions their programmatic goals espouse.
3. **School - University Partnerships:** Incentivize and invest in target preparation sites for candidate preparation. LEAs and schools hosting teacher candidates should receive training, support, agreements, and resources, to ensure teacher candidates experience quality placements aligned placements designed to support all learners.

Future Research

Residencies, as shared in the findings, continue to hold much promise for the opportunities to prepare future teachers in ways that bridge the gap between espoused and enacted social beliefs and practices. Leaders within the study elevate important practices to strategically lead collectively and across boundaries to facilitate quality placement for teacher candidates. And yet, many leaders encountered challenging structural issues in realizing institutional and programmatic aims centering justice for TK-12 students for graduate students. Future research should include qualitative studies centering teacher candidates' perspectives as they navigate the teacher residency year to continue to identify the conditions that facilitate candidate development and learning. Finally, additional research is needed to continue to understand the ways leaders within teacher preparation programs proactively create systems and work in partnership with the TK-12 ecosystem (e.g., school climate, site leader, mentor teacher) to develop social justice-informed teacher leadership educator competencies, case studies in examining common clinical preparation dilemmas, and innovative approaches, when preparing teacher candidates in dynamic placement contexts.

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Appendix A: Individual Interview Protocol

Leading for Equity: Examining Perspectives, Policies, and Practices of Teacher Residency Leaders within Teacher Education

Semi-Structured Individual Interview Guide

Zoom Link:

Script - Introduction

- Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in our interview for our research study! My name is Alexandra Creer Kahn, and I am a doctoral student in the LEAD EdD program at the University of California—Berkeley, and I will be conducting the interview today. This interview is part of a research study examining how leaders in teacher education programs develop and support teacher candidates with an equity-centered focus within their clinical settings/ sites. We aim to understand the perspectives, policies, and practices that shape these programs. Your experiences and insights will provide unique perspectives to leaders with similar roles in other teacher education programs.
- Please rename yourself on Zoom with how you prefer to be called during the interview and turn off your camera.
- We are conducting an interview in order to better understand the perspectives, practices, and policies leaders in teacher education navigate in their work supporting clinical placements.
- In particular, we are interested in understanding your experience in what informs your decision-making given your program's stated social justice aims.
- The interview should last between 45 and 60 minutes. Before we begin, we need to agree on some ground rules and guidelines (Use the share screen function via Zoom platform to review the ground rules and guidelines:
- You are free to stop this interview at any point in time, request that we skip a question, or withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty. Also, if you feel uncomfortable showing yourself in the meeting, you have the right to turn off the video by clicking "stop video."
- Lastly, please be careful not to include any information in your responses that could identify other individuals.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?
If it is okay with you, I am going to start audio recording.

Interview Questions

Script - Transition to Interview Questions

- Do you have any questions before we begin?
If it is okay with you, I will start recording.

1. General Self-Identification:

- a. What is your role in supporting the design and oversight of the clinical program within your teacher preparation program?
- b. What influences your perspective and approach to teacher education, specifically concerning the clinical components of your teacher preparation program?

2. Perspectives in Teacher Education

- a. Teacher education programs aim to prepare teacher candidates who are capable of serving students of diverse identities (ex., culturally, racially, linguistically, and neurodiversely). What do you believe are essential features of a high-quality clinical program that advance social justice pedagogies in your teacher candidates? Provide an example.
- b. What systems and/or structures exist within your program to support teacher candidates for clinical experiences that center social justice teaching pedagogies? Provide an example.
- c. What actions or practices support the high-quality implementation of a clinical program? Can you share a moment when a particular strategy or practice worked well? What about a time when something didn't go as planned? Provide an example.
- d. As a leader, what challenges do you encounter as candidates engage in their learning with mentors and clinical placement sites? How do you respond? Provide an example.

3. Policies in Teacher Education - Clinical Placements

- a. How do state, institutional, and local policies influence how your clinical program is enacted?
- b. How does policy alignment across support your work in delivering a high-quality clinical program? What challenges surface? Provide an example.

Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your perspectives and for participating in this interview. Your insights are valuable and illuminating. I expect to complete my research interviews by December. I will share a transcript of our conversation with you for your records. Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter



Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)
Office for Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS)

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NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: *March 25, 2025*
TO: *Tesha Sengupta-Irving, School of Education*
Alex Creer Kahn, School of Education
CPHS PROTOCOL NUMBER: *2025-01-18169*
CPHS PROTOCOL TITLE: *Leading for Equity: Examining Perspectives, Policies, and Practices of Teacher Residency Leaders within Teacher Education*
FUNDING SOURCE(S): *NONE*

A(n) *new* application was submitted for the above-referenced protocol. Your submission has been reviewed by the Office for Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS) and granted exemption, as it satisfies the Federal and/or UC Berkeley requirements under category(ies) 2 .

Effective Date: *March 25, 2025*

Expiration Date: *March 24, 2035*

Amendments/Modifications: Any change in the design, conduct, or key personnel of this research must be approved by the OPHS **prior** to implementation. For more information, see [Amend/Modify an Approved Protocol](#).

Please note that although your research has been deemed exempt from full committee and subcommittee review, you still have a responsibility to protect your subjects, and the research should be conducted in accordance with the principles of the Belmont Report. Download the Belmont Report at this link: www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

This approval is issued under University of California, Berkeley Federalwide Assurance #00006252.

Note: Exempt determinations are good for ten years. If the study continues beyond the ten-year period, the protocol must be cloned and re-submitted for an updated exempt determination.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact the OPHS staff at 642-7461 or email ophs@berkeley.edu .

Sincerely,

Office for Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS)
UC Berkeley

Appendix C - Dissertation Call of Participants

Dissertation Call for Participants – Email Version

Subject: Inviting You to Participate in Research with Leaders of Teacher Residency Programs

Dear _____,

My name is Alexandria Creer Kahn, and I am an EdD student and full-time administrator in a Teacher Residency Program. I am seeking participants for my study, “Leading for Equity: Examining Perspectives, Policies, and Practices of Teacher Residency Leaders within Teacher Education”. This project explores the stories of leaders of teacher residencies as they navigate complex environments on behalf of teacher candidates.

Participant Profile:

- Serve as current or former leaders responsible for the visioning, oversight, and/or program implementation of field-based clinical teaching experiences.
- Serve in teacher education programs supporting preservice candidate teachers to work in racially and linguistically diverse communities.

The ask, by November 7, 2025:

- Complete a brief consent and demographic form
- Participate in a 45–60 minute interview via Zoom (Participants will receive a \$15 gift card for your vendor of choice)

Optionally, all participants are invited to a follow-up session with me at a future date.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please reply to this email. Please also reach out should you have any questions. Thank you so much for your consideration and support.

In community,
Alexandrea Creer Kahn

Doctoral Candidate, Leaders for Equity and Democracy (LEAD), Berkeley School of Education

This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Berkeley (IRB 2025-01-18169). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Tesha Sengupta-Irving.

Follow-Up Email for Confirmed Participants

Subject: Dissertation Research Participation – Confirming Interview

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation study. I appreciate you sharing your time and experiences as a leader who designs and facilitates high-quality clinical experiences for preservice teacher candidates. Having received your demographic form and signed consent, I am now **writing to schedule your interview**.

This will be a 45-60-minute individual interview with me via Zoom (audio only). I can meet during work hours, at lunch, or in the evening, depending on what works best for your schedule. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. You're welcome to decline any question or exit the study at any time.

As you may recall, the study explores the stories of leaders of teacher residencies as they navigate complex environments on behalf of teacher candidates.

Please suggest a few days/times that work for you, or I can offer some options. Once we confirm, I'll send a calendar invite with the Zoom link and your chosen pseudonym.

Thank you again—I look forward to connecting and learning from your experience.

Warmly,

Alexandrea Creer Kahn
Doctoral Candidate, Leaders for Equity and Democracy (LEAD)
Berkeley School of Education, University of California