

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Case Study Research



Jonathan Wenk/Columbia Pictures/Everett Collection

The Wizard of Oz, 1939

“Case study research is appropriate when the researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g., what happened?) or an explanatory question (e.g., how or why did something happen?).” (p. 405)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading Chapter 15, you should be able to do the following:

- 15.1** Define and explain the purpose of case study research.
- 15.2** Describe the characteristics of case study research.
- 15.3** Describe the processes involved in designing case study research.
- 15.4** Describe the issues related to sample selection in case study research.
- 15.5** Describe how to conduct and analyze multiple case studies.

The chapter learning outcomes form the basis for the following task, which requires you to develop

the research procedures section of a qualitative research report.

TASK 8C

For a qualitative study, you have already created research plan components (Task 4B) and described a sample (Task 5B). If your study involves case study research, now develop the research procedures section of the research report. Include in the plan the overall approach and rationale for the study, site and sample selection, the researcher's role, data collection methods, data management strategies, data analysis strategies, trustworthiness features, and ethical considerations (see Performance Criteria at the end of Chapter 16, p. 438).

SUMMARY: CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Definition	<i>Case study research</i> is a qualitative research approach in which researchers focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system (e.g., individual teachers, a classroom, or a school).
Design(s)	The process of designing case study research involves determining the research questions, defining the case, determining the role of theory development in case selection, determining the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study, and deciding whether a single case study, multiple case study, or collective case study is appropriate.
Types of appropriate research questions	Case study research is appropriate when the researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g., what happened?) or an explanatory question (e.g., how or why did something happen?).
Key characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies can be described as <i>particularistic</i>, <i>descriptive</i>, and <i>heuristic</i>. • Case studies are focused on a bounded system or unit of study. • Case study research is a narrative account that provides the researcher (and reader of the case study) with new insights into the way things are and into the kinds of relationships that exist among participants in the study.
Steps in the process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State the purpose of the research. 2. Develop initial research questions. 3. Review related literature. 4. Develop a rationale for the selection of the case (i.e., unit of analysis) including sample selection. 5. Determine data collection strategies. 6. Conduct data analysis and interpretation.
Potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample selection/case selection/unit of analysis. • Data analysis of multiple cases.
Example	How do central office personnel, principals, and teachers manage and cope with multiple innovations?

CASE STUDY RESEARCH: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

As discussed in Chapter 1, **case study research** is a type of qualitative research design in which researchers focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system (e.g., individual teachers, a classroom, or a school). A number of researchers have addressed the definition of a case, which is a concept that is sometimes difficult to grasp. Merriam¹ explained, the case is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can ‘fence in’ what I am going to study.” Stake² further pointed out, “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied.” Similarly, Miles and Huberman³ described a case study as an investigation of a phenomenon that occurs within a specific context. In other words, if the phenomenon you want to study is not bounded, not identifiable within a specific context, it is not appropriately studied as a case study. Yin⁴ went beyond the definition of *case* to define *case study research* as a research strategy that is an all-encompassing method covering design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis. Taken together, these statements suggest that case study research is

- A qualitative approach to studying a phenomenon
- Focused on a unit of study, or a bounded system
- Not a methodological choice, but a choice of what to study
- An all-encompassing research method

Furthermore, the term *case study* is used not only for the research design but also for the product of case study research.

Case study research is unique because it leads to a different kind of knowledge compared to other kinds of research. It is more concrete—case study

knowledge resonates with the readers’ experiences because it is tangible and illuminative. It is rooted in the context of the study and is also related to the readers’ knowledge, experience, and understandings as they compare and contrast the case to their own life experiences. Case study knowledge is interpreted by readers who are affected not only by the context but also by the populations the reader has in mind. Most important, what we learn from a single case depends on the ways in which the case is like and unlike other cases. This idea is sometimes called the “epistemology of the particular.”⁵ That is, the context of the case and the reader’s prior knowledge and experiences affect how the reader is able to scaffold the case study and apply the findings to a similar context.

For an example of case study research, consider Mills’s⁶ study of educational change, which is discussed throughout this chapter. Mills described and analyzed how change functioned and what functions it served in an American school district. The function of change was viewed from the perspectives of central office personnel (e.g., superintendent, director of research and evaluation, program coordinators), principals, and teachers as they coped with and managed multiple innovations, including the introduction of kindergartens to elementary schools, the continuation of a students-at-risk program, and the use of the California Achievement Test (CAT) scores to drive school improvement efforts. Mills’s study focused on the question “How do central office personnel, principals, and teachers manage and cope with multiple innovations?” and he used qualitative data collection techniques including participant observation, interviewing, written sources of data, and nonwritten sources of data.

This study showed the characteristics of case study research outlined previously. The focus was on a school district as the unit of study, or bounded system. Qualitative data collection techniques included participant observation, interviewing, written sources of data, and nonwritten sources of data to answer the question “How do central office personnel, principals, and teachers manage and cope with multiple innovations?” Subcases of central office personnel,

¹ *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* by S. B. Merriam, 1998, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 27.

² “Qualitative Case Studies” by R. E. Stake, 2005, in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.), N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), pp. 443–466.

³ *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.) by M. B. Miles and A. B. Huberman, 1994, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁴ *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.) by R. K. Yin, 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁵ “Qualitative Case Studies,” Stake, p. 454.

⁶ *Managing and Coping with Multiple Educational Change: A Case Study and Analysis* by G. E. Mills, 1988, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, Eugene.

principals, and teachers were studied to understand how personnel within the school district–bounded system managed and coped with multiple innovation and educational change writ large, and the product of the research was a case study.

When to Use Case Study Research

Like other qualitative research designs, case study research allows a researcher to study phenomena that are not easily or appropriately studied by other research designs. Case study research is appropriate when the researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g., what happened?) or an explanatory question (e.g., how or why did something happen?). For example, Mills started his investigation of the change processes at the McKenzie School District by focusing on an explanatory question, “How do central office personnel, principals, and teachers manage and cope with multiple innovations?” Closely related to this question was a descriptive question, “What happened in the process of managing and coping with multiple innovations?”

Case study research is also an appropriate choice if the researcher is interested in studying process. Case studies are useful when describing the context of the study and the extent to which a particular program or innovation has been implemented. They are also useful for researchers interested in providing causal explanations, such as describing the process by which a particular innovation had a particular effect on the participants in the setting. For example, Mills wanted to describe the change processes at work in the McKenzie School District and to provide an explanation of the outcomes for the study. The case study account, therefore, provided rich descriptions of how central office personnel, principals, and teachers managed and coped with multiple innovations as well as a statement of the strategies used in the process. This research resulted in a taxonomy of managing and coping strategies that represented the gamut of behaviors used at different levels in the school district (see Table 15.1). Finally, Merriam (1998) asserts that case study might be an appropriate research design to use when a researcher studies a unique phenomenon and in so doing provides

TABLE 15.1 • Taxonomy of managing and coping strategies

School District Level	Strategies Used for Coping With Multiple Changes
Central office personnel	Using the committee structure, keeping in touch with the “real world,” administrative posturing: “the façade,” inaction
Principals	Maintaining the status quo: fine-tuning instructional programs; using personal beliefs, values, and goals; accountability
Teachers	Using compliance and resistance behaviors, seeking motivation for a career in teaching

knowledge about “atypical cases” (p. 33) that help us explore a wide range of human behavior.

So why is the Mills study not classified as narrative research or ethnographic research? As defined in Chapter 13, narrative research is the study of how different humans experience the world around them and results in the “storied lives” of individuals. The McKenzie School District study was focused on groups such as central office personnel, principals, and teachers, not individuals per se. Similarly, the Mills study did not meet the critical tenets of ethnographic research described in Chapter 14: describing and *interpreting* cultural patterns and perspectives in a natural setting. That is, the McKenzie School District case study did not involve cultural interpretation but rather focused on describing a bounded system—a school district.

Characteristics of Case Study Research

Case studies can be described as *particularistic*, *descriptive*, and *heuristic*.⁷ To say a case study is particularistic means that it is focused on a particular phenomenon, such as a situation or event. That is, a case study researcher may specifically choose a particular instance of a phenomenon under investigation to understand a specific problem that occurs in everyday practice. For example, a teacher may choose to conduct a case study of a child with special needs to understand the effectiveness of a specified Individualized Education Program (IEP). The case study can then supplement any data about the child gathered through standardized

⁷ See *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications*, Merriam, for further discussion.

testing procedures. To say that a case study is descriptive means that the end result of the case study, the narrative, includes “thick description”⁸ of the phenomenon that was the focus of the case study research—inclusion of many variables and analyses of their interactions. The term *heuristic* refers to the fact that case studies “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study,”⁹ beyond the reader’s original knowledge. In short, one outcome of case study research is a narrative account that provides the researcher (and reader of the case study) with new insights into the way things are and into the kinds of relationships that exist among participants in the study.

Case study research can also be characterized by the disciplinary orientation the researcher brings to the case study. That is, different disciplinary fields use case study research for different purposes. Educational researchers frequently rely on the disciplines of anthropology, history, psychology, or sociology for their conceptual frameworks and for techniques for data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Anthropological case studies on educational topics, for example, are influenced by the techniques commonly used in ethnographic research—Mills’ study of the culture of change in the McKenzie School District was an ethnographic case study. In historical case studies, researchers use techniques commonly used in historical research. For example, researchers collect data from primary and secondary source materials. In education, this type of case study research has tended to focus on descriptions of institutions, programs, and practices, including how they have changed over time. Psychological case studies focus on the individual. Although Freud is most commonly associated with psychological case study research, the case studies conducted in psychology with an emphasis on learning are the ones most commonly cited by educational researchers. Sociological case study research typically focuses on the constructs of society and socialization in studying educational phenomena. For a classic example of a sociological case study, see William F. Whyte’s *Street Corner Society*.¹⁰

⁸ *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* by C. Geertz, 1973, New York: Basic Books, p. 6.

⁹ *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications*, Merriam, p. 30.

¹⁰ *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* by W. F. Whyte, 1955, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Regardless of the disciplinary orientation underpinning case study research, case studies can be characterized in terms of their overall intent. For example, is the case study researcher intending to be largely descriptive, or is the goal to contribute to existing theory or to evaluate an existing program? Although most case study research in education tends to be descriptive, the use of case studies in program evaluation has been well established: “Case studies are particularly valuable in program evaluation when the program is individualized, so the evaluation needs to be attentive to and capture individual differences among participants, diverse experiences of the program, or unique variations from one program setting to another. . . . Regardless of the unit of analysis, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, holistically, and in context.”¹¹

MyLab Education Self-Check 15.1

MyLab Education Self-Check 15.2

MyLab Education Application Exercise 15.1: Evaluating Research Articles: Evaluating a Case Study

CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

The process of designing a case study research project shares many of the design features of other qualitative designs discussed in previous chapters. As with other qualitative designs, a good case study research design includes a statement of the purpose of the research, initial research questions, review of related literature, and a rationale for the selection of the case (i.e., unit of analysis). Specifically, the case study researcher should:¹²

- *Determine the research questions.* This step is probably the most important step taken in the case study research process. As is the case

¹¹ *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Models* (3rd ed.) by M. Q. Patton, 2002, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 55.

¹² Adapted from “Case Study Methods” by R. K. Yin, 2006, in the *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, J. L. Green, G. Camilli, and P. B. Elmore (eds), pp. 111–122, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; “Qualitative Case Studies” Stake, pp. 443–466; *Case Study Research, Yin; and Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications*, Merriam.

with all research, the questions asked by the researcher will determine the appropriateness of the research method. Questions that address *who*, *what*, *how*, and *why* provide the case study researcher with good starting points.

- **Define the case under study.** This step is similar to that in other research designs where the researcher defines the variables under investigation (i.e., in quantitative research) or a specific educational innovation being implemented to improve student performance (i.e., in action research). For example, in Mills' study, the case was the McKenzie School District. More specifically, the school district cases were focused on central office personnel, principals, and teachers—all of which were units of analysis.
- **Determine the role of theory development in case selection.** This step in the design process involves deciding whether or not to use theory development to select your cases. Clearly, no researcher is atheoretical, and case study researchers should make explicit the theoretical/conceptual framework that supports the choice of participants. For example, a case study researcher can use the review of related literature process and the development of explicit propositions related to the research. In his study, Mills developed a comprehensive list of propositions based on his review of related literature that included statements related to educational change processes, educational leadership, and change theory (e.g., Merton's¹³ discussion of manifest function, latent function, and the unanticipated consequences of change).
- **Determine the theoretical and conceptual framework of the case study.** No researcher, regardless of disciplinary orientation, enters a research setting as a *tabula rasa*, unencumbered by preconceived notions of the phenomenon that he or she seeks to understand. Theory can be defined as a set of formal propositions or axioms that explain how part of the world operates. In the field of education, for example, well-known theories include Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Piaget's theory of child development. However, theory can also be characterized as a general set of ideas that guide actions. We all have theories that affect

the way we view the world, and as William James is reported to have said: "You can't pick up rocks in a field without a theory"¹⁴ (for a comprehensive discussion of the role of theory in qualitative research, see work by Flinders and Mills¹⁵). These theoretical frameworks are derived from our disciplinary orientations, which in turn inform what we are studying and how we are studying it. For example, an educational sociologist and an educational anthropologist look at children and classrooms quite differently based on their disciplinary orientations: The sociologist is likely to focus on social interactions, and the anthropologist is likely to focus on the culture of the classroom.

One way to help you identify your conceptual or theoretical framework is to attend to the literature you are reading related to your research interest. Reflecting on the literature and developing a list of propositions about your research problem helps you identify the predominant theories and concepts that have emerged over a period of time. Invariably, these theories and concepts emerge as significant influences on the way you conduct your own research.

- **Determine whether a single case study, multiple case study, or collective case study is appropriate.** The decision about the number of cases to be studied should not be related to any preconceived notion that more is necessarily better or that more cases lead to greater generalizability or external validity. This is a seductive trap for new case study researchers who have come out of a quantitative tradition or who have faculty members urging them (inappropriately) to do more so that they can increase the rigor of the study. New researchers should resist the temptation to do more unless the use of subcases will strengthen the understanding or even theorizing of the phenomenon under investigation. For example, as noted previously, Mills focused on three subcases (i.e., central office personnel, principals, and teachers) to contribute to his understanding of the educational change

¹³ *On Theoretical Sociology: Five Essays, Old and New* by R. K. Merton, 1967, New York: Free Press Paperback.

¹⁴ As cited by Agar in *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography* by M. Agar, 1980, p. 23.

¹⁵ *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives from the Field* by D. J. Flinders and G. E. Mills (eds.), 1993, New York: Teachers College Press.

processes at work in the McKenzie School District. A focus on any one of these cases alone would not have provided a broad picture of how change functions in an American school district from the perspectives of the players (i.e., participants) intimately involved in the process. The challenges of conducting and analyzing multiple case studies are discussed later in this chapter.

MyLab Education Self-Check 15.3

MyLab Education Application Exercise 15.2:
Evaluating Research Articles: Identifying the
Steps in Case Study Research

SAMPLE SELECTION IN CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Qualitative sampling is the process of selecting a small number of individuals for a study so that the individuals chosen will be able to help the researcher understand the phenomenon under investigation. In case study research, the researcher is charged with selecting the unit of analysis; the educational researcher's unit of analysis may be a child, a classroom of children, or an entire school district, depending on the research question. In case study research, the most common form of sampling is purposive or purposeful sampling “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.”¹⁶ The benefit of this approach to sampling for case study research is the purposeful selection of cases that are “information-rich”¹⁷ or those from which the researcher can learn a great deal about the research problem.

Another consideration in the selection of the case or cases is the viability of the case. That is, the case study researcher should consider a screening procedure to avoid the problems associated with choosing a particular case or cases, only to discover once the research has been initiated that

¹⁶ *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications*, Merriam, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Patton, p. 169, cited by S. B. Merriam in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 1998, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

the case study participants withdraw from participation in the study. Screening also helps the case study researcher determine whether the case study participant has the necessary experience or knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation.

A screening procedure may include the following steps:¹⁸

- Review documents about the proposed case study site to determine whether it is an appropriate choice. For example, local newspaper stories, school board minutes, and department of education publications can provide a wealth of historical information about a particular school or district.
- Conduct informal interviews of key participants in the study to determine their willingness to participate in the study and to ensure that they understand fully the nature of their commitment over the length of the study.
- Determine whether the case study participants have the necessary experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation and the ability to provide information. For example, selecting someone who provides only monosyllabic responses to questions to be a key informant can make for very long interviews! Not all interviewees will be conversational in the way they interact with the researcher. Very shy participants who are unwilling to converse with the researcher or who are uncomfortable with such conversation may not be the best choice.

Data Collection Techniques

Like other qualitative researchers, case study researchers use the same data collection techniques used by researchers conducting other genres of qualitative research (e.g., ethnographic research and narrative research) with the aim of seeking understanding about the case under investigation—a case study researcher collects descriptive narrative and visual data to answer *how* and *why* questions. Furthermore, like other qualitative researchers, case study researchers are aware of the need to triangulate their data through the use of multiple data sources. A detailed discussion of qualitative data collection techniques and triangulation can be found in Chapter 20.

¹⁸ Adapted from “Case Study Methods,” Yin, pp. 111–122.

MyLab Education Self-Check 15.4

MyLab Education Application Exercise 15.3:
Conducting Case Study Research

CONDUCTING AND ANALYZING MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES

In educational research, it is common to find case study research undertaken about the same phenomenon but at multiple sites. These studies are commonly referred to as collective case studies, multicase or multisite studies, or comparative case studies.¹⁹ The use of multiple case studies in educational research is a common strategy for improving the external validity or generalizability of the research. Multisite case studies allow the researcher to make claims that the events described at one site are not necessarily idiosyncratic to that site and thus contribute to the researcher's understanding about contextual variations, or lack thereof, across sites. However, the traditional claims with respect to external validity are still limiting for the case study researcher. For example, the case study researcher may have limited ability to generalize the events from one site to other sites with similar characteristics.

Multiple case studies require cross-site analysis. In fact, an essential skill for case study researchers, and perhaps for all qualitative researchers who are concurrently involved in observation and interview activities that inform each other, is the ability to undertake data collection and data analysis activities together. For example, the case study researcher may, in the course of interviewing and observing an informant, identify inconsistencies between what the informant describes as “business as usual” and what the researcher observes in the setting. Conducting the interviews and observations is data collection, but recognizing the discrepancies between the two sources is data analysis. That is, the case study researcher is attempting to make sense of the data that have been collected and, in so doing, is identifying new questions and issues that will drive further data collection and analysis.

Miles and Huberman, in their seminal work on qualitative data analysis, provided case study researchers with helpful strategies for cross-site

analysis, noting, “By comparing sites or cases, one can establish the range of generality of a finding or explanation, and at the same time, pin down the conditions under which that finding will occur. So there is much potential for both greater explanatory power and greater generalizability than a single-case study can deliver.”²⁰ Their comprehensive list of strategies to be used for cross-site analysis can assist the case study researcher with the challenging data analysis task unique to multiple case study research, especially as he or she moves from a descriptive/narrative mode to an increasing level of abstraction while undertaking data analysis and interpretation. We present a brief summary of these strategies, along with examples to illustrate how the techniques may be applied, and recommend that prospective case study researchers using multiple case studies read the original source.

Unordered Meta-Matrix

Simply put, an unordered meta-matrix is a data management tool that enables the case study researcher to assemble master charts with descriptive data from each site on one large sheet, known as a monster dog. This phrase is a helpful way to think of one large piece of paper where the case study researcher attempts to lay out, site by site, all relevant data under organizing headings. For example, Mills constructed such a chart for each subgroup (i.e., central office personnel, principals, and teachers), shown in Figure 15.1. This chart was the starting point for Mills's management of the volumes of qualitative data collected over the course of a school year and his analysis of the themes that emerged from the study.

Site-Ordered Descriptive Matrix

The site-ordered descriptive matrix differs from the unordered meta-matrix because it includes descriptive data for each site but orders the sites on the variable of interest so that the researcher can see differences between high, medium, and low sites. For example, using this second strategy, Mills ordered the data from the principals in his study on the basis of how they dealt with change. In this example, principals ranged from “doing nothing” (i.e., ignoring central office directions) to “working with faculty to develop action plans” to deal with the change. The

¹⁹ *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications*, Merriam, p. 40.

²⁰ *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Miles and Huberman, p. 151.

FIGURE 15.1 • Unordered meta-matrix

Principal	Feelings about educational change	Interactions with central office	Interactions with teachers	Strategies for dealing with change
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

site-ordered descriptive matrix helped show the full range of responses to the challenges of managing and coping with educational change.

Site-Ordered Predictor-Outcome Matrix

A site-ordered predictor-outcome matrix moves the case study researcher from working descriptively and deductively to a more explanatory and interpretive mode. In this mode, the researcher attempts to order the case study sites in a manner that allows the researcher to understand the variables that appear to contribute most directly to the outcomes. For example, Mills was most interested in the factors that appeared to contribute to whether the principals under study chose to do nothing or to work with faculty as a response to the superintendent's mandate to implement educational change based on student performance on standardized tests. From the study emerged the revelation that individual principals made their choices based on whether they believed that taking action carried consequences and whether they believed the results of the standardized tests were valid.

Time-Ordered Meta-Matrix

A time-ordered meta-matrix extends the cross-site analysis to include chronology as an organizing variable, with the specific purpose of enabling the case study researcher to display descriptive data from several sites with respect to events that occurred over time and that may have contributed to the outcomes of the study. For example, by developing a time-ordered meta-matrix, Mills was able to see the chronology of events that led some principals

to adopt a “do nothing” response to a district mandate for change. Specifically, the time-ordered meta-matrix revealed that the superintendent consistently delayed implementation time lines and school site visits to collect evidence of action plan implementation, leading some principals to the conclusion that the superintendent was not serious about the need for school improvement plans.

Scatterplots

Scatterplots are visual displays of data from all the case study sites based on dimensions or themes of interest that appear to be related to each other. With a scatterplot, the case study researcher can see how different cases are aligned and where clustering of themes and trends occur. For example, Mills developed a scatterplot that suggested a relation between different change strategies used by central office personnel, principals, and teachers and change in the school system. A visual display is a useful tool for case study researchers as they continue to narrow their analytical focus and to triangulate their understandings of the research phenomenon with other data sources and displays.

Site-Ordered Effects Matrix

A site-ordered effects matrix is used by case study researchers to sort through the research sites and to display probable cause–effect relations between the focus of the study (i.e., the action) and the outcomes of the action. For example, Mills used a site-ordered effects matrix to identify potential relations among educational change strategies used at different levels within the school district (e.g., central office personnel, principals, teachers) and the resulting manifest

SUMMARY

CASE STUDY RESEARCH: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1. Case study research is qualitative research design in which researchers focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system. It is an all-encompassing method covering design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis.
2. The term *case study* is also used for the product of case study research.
3. What we learn from a single case depends on the ways in which the case is like and unlike other cases.

When to Use Case Study Research

4. Case study research is appropriate when a researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g., what happened?) or an explanatory question (e.g., how or why did something happen?), or when the researcher is interested in studying process.

Characteristics of Case Study Research

5. Case studies can be described as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic.
6. Different disciplinary fields use case study research for different purposes, and specific characteristics of the study are determined by the discipline.
7. Regardless of the disciplinary orientation, case studies can be characterized in terms of their overall intent.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

8. The process of designing case study research involves determining the research questions; defining the case; determining the role of theory development in case selection; determining the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study; and deciding whether a single case study, multiple case study, or collective case study is appropriate.

SAMPLE SELECTION IN CASE STUDY RESEARCH

9. The researcher is charged with selecting the unit of analysis.
10. The most common form of sampling is purposive or purposeful sampling.
11. Screening helps the researcher determine whether a case study participant has the necessary experience or knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Collection Techniques

12. Case study researchers use the same data collection techniques used by researchers conducting other genres of qualitative research with the aim of seeking understanding about the case under investigation.
13. Case study researchers must also be concerned with triangulation.

CONDUCTING AND ANALYZING MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES

14. In educational research, it is common to find case study research undertaken about one phenomenon but at multiple sites. These studies are commonly referred to as collective case studies, multicase or multisite studies, or comparative case studies.
15. Multiple case studies require cross-site analysis.
16. An unordered meta-matrix is a data management tool that enables the case study researcher to assemble master charts with descriptive data from each site on one large sheet of paper.
17. In a site-ordered descriptive matrix, sites are ordered on a variable of interest so that the researcher can see differences.
18. A site-ordered predictor-outcome matrix moves the case study researcher from working descriptively and deductively to a more explanatory and interpretive mode.

- 19.** A time-ordered meta-matrix extends the cross-site analysis to include chronology as an organizing variable.
- 20.** Scatterplots are visual displays of data from all the case study sites based on dimensions or themes of interest that appear to be related to each other.
- 21.** A site-ordered effects matrix is used by case study researchers to sort through the research sites and to display probable cause-effect relations.
- 22.** Causal models extend the case study analysis and assist the case study researcher in identifying how things go together.

EXAMPLE: Case Study Research

Using Community as a Resource for Teacher Education: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT This is an account of a teacher education program’s attempt to connect with a neighboring community in order to better prepare faculty to teach about the urban context in which their preservice teacher education students practice. Taking a feminist perspective, the two authors discuss their goals—the processes of using a community organization to lead the discussion and obstacles inherent to university settings. Knowledge about urban communities is an area that is often neglected in teacher preparation and one that needs to be more fully considered.

“We do not really see through our eyes or hear through ears, but through our beliefs.”

—Delpit (1988, p. 297)

Case study of a teacher education program and community organization working together to improve teacher preparation.

- (01) Most teachers in urban classrooms instruct students who are very different from themselves, and often teach in communities that they have never previously even visited (Wirt, Choy, Rooney, Hussar, Povasnik, & Hampden-Thompson, 2005). It is important that teacher preparation programs address these issues of diversity by helping their education students understand the value of making connections with their PreK–12 students’ families and communities. The following study, written from a holistic and feminist perspective, tells the story of a teacher education program and a community organization working together to institutionalize a partnership whose main objective is to improve teacher preparation.
- (02) In the Graduate College of Education at the University of Massachusetts–Boston, those of us who prepare students to be effective urban school teachers, know that many of our students have never visited the communities in which they will student teach and (perhaps eventually) work. Yet, as Delpit (1988) points out, they do come to their preparation programs with beliefs about children and families who live in urban neighborhoods. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 84% of U.S. teachers are white and middle-class with limited experience with people of backgrounds different from their own (Wirt et al., 2005). A new teaching reality for which we need to prepare students in the 21st century is that “multiculturalism is simply a fact” (Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Another fact is that children spend only 1000 hours per year in schools as compared with 5000 hours spent in their communities and with their families (Berliner, 2005). These sheer numbers alone speak to the issue of the strong impact of the neighborhood. It is a force influencing children’s learning that has to be recognized.
- (03) When these new teachers face a classroom of children who may be different from themselves (for example, in race, ethnicity, or language), how do they see and relate to the students and their families? Ayers (1996) believes that school people need to understand and respond to the conditions that shape students’ lives rather than trying to “fix” community and family problems. It is important that these teachers be prepared to work

effectively with children they may perceive to be “at risk” and therefore, perhaps unteachable (Haberman, 1995). They have to be prepared to be effective in teaching children from a wide range of diversity. This is contrary to the idea that the culture of the students is irrelevant. As Ladson-Billings (2001) points out, in a “middle-income, white, English-speaking school community, teachers *do* use student culture as a basis for learning” (p. 99). That culture is invisible. It is only when the children’s home culture is different from the school norms and school culture that it becomes visible and often seemingly problematic. In order for all teachers, and especially teachers in urban areas, to be successful, they have to take responsibility for learning about the culture and the community of the children they teach (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Prospective teachers, particularly those who are white and middle-class, need cross-cultural opportunities with families and students who are neither white nor middle-class and who often speak a language other than English at home. It can be argued that without connection to diverse schools and local communities, bias and stereotyping of children by teachers may go unexamined (Cochran-Smith, 1995) and interfere with the success of the children in school. Schools cannot work successfully in isolation from students’ families and communities (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Comer, 2005; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansom, & Van Voohis, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Taylor & Adelman, 2000). Epstein (1995) talks about the overlapping spheres of influence determining a child’s achievement. Teachers play the central role in the overlapping spheres of family, community, and school. It is clear that teacher candidates must learn about the inclusion of children’s social context in the school experiences.

We are arguing that teacher education programs need to take the lead (04) in showing how to build a bridge between the school (in this case, the university) and the families and cultures of PreK–12 students whom their preservice teachers will be instructing. Teacher education is under constant scrutiny (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Fullan, 1998; Goodlad, 1990) because there are doubts that it can meet the needs of teachers who are coming into schools.

Although most new teachers have positive things to say about teacher education, and they believe it is a necessary part of becoming a teacher, many feel that teacher education needs to be rethought and reconfigured to provide prospective teachers with opportunities to spend more time in classrooms and communities. (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 3)

It is not surprising that these teachers “are often ill prepared to connect (05) with students, families, and communities” (Oaks & Lipton, 2003, p. 432). This is especially true for those teachers who work in schools where there are students of color who live in poverty.

[Changed] social and political circumstances mean that for teacher education to matter it too will have to change. It will have to offer new teachers a fighting chance to both survive and thrive in schools and classrooms filled with students who are even more dependent on education to make the difference in their life circumstances. (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 6)

It is clear that teacher education faculty, the people who plan and create (06) the curriculum for would-be teachers, need to see the big picture of how to relate to families. They also need to know about the specific communities in which they place their students and where many of their students will work and some may live: What are the names of the schools? Where do families shop? Go to church? Play?

- (07) Often, in responding to issues of diversity, teacher education programs offer courses about sociocultural perspectives, multicultural education, and anti-bias curriculum with no consistent focus on the role of the community (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Clearly, there is a need for teachers and teacher educators to connect with the communities where the children and their families reside. Historically, it has been difficult to find a way to connect communities and public schools (Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2002). These links are ill-defined and often put the parents in a “helping” role rather than in a full partner position (Ayers, 1996). If we extend the notion of community involvement to university programs, it becomes even more of a stretch. However, the practicum experience within the school-community setting is a good starting point and may be the most important element of teacher education (Bullough et al., 2002; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Knowledge of the community in which schools reside and in which our students will work is an obviously important element in the success of preservice teachers.
- (08) There is very little incentive for teacher education programs to change (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Even teacher licensure, which drives much of what is taught in preparation programs, rarely looks at content in relation to knowledge about community. With state licensing agencies increasingly focusing on alternative routes to teacher preparation, the requirements become more focused on minimum literacy and content requirements (Berliner, 2000). As a result, teacher education programs often lack a comprehensive family involvement practicum. Little is known about alternative ways to prepare prospective teachers to interact with families and students outside the structured and traditional parent-teacher conference or parent-teacher sessions regarding disciplinary actions. Since most teacher educators do not have knowledge about the local urban communities, they are not able to be a resource for their student teachers. If prospective teachers need opportunities to visit and interact with families and community members, it makes sense that teacher educators need to lead the way.

Building Bridges

- (09) This is an account of a teacher education program struggling to find a way to connect with the surrounding community through a grassroots, neighborhood organization. Our story has a feminist view as a theoretical perspective. The feminist view embraces the value of multiple perspectives, erases the distinction in hierarchy between “researcher” and “researched” (Lather, 1991) and values both “subjectivity and personal experience” (Black, 1989, p. 75). We researchers are participants as well, and in telling authentic stories, there is a comfort with “unfinished stories” (Black, 1989, pp. 4-5). That is, the story continues after the study is completed; this is only one moment in time. It also means that it may be the telling of the story that makes the most sense to the readers and that they, the consumers of the research, make sense of it for use in their own lives. It becomes applicable in the lives of teacher educators as they read and think about it, perhaps applying pieces of it to themselves and their situations. In addition, “feminist research strives to represent human diversity” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 252). All of these characteristics describe the value system that underlies both the project and the research about the project. The validity is internal validity, which means that it makes sense in its own context. We hope to be part of the conversation. The few tentative steps we have taken may spark interest and possibility for other teacher education programs.

The case study uses a feminist view as a theoretical perspective for the conduct of the research. “The feminist view embraces the value of multiple perspectives, erases the distinction in hierarchy between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched,’ and values both ‘subjectivity and personal experience.’”

What are the advantages of using a feminist theoretical framework to study teacher preparation programs and community programs, and their impact on the effectiveness of teacher preparation?

- (10) As researchers and teacher educators, we have these firm beliefs: The overarching and most important objective for teacher educators is to improve the teaching and learning of students in urban schools; this can be done through improved instruction of teacher candidates. It is the responsibility of Colleges of Education to enhance teacher education programs

through community bridging, making and sustaining authentic collegial relationships with parents of students in urban schools and community organizations.

We at the University of Massachusetts–Boston’s (UMB) Graduate College (11) of Education began to look closely at how our teacher education programs were addressing education in urban public schools. We could not help but notice that there was an almost complete lack of knowledge about the specific social context of the surrounding urban communities. We decided to try to integrate community members in our ongoing discussion as informants, as people who had knowledge we lacked. At the same time, we were at the beginning of a Title II (Higher Education Amendments of 1998) Teacher Enhancement grant, which gave us even more opportunities to shape and reshape our programs. The Director of the grant, Najwa Abdul-Tawwab (the second author of this article), was also the president of the board of a local community organization. We wanted a renewed focus on preparing teachers for urban public schools.

Research Question

A compelling issue for those of us who work in teacher education is to prepare our students for the context of the community in which they will teach (Murrell, 2001). The question for this research project is: How can an urban university’s teacher education program begin to form a relationship with its surrounding communities in order to improve the preparation of teachers? (12)

Research question: How can an urban university’s teacher education program begin to form a relationship with its surrounding communities in order to improve the preparation of teachers?

Our goal was to bridge the gap between the teacher preparation programs and preservice student teachers’ clinical placements, pre-practicum, and practicum experiences, where they may eventually teach. This is a documentary account of how the discussions began and how the context of the teacher education program changed. Included are its successes and failures to value and accommodate the views, as well as the knowledge of members of the community organization. (13)

Methodology

Because of the myriad purposes of educational research, it is important to select the methodology that best suits not only our feminist perspective but also informs practice and policies (Lagemann & Shulman, 1999). The qualitative method is a naturalistic approach that respects the context of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Specifically, for this inquiry, we are “qualitative researchers studying things in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). (14)

Case Study Method

The specific qualitative methodology we used was case study, with purposeful selection (Stake, 1995) of participants from UMB and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) case study structure, we have included in this report: the issue, the problem, the context, and the lessons learned. But first, it is necessary to situate the case within the context of its social setting (Stake, 1995), so the account describes the university setting. The case study fits well with our feminist viewpoint because both share the goals “to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification and to conduct research that is transformative” (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). Stake (1995) stresses that a qualitative, holistic case study is highly personal research. He notes that “the quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated by the researcher or the reader are valued. Thus a personal valuing of the work is expected” (p. 135). (15)

Single case study of participants from UMB and DSNI using purposeful selection.

Certainly the work was valued by the people involved in the study and in the project. Specifically this is considered a holistic case study, which is a “highly subjective affair and includes the personal value system of the case study team” (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p. 21). Holistic nature means that there is a description of the case, and in-depth understanding is a desirable outcome. Even this written account illustrates a feminist influence as it becomes more personal when it moves away from the formal presentation of the methodology and moves toward our story. Another important feature of this methodology that was also attractive to us for our purposes is that the case itself can be a “significant communication device” (Yin, 2003, p. 144).

- (16) Extending this description of case study, it further fits into the feminist perspective because both of us (the researchers) were closely affiliated with the problem so that “being insiders of the experience enables . . . [us] to understand in a way that no other person could” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 260). During this project, we explored ways to talk about teacher preparation with community members, who are typically outside the process. Our account is written with the understanding that we bring our values to the project and to the inquiry. Agreeing with Freire (1985), “All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator’s part” (p. 43), we are making our values explicit. These values include the desire for the regeneration of urban schools; the preparation of teachers who can be successful with urban children; the recognition of varied voices of “expertise” that exist in urban areas; and a “culture of conversation” (Oakes & Lipton, 2003, p. 419) within the university. We open the traditional paradigm of “expertise” to legitimize the voices of those outside the university who are involved in the achievement of children in urban schools. Our goal was to accomplish Stovall and Ayers’ (2005) description of a project in Chicago, “The ‘experts’ [university faculty] engaged community members as equals” (p. 37). This view sees the urban community as a context for faculty to develop relevant objectives based on students’ lives. We also understand that the reality of all institutions is that much action, including our project, is person-dependent, and as the “players” change, so too the project may change and become inactive or even disappear.

Data and Analyses

- (17) There are multiple sources of data that reflect the nature of a case study: “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ [using] in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Bounded in time, our study spanned about two years (or four semesters) at the University of Massachusetts—Boston. The data included minutes from all Department meetings, Title II meetings, seminars and workshops with participants from DSNI and UMB, reflective journals, and informal interviews with faculty and members of DSNI. Because we see this as an issue-oriented case study (Stake, 1995), all of the data were limited to the stated question of how the UMB teacher training program can connect with a local community organization. The strategy for data analysis was suggested by Yin (1984): The original theoretical proposition, which led to the study and shaped the data collection, served as the guiding strategy to focus on some of the data and ignore other irrelevant data. This proposition helps to organize the entire case study and is especially effective when used with inquiries that have a “how” question.

Data collection strategies included: meeting minutes, field notes from seminars and workshops, reflective journals, and informal interviews with faculty members and members of DSNI.

Our Story

- (18) Before we begin our story, we will give a brief description of the values and goals of the University, the Curriculum and Instruction Department, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. The University of Massachusetts—Boston identifies as a “model of excellence for urban universities” (UMB, 2004, Mission Statement, ¶1). Its core values include meeting the needs of

both traditional and non-traditional students and its intent is to “dedicate itself especially to understanding and improving the environment and well being of the citizens of this region” (UMB, 2004, Vision Statement §, ¶2). From the Chancellor’s Office to Student Affairs, there is a stated public commitment that the surrounding community, meaning the neighborhoods around the university and Boston as a whole, are important in both research and academic programs.

The Curriculum and Instruction Department houses most teacher education, including initial and professional licensure programs. At the time of the study, there were about 100 undergraduate students and 500 graduate students in all licensure programs. There were about 22 full-time faculty in the Department and 3 full-time staff. The College is National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved and many, although not all, faculty are involved directly in the teacher education programs through teaching, research, and/or service. (19)

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) is a nonprofit community-based organization committed to revitalizing “environmental, economic and human” (DSNI, 2005, Mission Statement, ¶1) resources in the Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhood in Boston. It began in 1984 with residents who wanted to revive their community “nearly devastated by arson, disinvestment” and who wanted “to protect it from outside speculators” (¶1). It has a diverse population whose major accomplishments have been to “create a shared vision of the neighborhood and bring it to reality” by working with “individuals and organizations in the private, government and nonprofit sectors” (¶6). (20)

After the Director of DSNI was hired to lead the Title II project, we began to look more closely at how we might use DSNI as a resource for the teacher education program. Because Ms. Abdul-Tawwab also had been a teacher in the Boston Public Schools, we were able to strengthen ties with many of the surrounding public schools for clinical placements and professional development sites, which the grant enabled us to fund. We then began to look at how to involve more members of the Department in the Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement grant. One specific goal of the grant, and one that fell within our interests and expertise was to “[e]xpand the school- and-community-based nature of teacher education to provide greater practical experience” (Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement, 2004, p. 1). (21)

After having just successfully gone through an NCATE review, the UMB teacher education programs were ready to go to a higher standard of practice than the required “minimum” expectations of national and state requirements. In order to move the grant forward and in order to go deeper into the issues of urban diversity, we decided to look at an area where little or nothing has been written—the direct connection between teacher education and community organizations. (22)

The two of us, Mari Koerner and Najwa Abdul-Tawwab, discussed many options of how to institutionalize the notions of community. Because we had little guidance, our discussion began to focus on monthly Department meetings, the one time all the faculty and staff are together. We liked the idea of enlarging Department meetings, at least one or two of them, to include members of the community and parents of students in our Title II partnership schools. We intentionally did not use the Advisory Board model. This, historically, has not been seen as a source for information about the larger community, but rather an almost pro forma structure to meet the needs of accreditation. We also discussed the membership of Advisory Boards and how this relates to community involvement. Often the membership of Advisory Boards is slanted to only include people who can be guaranteed to show up at meetings or who are publicly known for their expertise. Because (23)

both of us have served on these Boards, we knew that there is limited discussion and often the purposes are diffused because the participants may have little in common. We were looking for a more comprehensive engagement model for Advisory Boards that calls upon community members and parents to be valued peers in the education of urban teachers (Stovall & Ayers, 2005). This was based on our deeply held belief, supported by research showing positive outcomes of community/school partnerships for PreK–12 education (Comer, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), that linking a university teacher education program with urban parents and community would eventually enhance PreK–12 education.

- (24) We believed that “insufficient knowledge about the circumstances, neighborhoods, and supports of their students hampers teachers’ effectiveness with many students, most particularly, with students who come from backgrounds different than the teacher’s” (Honig et al., 2002, p. 1017). For us, this meant that we needed to heighten faculty’s awareness of the importance of community and family in the lives of children. Because of lack of familiarity with urban neighborhoods, it became clear that many faculty members could benefit from more knowledge about the communities in which their students had clinical experiences and in which these students might work. We thought that if we could provide opportunities for faculty to learn firsthand about the context in which urban children live, play, and work, they would be able to more effectively include this knowledge about community in courses and develop a disposition to emphasize its importance. Delpit (1988) notes that it is through our beliefs that we see the world, and a teacher education program has many opportunities to stretch, examine and shape each individual’s perception that exists with and results from these beliefs (Schubert, 1991). Hopefully, this can create a sensitization of preservice teachers to the positive impact of the urban neighborhood.
- (25) Our story continued as our discussions led to action steps. All of our activities (some of them funded by the grant) were led by the Director of Title II (Abdul-Tawwab) and the Department Chair (Koerner). Parenthetically, the Dean was supportive but not actively involved in the process. We spent a lot of time talking to faculty, staff, community members, and each other to decide on the steps we could take to engage and teach faculty. Specifically, we decided to highlight the community in the curriculum and content of preservice teacher education courses and in the required clinical experience by using funds from the Title II grant to provide materials and the stated goals of the project to push the dialogue along.
- (26) We began this practice by scheduling a meeting with Department faculty and staff with a panel of school principals, teachers, faculty, and community organizers, who made a presentation about the community (both current and historical perspectives) and its importance in the education of children. The presentation was engaging and informative because it was given by a community organizer who brought a real, clear, and urgent focus about the importance of schools and teachers to his neighborhood (an expertise and framework that was lacking within our own Department). A recommendation that came out of this meeting was that community members should be invited to attend future scheduled Department meetings when relevant. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction revised their constitution to say that at least one meeting per semester should include community partners and parents as part of the discussion portion that deals with pedagogical practices or licensure. The constitution was revised so as to institutionalize the inclusion of community people in department meetings.
- (27) To ensure that everyone understood the role of DSNI as an example of a community organization linked with families of PreK–12 students, we planned a Department meeting at the community center itself. When we

invited staff and faculty to attend the meeting, we decided to make it a special event by having a lunch provided by a local caterer. We emphasized that it was very important that each person come who had promised to be a part of the event because poor attendance might be regarded as indifference on the part of the university people. Colleagues from another university in the Title II consortium were invited as well. There were some questions about directions and facilities for parking and some slight discomfort with issues of safety but, in the end, there was 100% attendance.

We set an agenda that highlighted the personnel and accomplishments of the organization. The meeting included a tour of the neighborhood (the houses and the school), which had been dramatically improved because of the work of DSNI (Medoff & Slar, 1994). In addition, a copy of the book recounting the history of the community organization, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (Medoff & Slar, 1994) was given to each person attending the meeting. As a consequence of the meeting, goodwill was generated between the organization and the Department, and it was recommended that a mission statement, which we had been writing to represent the overall values of the Department, be revised to include the goal of inclusion of community. (28)

Along with a movie, the walking tour, and presentations, the staff and members of DSNI had specific suggestions for the teacher education program. One of them was to encourage faculty to become actively involved in community and model ways in which inservice teachers see their role in the community development process. This was a unique experience for Curriculum and Instruction faculty: professional development, done intentionally and done through a regular Department meeting. (29)

Because this was such an unusual event, many people talked to us, both informally after the meeting and through e-mail. There was a positive feeling about the connection with each other and with the community people, and there also was a strong feeling of respect for the work of the community people. It was suggested by several participants that the Department expand meeting places to include community locations. Several faculty also made the suggestion that they collaborate with community members on papers and presentations at local and national conferences. This paper came about as a result of the community-based meeting as well. (30)

Title II funds provided opportunities for professional development. Najwa Abdul-Tawwab asked for volunteers to participate in an ongoing book discussion group to meet monthly. Ten faculty and staff members volunteered to be part of the group and Title II funding provided books. The books, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (Medoff & Slar, 1994) along with Peter Murrell's (2001) book, *The Community Teacher*, provided common ground for the discussions. By allowing an extended time for deep conversation, this allowed faculty and teachers a safe place in which to talk about and critique practice by looking at research on community involvement, with an actual case study of a neighborhood that reformed itself. (31)

Another simple suggestion that arose from the meeting was to keep reading materials about community works available to students and faculty. We collected them from both DSNI and the Coalition of Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY), an Asian American student organization that is sponsored by a professor in the Department—and left them in the Department reception area as well as in the student advising office. (32)

These ideas focused on how to enhance some of the procedures and practices in the Department to encourage community participation. There were additional ideas that came from faculty and staff in subsequent Department meetings for how to enhance the design of the teacher education curriculum. Some faculty met as a study group to talk about how our new ideas could inform teaching and curriculum. These recommendations, (33)

although made for our teacher education programs, can apply to any program. They include:

- Having preservice teachers do lesson plans and make curriculum materials that use the neighborhood as the source and focus of content for student learning. Be sure family and community are used almost like a text; that is, included in every area of the curriculum.
- Taking a critical stance, continuing within a feminist perspective, and providing work in courses where students examine school policies and practices that impact lives of children in urban schools. For example, collect the parents' stories about how their children are not served well on days when their teachers are absent. Many of the preservice students work as substitute teachers, so this is an issue that is particularly relevant to a graduate teacher education program.
- Being creative in course offerings. An example of this creativity is part of our story. A special topics course about Islam and what it means to teachers and schools was proposed. Access to the local community provided the opportunity to recruit a leader of a local mosque who was respected in the community and who would not have been in the traditional academic "expert" circles.
- Preparing practicum supervisors to look at how student teachers use the community and families as resources. They need to ask questions like: Do students invite parents into the classroom? What is the language that preservice students use to describe the children's families? Do the student teachers know about the district's policies that deal with the place of family and community in the curriculum? In the school? In the classroom?

- (34) A central positive result of working together was the opening of a new subject for discussion among faculty about teaching practices and issues central to urban education. Part of this collegial conversation led to dispelling the myth that community and parents have little interest in or knowledge of how teachers are trained for urban classrooms. There was also the recognition that the consistent revision and reformation of syllabi (course content) was needed to improve the preparation of teachers for urban classrooms.
- (35) There is no question that these issues can have a direct impact on the area that has the closest relationship to the community: clinical or practicum placements. It is here that the future teachers come to know about classroom and community experiences and integrate that knowledge into future learning experiences. This is the culminating experience in teacher education programs (Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002). Many of the faculty who supervise student teachers continued these discussions with part-time people who attend a monthly discussion group for supervisors.
- (36) Another suggested step was to create an alternative field experience for pre-practicum teacher education students. This would help to dispel students' self-reported notions that parents of color and those who may live in poverty do not care about their children. For example, an internship at DSNI or Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) would help the teacher education students to see urban parents as more than abstract concepts by working with and having conversations with families. This would provide opportunities for a deep understanding of the overlapping spheres of influence that contribute to a child's achievement (Epstein, 1995)—the spheres of family, school, and community. This is not possible in a traditional field experience, which tends to be only in schools. It would provide space for collegial conversations among faculty, students, and community members—a conversation about preconceived ideas, assumptions, and prejudices.

Other Outcomes

Two clear outcomes that arose from this project were: to create a substitute training program with the Boston Public Schools (BPS); and to establish an oral history project with CAPAY. (37)

We were contacted by Najwa Abdul-Tawwab's colleague from the community group, ACORN, to find out how we could join forces in getting the public school system to look at the substitute teacher workforce. After going to a community meeting, we were asked by the Superintendent to meet with the head of BPS Human Resources. Following a series of meetings, the university, through the grant, planned and funded a substitute teacher training workshop. Then with representatives from ACORN, many of whom were parents, we petitioned the district office to start the training. The schools welcomed the ideas and were working on their own plan. All three constituencies worked together to change the policies for substitute recruitment and training and also requested additional funding to do a pilot program. ACORN became part of the invited guest list for future teacher education Department meetings. (38)

Because of the success of the trip to DSNI, many faculty members asked if we could have another community group talk to the Department members in the next semester. We decided to ask the faculty advisor of CAPAY to bring some of the members of his organization, which is housed in the College, to a meeting. The group who attended consisted of the Director of CAPAY and several high school student members of the organization who talked about their experiences with racism. There were faculty discussion groups following their presentations. Because their stories were so personal and powerful, we decided to ask them to write five case studies describing their experiences in high school that would be available for use by faculty in their college classrooms. (39)

Lessons Learned

We resonate with Stovall and Ayers (2005) in how they described their project, "These lessons are neither manifesto, nor 10 step program, neither blueprint, nor map. Instead, they serve as points of departure and dialogue" (p. 37). Because this study looks at the case holistically, our stories represent a change in the culture of the university and alternative sources in addition to traditional knowledge. In universities, expertise often resides in the professoriate and although there is acknowledgment that teachers in the field possess a practical knowledge, it is rare that respect extends to families and communities—especially those who reside in urban areas. There is much research that points to the importance of connecting teachers with the families of their students (Epstein et al., 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), but there is virtually no research about the importance of families and community in the education of teachers. Knowledge about this important aspect or circle of influence in a child's life and its relationship to the effectiveness of teacher preparation is ignored in the formal inquiries done by university faculty. (40)

Many of our discussions and panel presentations shed light on why this happens. We found there are numerous barriers that prevent collaboration of teacher education programs, community organizations, and parents of students in public schools. We received feedback from both DSNI and ACORN members that the university often appears to be a well defended fortress with little access to anyone from the outside. They felt this was especially true because of the difference in status between community people and faculty's levels of education. (41)

It is difficult to make changes in the culture of a university, and it is even more difficult to institutionalize changes. A big problem and, ultimately the piece that can lead to failure, is that new policies and practices often (42)

depend on one or two people and when those individuals are gone, the changes go with them. Making changes permanent, independent of who is in charge and that extend beyond the life of the grant is a constant struggle. Another issue that makes change difficult is that colleges are places where courses are the top priority and schedules are arranged around those classes. The main responsibility of faculty is to teach those classes. Community organizations meet during regular business hours or in the evening at the same time as classes are scheduled. Just changing meeting times to accommodate community people as well as public school teachers would help to build bridges.

(43) We talked about the values that underlie all of the work we view as important and that drives our work. Again, we think that the overarching objective is to improve the teaching and learning of students in urban schools. We think this can be done through improved instruction of teacher candidates. We further believe it is the responsibility of Colleges of Education to enhance teacher education programs through community bridging—making and sustaining authentic collegial relationships with parents of students in urban schools and community organizations. A summary of our goals in this project, which we tried to implement and that we think are portable to other institutions, include:

1. Make institutional and systemic changes in order to build the connection for community input into teacher education instruction and curriculum.
2. Provide a forum for discussion of the expectations and issues surrounding the preparation of teachers for urban children.
3. Make faculty aware of community resources for their inclusion in their courses.
4. Use community organizations to help recruit future teachers.
5. Open up discussions so that faculty can have greater knowledge of community and greater understanding of the home and school life of urban students.
6. Validate and value community members and parents in the training of teachers.
7. Make community members and partnership schools more aware of and part of the underlying values of college of education conceptual framework.

Significance

(44) A feminist perspective includes issues of diversity and power relationships. This case has pointed to problems with barriers that have been set up to recognize academic knowledge over and above practical experiences and common sense. Research shows that it is necessary to include outside experts, families, and community members in the education of their children (Epstein, 1995). We hope that our account highlights the necessity of building on families' cultural and linguistic capital. Further, this case has raised issues of equity, its meaning, and the role educators play in the goal of achieving an understanding of social justice, stated in the College's Conceptual Framework ("Conceptual Framework," 2002). How we infuse it into the curriculum for our students is vital.

(45) Because awareness of, and intentional experiences with, issues of diversity tend to be outside the experiences of many students as they enter their clinical experiences, it is good practice to have them placed in settings where their preconceptions and biases are challenged. It is often difficult to provide positive experiences for students to view activists working toward social justice and see its validity in classroom practices. The nontraditional field experience of placement in a community center would enable students to see what they had previously only experienced through readings and

lectures. The partnership with DSNI and ACORN would give prospective teachers opportunities to learn firsthand how an organization works with families and how a community center can help parents actively participate in the education of their children. It would also provide future teachers opportunities to interact with families and find out what it means for them to be involved in their children's education.

When universities and communities are linked, it expands the possibility (46) of the resources typically available to teacher education programs. An urban focus broadens the perspective of the educational goals and content. It also can provide advantages for the faculty who teach the classes in the college program. Teacher educators can establish a professional network that provides opportunities to connect with a different set of "experts" as an aide to their teaching and research. These relationships can provide opportunities to do action research. For example, many of the parents involved in the community organization can provide information about how schools align themselves with home life. As one example, studies about the urban neighborhood and their views of the required achievement tests are needed. An additional benefit to faculty who work in universities is the opportunity to be a vital part of community through volunteer work. This is especially true for faculty who have an interest in social justice. They may perhaps work with the PreK–12 students who will be in the classrooms of their university students.

Conclusion

"Those teachers must be willing to travel new highways and byways of teaching and learning to ensure that all of the children they teach experience academic, cultural, and social sciences" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 9). The new highways for teacher education and colleges of education have to be found in work outside of the university classrooms. The enterprise of preparing people to become teachers for urban classrooms is a complicated business. It takes more than good intentions; it takes expert knowledge from many different sources; it takes valuing children and their lives. Through our work, we received glimpses of different paradigms for doing this work.

In explaining the best outcomes of a feminist approach to research, it (48) is important to note that, "for many feminists, research is obligated to contribute to social change through consciousness-raising or specific policy recommendations" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 251). Therefore, the goal of this inquiry is to be part of a conversation at UMB and also to stimulate a conversation beyond our teacher education program. Because "feminist research strives to create social change" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 240), we think it is important that through a critical perspective, various parts of teacher education programs need to be investigated. We hope to expand the conversation about how to think about these new voices in education and then take steps in making them a part of children's learning and the preparation of their teachers.

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