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Focusing new teachers on diversity and equity: Toward a knowledge base for mentors

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Abstract

New teachers in the US often are unprepared to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Preparing teachers for diversity has generated widespread interest in mentoring, yet little research has explored a knowledge base for equity-focused mentoring. Drawing on expertise of leading mentor practitioners and a case study, this article builds a framework for what mentors need to know and be able to do to focus new teachers on equity. Mentors need a bi-level and multi-domain knowledge base, targeting both students and teachers. Using a bifocal perspective, mentors view the new teacher up close, but also focus on the larger picture of students. Analyses delineate challenges and tensions in tapping this knowledge base in the action of mentoring.

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If they haven't had good preparation, especially about English language learners and reading comprehension, which not all preservice programs are good at preparing, new teachers don't fall back on intuition and intellectual soundness. They fall back on mythology from the culture of the school, the broader culture, and their own experience as a student. They fall

back on how they learned and what that means that other people should need. That's how they figure it out on their own.

(Sonya, a mentor of new teachers²)

Sonya's remarks point to themes that shaped and arose from the study we report here. Implicit in the remarks is a basic argument: New teachers need support and guidance to address varied needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Otherwise they fall back on misconceptions.

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These may include notions of culturally and linguistically diverse youth as academically less capable than their white, native English-speaking counterparts in the US. Myths also include beliefs that all students should be taught the same, regardless of earlier preparation, life experiences, learning styles, or English language proficiency. Sonya also notes the problem of mythology from “the broader culture.” The US teaching force has grown increasingly white, female, and middle class, and many of these teachers have personal histories shaped by white privilege that the broader culture perpetuates. Such privilege may impede teachers’ abilities to grasp needs of those with other perspectives and experiences. Finally, Sonya notes the problem of new teachers falling back on “how they learned and what that means that other people should need.” Here Sonya points to the problematic apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) that many new teachers tap, personal encounters with school as students that may not serve their own students.

New teachers in the US, especially those under-prepared, are disproportionately placed in classrooms with students of color, from low-income families, and with diverse language abilities (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Oakes, 1990; Shields et al., 2001). Even with basic preparation, most new teachers need continued support for this work. For teachers on emergency credentials, support is even more critical. Without strong support for these new teachers, many students in their classes likely will be underserved. Many teachers themselves will despair at job dissatisfaction and unsupportive work conditions and leave the profession early (Ingersoll, 2001), 30% leaving in their first five years and up to 50% leaving after seven (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). How can such predictable patterns be disrupted so new teachers in particularly high needs schools gain support to advance the learning of all of their students?

The task of preparing and supporting teachers for work with diverse youth has generated widespread interest in induction and mentoring programs (Feiman-Nemser, 1994; Huling-Austin, 1990; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Wang & Odell,

2002). Mentoring typically pairs the novice with an expert veteran teacher who attends to the professional development of newcomers. Mentoring programs often are linked to standards for addressing needs of diverse students (e.g., Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium). However, much of mentoring in practice falls short of equity-focused work. It can be better characterized as “situational adjustment, technical advice, and emotional support” (Little, 1990). Part of the problem is the lack of an articulated knowledge base for such mentoring. We still know little about expertise needed to mentor novices on equity and diversity, and we have little empirical evidence identifying how such a knowledge base is enacted.³

In this article, we articulate such a knowledge base, drawing on teaching and other professions in which a knowledge base is grounded in work of their practitioners (Shulman, 1992). Our study contributes to this important area of inquiry by asking two research questions. (1) How do experienced mentors and induction leaders characterize what mentors need to know and be able to do to focus new teachers on diversity and equity? To answer this question, we examined wisdom of practice of expert practitioners (Shulman, 1983) in a network of teacher induction leaders who have taught, mentored, organized mentors, and conducted inquiry on their leadership practices. (2) What does this knowledge base look like in practice, particularly related to complexities of mentoring for equity? Here we extend our analyses by examining a two-year case study of a mentor (Sonya) and her new teacher (drawn from a larger study of 15 mentor–mentee pairs) for evidence of this knowledge base in the mentoring process. We examine the problematic nature of this work, even when a mentor holds convictions as clear and strong as Sonya’s. We then discuss the multi-dimensional knowledge base of mentoring for equity and the educational implications of this mentoring work.

³There is a larger research base on diversity and equity among various teacher educators at the preservice level (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Merino, 1999; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner et al., 1998).

1. Framework

1.1. Challenge of focusing novice teachers on equity and diversity

Our focus on equity concerns persistent patterns of difference in educational opportunities and achievement among students. Broadly speaking, the primary gap in the US, site for the present study, exists between white, native English speaking, middle to high income students on the one hand, and generally lower income, culturally and linguistically diverse (primarily Latino and African American) students on the other. Equity refers to a state in which the gap is eliminated and where achievement of all is raised; it also refers, at times, to measures needed to close the gap. Access to learning opportunities for all means providing differentiated supports for learners (Haycock, 2001). Also necessary is challenging current inequitable practices to transform schools into more socially just and equitable systems (Freire, 1983; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Affirming diversity is to celebrate its richness and also to understand how diversity enhances learning for all (e.g., Nieto, 2004). Understanding diversity and equity issues, however, also requires knowledge of structural inequities that persist in larger societal contexts in which schools are situated. This includes understanding ways issues of race, ethnicity, language, and class impact teaching, learning, and schooling.

Working toward equity requires developing cultural competence. This includes teachers' knowledge of their own, students', and school cultures; how to teach content to diverse learners; and how to affirm diversity in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Focusing *novice* teachers on equity and diversity is a particular challenge. New teachers in the US are predominantly white, middle class, and monolingual and often are unprepared to meet the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students whom they very likely will teach. They may have negative assumptions about diverse learners due to a cultural mismatch with students (Guskey, 1995). Also, new teachers have unelaborated schemata of children from their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). Novices also have limited instructional

repertoires and resources specifically focused on diverse learners. Much of this gets compounded for the many new teachers no longer following traditional pathways of preservice programs, who need even more substantive and extensive support.

1.2. Developing a knowledge base for mentoring for equity

Teacher induction programs offer a means to help new teachers address diversity and equity. Interest in teacher induction has grown worldwide. China, France, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Japan have well-funded induction support for two or more years addressing ambitious learning goals for new teachers (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003). In China, new teachers give public lessons that teachers, researchers, and administrators collaboratively examine (Wang & Paine, 2003), and they receive content-specific mentoring (Wang, 2001). In France, new teachers in induction programs write professional memoirs, conduct action research with a mentor, and observe at other school sites (Britton et al.). In New Zealand programs, administrators convene beginning teachers in biweekly facilitated peer support, and in Switzerland, mentors facilitate practice groups of new teachers from multiple districts (Britton et al.). In Israel, the Ministry of Education and Culture funds induction and mentor development (Orland, 2001). In Australia, educators and policy makers show increasing commitment to mentoring new teachers (Ballantyne, Hansford, & Packer, 1995). In the US, as of 2003, 30 states had induction programs; 16 required and financed formal induction for all new teachers (Quality Counts, 2003). Clearly, many policy makers, reformers, and educators worldwide have turned their attention to teacher induction, given the needs for new teachers, support necessary to retain them, and an urgency to meet ambitious teaching goals articulated by recent reforms.

Despite such fervor, mentoring and induction programs often do not hold robust ideas about teacher knowledge, students, or change (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1998), much less about diversity and equity issues. The most common form of new teacher support remains

workshops focused on school policies and classroom management (Shields et al., 1999). The focus often is socialization into a current system, with no challenge of dominant norms or beliefs. Thus mentors become local guides and not agents of change (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). This has emerged in several nations, including the UK, the US, and China, despite mentors' articulated goals of focusing new teachers on individual students' learning (Wang, 2001). Part of the problem is this: While we know that many induction programs select mentors for being veteran teachers of some distinction (Porter, Youngs, & Odden, 2001), we know much less about what mentors need to know and be able to do to help novices develop into quality professionals, much less into equity-minded teachers.

Some direction is provided by the knowledge base for teaching. By knowledge base, we mean a "codified or codifiable aggregation" of knowledge, understanding, skill, and disposition (Shulman, 1987, p. 4). This includes things we imagine "in the brain" but also includes skill (the ability to enact knowledge) and disposition (a propensity to act or not act on what one knows). A knowledge base for teaching categorizes knowledge and provides "a means of representing and communicating it" (Shulman, p. 4). For practitioner knowledge to become a professional knowledge base, it must be public, represented in a form enabling its cumulative and shared nature, and continually verified and improved (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). The teaching profession has seen this *improving* of collective professional understandings (what Shulman calls the "ever-growing" knowledge base). One recent version tapping a range of projects uses three broad categories of teacher knowledge: (a) learners and learning, (b) contexts and purposes, and (c) curriculum and teaching (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999).

Mapping a knowledge base for mentors, however, entails a key adaptation. Mentors need knowledge of both student learners and teacher learners. They must know student classroom and community contexts, as well as professional contexts that inform teacher decisions. They need knowledge of teaching as it relates to students, as

well as teaching, tutoring, and mentoring as they relate to adult learners as new teachers. When mentoring focuses on equity, clearly it requires more than a technical "knowing how to" (as it often gets cast in mentoring programs). It requires also a "being someone who" perspective that includes moral dimensions related to justice, fairness, and ethics, and political dimensions related to power, interest, and conflict (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004). These areas prove salient as mentors make judgments about doing justice to students and new teachers for whom they are responsible and in often complex political terrains.

Some past work has offered broad categories of a knowledge base for mentoring, a framework for quality indicators, and brief mentor cases (Bey, 1990; Odell & Huling, 2000; Shulman & Colbert, 1988). In one case, Feiman-Nemser (2001b) identified principles of educative mentoring that may add to a knowledge base of mentoring for equity. These include focusing on students and problems, probing novices' thinking, being direct, and finding openings for productive thinking. The mentor moves model ways new teachers can work with students. In a prior study, we found that mentors can focus novices on individual students' learning, especially those underperforming, through several means. These included tapping knowledge of student and teacher learners, pedagogy for classrooms and for tutoring teachers, and especially multi-layered knowledge and abilities in several domains of assessment (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003). Skillful use of this knowledge can bring individual student learning into focus, and it can help new teachers generate methods for shaping instruction to reach all learners. In another study, Achinstein and Barrett (2004) found that mentors helped reframe novices' thinking about culturally and linguistically diverse learners and their challenges of practice. This involved extending novices beyond managerial frames focused on controlling students and offering other frames. A political frame identified inequities in teacher–student interactions and schooling. A human relations frame highlighted relationships between individuals and groups. While these studies identify aspects of a mentor's knowledge base, the present study extends the field

by focusing explicitly on what a mentor needs to know and be able to do to support a new teacher's attention to equity.

2. Method

2.1. Contexts for the study

Our first research question asked: How do experienced mentors and induction leaders characterize what mentors need to know and be able to do to focus new teachers on diversity and equity? We looked to veteran mentors and new teacher program directors in the Leadership Network for Teacher Induction (LNTI) for some answers. LNTI is a reform network of induction leaders who support 2750 new teachers in 60 districts in Northern California. LNTI is a prime site for examining wisdom of practice of mentors as it relates to equity. These leaders work in a state with one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse student populations: 62% of California's students are youth of color and 25% are English language learners (ELLs) (Shields et al., 1999). California has had a well-funded statewide program of new teacher support and assessment, and LNTI members have had extensive and diverse experiences in teaching, mentoring, and induction leadership in varied contexts.

LNTI also supports, taps, and develops members' wisdom of practice and knowledge through inquiry projects. This work features mutual knowledge, learning, and collaboration to explore critical educational issues, rather than relying solely on transmission of outsider knowledge—features of many successful education networks (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996). A limitation of this group is that it reflects the broader profession in consisting primarily of white women. However, several African American, Latino, and Asian American educators have been active LNTI participants, and most have provided perspectives of urban districts of mostly students of color. Equity had emerged as a LNTI focus; members engaged in relevant professional development with skilled facilitators, action research, and ongoing discussions on diversity, equity, and anti-racist

practices. For all of these reasons, LNTI served as a prime site for tapping practitioner knowledge about mentoring for equity.

Our second research question asked: What does this knowledge base of mentoring for equity look like in practice, and what are its complexities? To address this question, we looked inside one of the teacher induction programs represented in the network. We chose a case study approach for richly textured data from a series of mentoring conversations between a beginning teacher and mentor, and interviews with both over the course of two years. The induction program involves two years of on-site weekly mentoring support and monthly seminars focused on state professional standards for teachers. The mentors are selected through rigorous interviews, are released from other duties to mentor full time, and engage in weekly professional development on mentoring practices. The program is inquiry-oriented, promoting reflection on artifacts of practice. The mentor and novice engage in lesson planning conversations, observations of teaching, post-observation reflecting conferences, lesson modeling, resource sharing, and goal setting.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

For the first part of our study, we examined questionnaire responses of 37 LNTI members. LNTI had 40 active network members in the year of this study, many representing multi-district induction programs. In this way, 60 different school districts from Northern California were represented. These programs supported the work of a total of 772 mentors and 2750 new teachers. At most network meetings, all LNTI members present reflected on their practice in surveys, questionnaires, or journal writings. Questions addressed such issues as: how to focus new teachers on individual student learners, significance of subject matter in mentoring, and organizational context concerns for mentoring and mentor leadership. This portion of our study examined participants' responses to two open-ended items from one questionnaire: (1) What do mentors need to know and be able to do to help new teachers focus on issues of diversity and

equity in teaching? (2) Select one of the things identified for question 1 and provide an example from your practice.

For this portion of the study, three researchers constructed categories to analyze patterns of responses in the preponderance of questionnaire data (Merriam, 1998). We used participants' own language to derive categories, but this analysis also was informed by the research literature on the knowledge base for teaching (e.g., Grossman, 1990; Hollins, 1996; Shulman, 1987). Categories then were refined with attention to themes within categories until a model was constructed to capture all relevant ideas. We conducted interrater reliability checks on categorization of data, refining categories and themes until we reached at least 90% agreement. Participant-elaborated illustrations of mentoring experiences were used to delineate categories more fully and to highlight phenomena.

For the second part of our study, we drew on data from a larger study of one of the induction network programs (see Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). We reviewed 15 cases of mentor–mentee pairs and transcribed data from the 15 cases. Each case included a beginning teacher and a mentor working together over two years. Data for each case included audiotaped “planning conferences” to co-plan lessons; taped “reflecting conferences” after a mentor had observed a literacy lesson; and interviews with the teacher and mentor conducted over the two years. Case data were analyzed for particular patterns identified in questionnaire results and to provide depth and contrast. These data were analyzed on multiple levels, following Miles and Huberman (1994). The first level involved preliminary coding to summarize data segments that referenced domains identified in the questionnaire portion of our study. The second level involved generating pattern codes that identified emergent themes that revealed different approaches and challenges to mentoring for equity.

After reviewing and analyzing all cases for crosscutting themes, we selected one case to highlight mentoring approaches and complexities. This case demonstrates much of the knowledge base described by leaders in the first part of our

study, as well as challenges mentors face in focusing novices on equitable learning for diverse youth. The mentor in the case we selected was experienced (in her third and fourth years), and was identified by the induction program's leaders as expert on issues of diversity, equity, and ELLs. This enabled us to see possibilities of the knowledge base in action. The teacher she mentored worked with mostly ELL Latino students in a classroom labeled “low ability” by her grade level team and school. This classroom context also highlighted possibilities and illustrated realistic challenges faced by many California teachers. It also provided occasions to see a *mentor's* realistic challenge—focusing a novice on equitable student outcomes with particular attention to addressing needs of ELLs.

3. Results part one: mentor knowledge and abilities needed to focus new teachers on diversity and equity

First we report teacher induction leaders' notions of an effective mentor's knowledge base to focus new teachers on diversity and equity. We then report analysis of the case of Sonya and Maggie, a mentor–new teacher pair, illustrating the knowledge base in action and highlighting its complexities.

Analyses of questionnaire responses from the 37 teacher induction leaders yielded four main categories, exhibited in Table 1.

3.1. Pedagogical knowledge needed to mentor for equity

Table 1 shows that participants overwhelmingly identified pedagogical knowledge for equity as the most essential in mentoring for equity (92%). Two themes of pedagogy emerged: knowledge of ways to teach diverse *youth*, and knowledge of ways to teach or guide *teachers* during mentor sessions in ways that promote equitable learning.

3.1.1. Knowledge of classroom pedagogy related to diversity and equity

Nearly three-fourths of participants identified the first theme—that pedagogical knowledge for

Table 1
Teacher induction leaders' reports of mentor knowledge and abilities needed to focus new teachers on diversity and equity

| Domain of mentor knowledge and ability | Number (and percentage) of respondents reporting ($N = 37$) |
|---|---|
| <i>Pedagogical knowledge for equity</i> | 34 (91.9) |
| To teach diverse learners and foster equity | 27 (73.0) |
| To focus new teachers on diversity and equity in mentoring sessions | 21 (56.8) |
| <i>Contexts relevant to teaching diverse youth</i> | 16 (43.2) |
| Strategies/resources to help teachers learn local culture, community and about negotiating professional world | 9 (24.3) |
| Broader social and structural issues related to diversity and inequities in society and schooling | 7 (18.9) |
| <i>Knowledge of learners: What diverse learners bring to class</i> | 10 (27.0) |
| <i>Mentor's knowledge of self-related to diversity and equity</i> | 10 (27.0) |

teaching diverse youth is essential in mentoring for equity. This includes a repertoire of strategies to establish a trusting classroom climate, build community, and hold high expectations for all students. Also included were scaffolding lessons to serve all students, multiple modes of lesson presentation, and means to differentiate instruction tailored to individual needs. To do this, mentors benefit from, according to participants, research on multiple intelligences and learning styles/resiliency, and knowledge that “designing lesson/units for higher levels of engagement will not only increase learning but lower distraction, etc. in (the) work environment.” In these ways, mentors can support teachers in efforts to reach all learners in any classroom, regardless of culture, language, gender, and SES.

Participants also identified pedagogical knowledge *specific* to mentoring to diversity and equity. Effective mentors know how curriculum supports learning of all students through infusion of diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic content—what Banks (2003) calls content integration. Mentors reported guiding teachers to tap local funds of knowledge (Moll & Vellex-Ibanez, 1992), so that students, families, and their cultural and community experiences were incorporated into teaching plans. Also, participants noted that effective mentors use knowledge of standards to guide pedagogy. One explained, “If I have some familiarity with grade-level content standards,

I can better talk about where any one student is ... [which is] critical to working on closing the achievement gap.”

Participants also noted that mentoring for equity requires pedagogical knowledge to support academic development of ELLs. This includes research-informed practice, what one participant called “An understanding of the stages of language development and other second language theories and what students are capable of doing at each stage so that teachers can differentiate instruction.” This knowledge includes specific approaches to support language instruction and development of academic literacy, including Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) techniques. Participants noted that mentors need to know participant structures to support ELLs' achievement, including: language development in cooperative learning groups; adequate wait time to answer questions; heterogeneous grouping for conversation with more fluent English speaking peers; and equity cards or other tactics so space is made for ELLs to participate. One participant noted that many new teachers have been exposed to such a “tool box” and that “Mentors need to know this too.”

3.1.2. Pedagogy to focus teachers on diversity and equity in mentoring sessions

Beyond classroom pedagogy, Table 1 shows more than half of participants wrote that effective

mentors know how to use a mentoring session as a strategic site for focusing new teachers on diversity and equity. Starting with individual students and their learning was fundamental. One participant noted: “Help new teachers realize they are teaching kids, not algebra, and how important it is to let kids know you care about them as individuals.” Models of learning to teach have identified this ability to move past a focus on the teacher self, materials, and classroom management as something that occurs only after several years of teaching (e.g., Fuller, 1969). However, in a related study (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003), we documented how mentors can, in fact, disrupt this tendency in teacher development by using a repertoire of formative assessment strategies to focus teachers early in their careers on individual student learning.

Beyond focus on individual students, participants noted that mentors need to sharpen attention to equity and diversity. This involves embedding such work in weekly conversations, and using observational data to help the teacher analyze equitable learning opportunities during instruction. One participant noted: “Always look for who is left out and who benefits. Don’t be afraid to gently name the dynamics you see.” The mentor can use many concrete ideas for equity pedagogy and knowledge of relevant conferences and resources for support. The mentor also can tap local teachers “who are meeting the needs of diverse populations so they can provide opportunities for the beginning teacher to see effective practices.” The mentor can broker occasions for observations of these teachers by novices and for these teachers to serve as models and leaders in induction programs.

Participants were clear, however, that many new teachers are unprepared or unwilling to take on issues of equity in their instruction. This calls for sizing up a teacher’s knowledge of self-related to such concerns and for support and challenge. Participants noted that mentors need a repertoire of supports. This includes attending to individuality of teachers and an “ability to listen to teacher reflection and move that into a conversation that assists the teacher to look at a practice in a new way.” It involves knowing when a teacher simply

is stuck and being able then to be flexible, to be able to change hats, “moving from a consultant stance to a collaborative stance” as fellow lesson designer and strategist. The mentor can use data to prod a resistant teacher to be more reflective about equity. One participant illustrated:

During the pre-observation conversation, the beginning teacher made a judgmental statement about which students would be on task. So (the mentor) did a scripted observation, which included both a focus on a particular student and an every-five-minute tally of on-task behavior. During the post-observation conversation, the beginning teacher examined the data and was surprised to see that her “hypothesis” was not supported by the data. (The mentor) began a conversation that will continue for many weeks.

At times mentoring for equity involves knowing how to move the resistant teacher past a racist or narrow perspective or one blind to some important learner concerns. As one participant noted, this involves helping the beginning teacher with “an attitude awareness shift without lecturing and/or pointing out that the new teacher’s existing stance and values may be unexamined and limited.” This dance between firm and gentle relates to the need to keep the students always central. The mentor needs to monitor her/his own process of challenging new teachers’ attention to equity so that maximizing the learning of underserved students remains central.

3.2. Knowledge of contexts relevant to teaching diverse youth

Table 1 shows the second largest category of knowledge to mentor for equity and diversity is nested contexts relevant to teaching diverse youth. This includes knowledge related to lives of both students and teachers. The first theme in this category relates to local contexts, and the second to broader social concerns. At the local level, participants noted that mentors need strategies and resources for two areas. They have to help teachers learn about local cultures and communities, and know how to help new teachers

negotiate their professional worlds as they work to meet diverse learners' needs. Learning about local communities includes understanding how schools have cultures that affect students and community, and that communities have local concerns that affect schools. An important thing is knowing "how to work effectively with the cultures by knowing the history, values, family ties and cultural specifics of the dominant groups." The effective mentor, according to several participants, knows multiple ways to access this information, including district documents, community agencies, helpful people and material, and even a bus ride through communities where students live. Knowing local cultural knowledge serves the mentor. One participant recalled mentoring a teacher who panicked during Black History Month because of no materials:

Instead of finding books to use just for that time, we started creating a library of books she could use throughout the year. ... We invited families to share their culture (not just in December, but through the year). We used students from our own school to share their stories.

This exemplifies how the effective mentor needs to know how to link classroom learning with local community and cultural contexts. It also illustrates knowing how school realities constrain practice and how to guide a teacher to work within such constraints to affirm diversity and promote equity. Local knowledge also includes how to identify "inequities in content, methodology, treatment of students, and system." It includes how to "coach for equity" with a teacher, attending also to "a community of teachers, and a system (school/district)." This last component signals the way in which several participants cast mentors as change agents who understand how classrooms are embedded within school and district contexts that support inequities and can change them.

The second context theme regarding broader social issues begins with what participants referred to as "the systemic underpinnings of racism in our society," as well as "white privilege and how to see it." Also, mentors need a conceptual understanding of terms. Several mentors argued the need to

know how "diversity" relates to multiple indicators of difference, including race, language, gender, and SES. "Equity," several reported, is a concept that needs deep mentor attention. This includes knowing how broader social realities shape inequitable educational opportunities for children. Several participants noted that the effective mentor uses this knowledge to work toward closing the achievement gap between those student groups who traditionally perform well in particular schooling contexts and those who do not.

3.3. Knowledge of learners: What diverse learners bring to class

Just over a quarter of participants noted how mentors must help new teachers learn about assets diverse learners bring to class. Their remarks point to how mentors can help novices move beyond a stance of viewing culturally and linguistically diverse youth as "problems." Several themes here are important. One of these concerns the issue of helping new teachers move past a distanced "othering" of students different from themselves, to a closer knowing of individuals. One participant remarked:

When working with a variety of "at-risk" and culturally/linguistically diverse groups—a personal connection with each individual student is important. When we ask these students what is the one thing that makes a difference in their education, they respond: It is the personal attention and connection that is remembered.

Such attention involves being unafraid to inquire: "Why does José not do homework (sleep in class)? Is that because he is working 40 hours per week to help support his family?" This kind of getting to know youth becomes essential, especially for new teachers who, like most in the US, are white and middle class and need to learn about the worlds that shape their students' classroom learning.

A second theme in these responses involves the need for the mentor to be on the lookout for new teachers seeing non-mainstream students

through deficit lenses or failing to look deeper than surface behaviors. One participant described it this way: “If students who are acquiring English are all described as ‘discipline problems’ by the beginning teacher, it is the mentor’s job to present these data and work with the beginning teacher on possible solutions.” Another participant recalled how a new teacher was focused on some children “cheating” on tests because they were underprepared for them. As a mentor, this participant had to help the teacher see how using a single assessment, a test based almost solely on homework, was privileging some students and producing high failure rates for students who apparently were unable to secure equitable parental assistance with homework at night. The teacher needed guidance to examine practice and to see other ways to support all students as potential learners. One participant stated it boldly: “You can’t increase student achievement until you believe all students...culturally/linguistically diverse... are capable, gifted and talented children.”

3.4. *Mentor’s knowledge of self related to diversity and equity*

Table 1 shows just over a quarter of participants addressed a final area: mentors’ knowledge of self-related to diversity and equity and the ability to evolve. Participants noted that mentors need to have engaged in self-reflection on their attitudes toward educational inequities. One remarked that a mentor should know his or her own beliefs, values, and practices related to “diverse youth and the challenge of closing the achievement gap.” Without such self-awareness, mentoring for equity appears fruitless. This includes understanding biases one brings to a mentoring relationship. Without confronting one’s own positions and prejudices, mentoring for equity gets undermined. According to participants, mentors also should be open to their own sense of inadequacy in confronting these issues. Like most educators working in the often highly diverse classrooms of California, mentors will not find the work clean and easy. Central, however, is the ability to be comfortable discussing these issues openly and

honestly. Silence is not an option. Mentors, however, must be able to remain open to diverse points of view as they work with new teachers, and be committed to making change themselves as they come to understand the complexities of mentoring for equity in partnership with new teachers. One participant noted, “Without having done some self-reflection on equity, how can the mentor be expected to coach a new teacher in this area? It’s important to keep your own house in order before helping others.”

3.5. *Summary: The mentor’s knowledge base for focusing new teachers on equity*

Participants distinguished pedagogical knowledge for equity as the most essential knowledge category in mentoring for equity, including knowledge of ways to teach diverse youth and of ways to teach or guide new teachers in promoting equitable learning. Nested contexts mattered in learning of local dimensions of students’ lives, and of broader social and structural issues of diversity and equity. However, mentors also need knowledge of how local and professional contexts affect new teachers’ work. Knowledge of what diverse learners bring to class also helps a mentor see when to guide a new teacher to move beyond a stance of viewing culturally and linguistically diverse youth as “problems.” However, the mentoring exchange also requires a delicate dance so the mentor finds ways to work with teachers on equity concerns without alienating the teacher or intensifying a predisposition to resistance. Mentors also need knowledge of themselves related to diversity and equity, being prepared to evolve as needed, and of ways to promote teachers’ self-reflection regarding equity.

4. Results part two: a case study of mentoring for equity and diversity

Examining more closely one case of mentoring for equity exposes nuances and tensions of a knowledge base in action. This section examines an experienced mentor with a strong background in mentoring for equity. She was identified by her

induction program leaders as an expert on equity issues, particularly in working with ELLs, and she led professional development on equity. A white woman in her 40s, Sonya was in her fourth year as a mentor at the time of the study and described her career as “liberation work for kids.” She further articulated her *knowledge of self-related to diversity and equity* in saying, “I feel as a teacher and a mentor if you are not consistently challenging the system, you’re furthering it.” She was conscious of her own social justice stance toward equity as an educator. Maggie, a white woman in her 20s, was a new teacher at Lake School. Lake is a K-5 school with 96% Latino students, 66% low income, and 55% ELLs. Maggie’s grade level colleagues drew straws to decide who would work with each group. Maggie drew the short straw and therefore received the “low” language ability-tracked 4th graders. Her more experienced colleagues drew the “highs” and “middles.” Sonya later remarked on the inequitable nature of this selection process: “It doesn’t make any sense to decide who gets the most challenged reading group by drawing straws and leaving that to the new teacher.” Maggie was confronted for the first time with a classroom full of ELLs and students with different skill sets, with six students identified as “nonreaders.”

Both Maggie and Sonya described their mentoring relationship as positive and collaborative. However, one equity-focused problem Sonya addressed with Maggie concerned Maggie’s beliefs and practices related to her ELL students and particularly her capacity to “differentiate instruction.” Maggie had tended, in Sonya’s words, “to keep on the lowest common denominator.” Sonya found that Maggie was shifting her instruction downward, not challenging learners, and not recognizing different needs of students. Here Sonya tapped her *pedagogical knowledge for equity to teach diverse learners and foster equity* in articulating high expectations for *all* students and the importance of differentiating instruction. But it was her additional *knowledge of contexts about broad social issues related to inequity in school* that enabled her to identify this set of concerns as an equity issue. By situating a problematic labeling of “low learners” in a context of inequitable school practices, she brought a larger equity lens to the

classroom interaction. She explained why it is an equity issue:

There is a culture among teachers who’ve accepted that these kids are of limited intelligences. These kids are designated as “low learners.” They are not being treated as ten year olds, but as six year olds. It’s totally humiliating their intelligence and what they are capable of doing. You would never see that in a white, middle class school where parents are empowered.

Sonya used the mentoring conferences as an opportunity to push Maggie’s thinking in a number of ways, demonstrating her *pedagogical knowledge for teaching diverse learners* in identifying the needs of ELLs. First, Sonya was concerned that Maggie was creating a level of “dependence” among her ELLs, as she tended to read for them out loud and rarely extended them to develop their own reading or comprehension abilities to promote academic language. Second, she wanted to help Maggie differentiate instruction, address different stages of language development of the learners, and not teach to the lowest common denominator.

Sonya’s case most importantly demonstrates *pedagogical knowledge for focusing the new teacher on equity in mentoring sessions*. Sonya used this knowledge by starting with Maggie’s identified concerns yet challenging her to move to more equitable practices. In a lesson planning conference, Sonya found her opening when Maggie brought up a concern that she didn’t know what the students could do independently and that she was scaffolding so much that she did not know their abilities to work on their own. Sonya took the opportunity to work with this concern and to focus Maggie on developing her students’ independence and higher order capacities. Sonya directly asked Maggie about how she was differentiating instruction given the complexity of her classroom and wondered if Maggie might be “depriving” a group of students access to learning because of her approaches. She entered this conversation very delicately (M = Mentor; T = Teacher).

- M: How does differentiation look given that its a whole group activity and it does sound like quite a diverse group since you've got the six who are not comprehending independently yet.
- T: The only differentiation would be, for the lower kids, reading it out loud, they're following along...
- M: I'm wondering about...your whole thing you started out with, "How do I know what they can do on their own" and along with it "How do I give them the maximum opportunity to do what they can do on their own." I'm wondering if you're not depriving the other 17 students of a chance to see what they can get on their own before you read it to them.

Sonya went on to explain a variety of ways to differentiate for different kinds of learners, with more intensive work on vocabulary for some while pushing for independent comprehension from others. She provided strategies, careful not to sound too directive. She hesitated in her remarks, adding,

- M: I don't want to take over. You might want to keep it simpler, but...not letting the differentiation for the very beginners keep the others from trying to get it on their own first.... Some of the kids who wind up in these so called "low intensive groups," one of their issues is they become more teacher dependent.

She demonstrated her pedagogical knowledge of focusing a new teacher on equity when she assessed the approaches of the novice that may have underserved many of her students and carefully supported her to focus on changes. The mentor had to be respectful in the mentoring relationship to keep pace with the novice's concerns (starting with Maggie's own concern), to not be too directive, yet to help the novice move towards more equitable practices. On one hand, Sonya highlighted her *knowledge of student learners*: examining needs of very different ELLs

(differentiating the 6 from the 17), assessing the novice's challenges, and confronting Maggie about "depriving students of a chance to see what they can get on their own" and "pushing students away from feeling dependent." On the other hand, Sonya appreciated the novice's needs as an adult learner; she was careful to maintain a nondirective stance by explaining that the suggestions were not to be viewed as the mentor "taking over" the new teacher's ideas.

In a reflective interview, Sonya explained her thinking about that conference. She highlights both her *knowledge of learners* by seeing beyond the "low" label to students' assets and her *knowledge of focusing a novice on equity* by prompting learning about differentiation.

I was constantly scanning and searching for an opportunity in the discussion. I kept coming back to that these people are capable of reading for themselves. They have some ability to look at print and make sense. Every one of them, even if they are low. I have to find an opening for her to find that. Instead of saying, "They can't read it and show a video." A lot of mentors might do that. I was searching for an opening.

Sonya assessed the novice's *pedagogical knowledge and practice related to equity*, working to both support and then challenge her to reconsider her practices in the reflecting conversation after observing the planned lesson. Sonya began the reflecting conference asking Maggie how she felt the lesson went. Maggie said she thought it went well and it felt good. Sonya later remarked that there was "no opening when a teacher said it was really good. That's like a wall. You can't really step in and say, I don't think it was so good." Thus Sonya noted,

My biggest goal was to find a way to honor what she had done and to find some kind of in to see if she was still going to be open for a next step to allow students to answer questions on their own. To do something to allow them to demonstrate their comprehension or lack of it.

Sonya used observational data that described what students were doing and saying in order to

challenge Maggie's thinking. Sonya also interjected pushing questions and prompts to direct Maggie. Examples included: "I can't tell for sure where the students got this information from, you reading it or reading it themselves" and "Is there an opportunity for students to recheck their predictions?" Sonya reported to Maggie that there was almost "no higher level thinking in all of the lesson," and that assessing predictions would contribute some higher level thinking.

By the end of the observation cycle and conferences with her mentor, Maggie was beginning to rethink some of her ideas about students and her teaching practice: "I know next time I would do things differently. ... A real aha I had from the observation and feedback process is about giving them a chance to do more on their own so that I can get to know their independent comprehension level." Maggie identified that she had made growth over the year in learning more about differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of all learners. She identified growth in learning to pull out a small group of students for extra support and using multiple strategies to scaffold. However, she saw this as an area for continued growth.

Sonya faced a number of challenges in focusing Maggie on issues of equity, highlighting the tensions between the mentor's knowledge about the sensitivities of adult learners and knowledge of broader social inequities for student learners. Sonya chose not to confront Maggie with a critique of inequities in her school:

My goal in the political sense is not something I can hit head on with her. It's not going to make sense to her ... about how there is a whole cultural social thing that allows a whole group of teachers to look down on kids and expect less of them without even realizing they are doing it. That's not some place I would go with her. But I want her to see who the students are as human beings and what they are capable of.

Sonya also chose to be careful in her critique of Maggie: "Some teachers, if you tell them what you think, they feel criticized and then shut down. Maggie is like that. So it's kind of a cross between

giving her information that she is really lacking, but not doing it in any sort of blaming way."

Sonya exhibited her *knowledge of professional contexts in relation to equity*, identifying that she was working against both Maggie's resistance and the status quo of the school on equity issues:

I'm working against a million things because the principal thinks everything Maggie is doing is great and the other teachers want her to make her class as rote as possible... So, I'm working pretty much against everyone around her. I think I'm the only one who would bring that point of view in... and she was a little bit resistant to hearing it from me.

Sonya reported that the equity work would challenge Maggie's relationships at her school: "She is going to have to think critically about her peers and the principal when she does that."

At times Sonya saw her role as one of activist in the larger school, reaching out to several educators over four years she worked with novices there. She spoke of challenges and of hope:

I have to try and impact higher level things that I know are not good for kids, things that are lacking. It's an activist kind of role. Like if you get them to question academic tracking, and work with a number of teachers and the principal to encourage them to question the system.

Sonya's nonconfrontational stance ("looking for an opening," "getting them to question") represents one among several stances a mentor might take. Nonetheless, the case reveals the challenges of this work and how one mentor taps a knowledge base for equity-focused mentoring and uses it judiciously to enact change with a novice teacher.

5. Discussion

New teachers in the US need guidance to address the needs of their diverse students and to close achievement gaps. Mentoring is one means to provide this support. However, mentoring often falls short of these goals, in part because

the profession needs a stronger conceptual understanding of mentoring for equity. This study contributes to such an understanding by analyzing practitioners' wisdom of practice and articulating a knowledge base for focusing new teachers on equity. It also offers insight into the complexity of this knowledge base in practice. Several categories of a knowledge base emerged from our analyses of induction leaders' responses. The most prominent was pedagogical knowledge for equity. This included the mentor's use of a repertoire of strategies for teaching diverse youth and fostering equity in classrooms. It also included knowing how to use the mentoring exchange as a pedagogically rich occasion for focusing the new teacher on diversity and equity. Knowledge of contexts relevant to teaching diverse youth included two kinds. First was a focus on local context. This included cultures and communities affecting the schooling of youth, as well as the professional contexts within which new teachers were functioning. Participants also argued that mentors need knowledge of broader social and structural issues that shape inequities. Knowledge of learners meant that mentors are alert to ways new teachers position themselves in relation to diverse youth and how misconceptions and biases may affect pedagogy. Finally, to do this mentoring work, effective mentors use knowledge of self-related to diversity and equity, and a flexible and reflective stance to rethinking one's own stances and biases.

Our case of Sonya and Maggie highlighted this complex knowledge base in action. When Maggie drew a short straw, receiving a class labeled "low ability" ELLs, Sonya identified the need to differentiate instruction and yet maintain high expectations for students. When the mentor found the novice shifting instruction downward and limiting students' independence, she sought opportunities to intervene. She was "constantly scanning and searching" for an opening, which she found when she and Maggie planned opportunities for student independence and differentiated instruction. The case also highlighted a careful dance mentors do in challenging novices about expectations of culturally and linguistically diverse students while not blaming teachers. The mentor had to sustain a positive relationship with

the teacher while questioning her beliefs and practices. Sonya identified how political and equity issues are not something that she chose to "hit head on" with Maggie. She had to find another way in to the conversation. The case finally spotlights the complexity of challenging the status quo of lowered expectations for culturally and linguistically diverse learners replicated in one school's tracking practices. Sonya identified how she worked against messages Maggie received from colleagues, the principal, and the school. Sonya realized that confronting inequities in Maggie's classroom ultimately put Maggie in opposition with the larger culture of her school. Ultimately, she remained optimistic about her change efforts, as she sought to be an activist at a schoolwide level.

5.1. A bi-level knowledge base and bifocal perspective for equity-focused mentoring of new teachers

As we noted, in many ways the knowledge base identified by induction leaders maps onto previous research on teachers' knowledge base (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987). It also reinforces several concerns in research on equity-focused teacher education. These include new teacher inquiry into inequitable practices, culturally relevant pedagogy, and teaching that fosters language development and language self-esteem (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1995; Garcia, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Zeichner et al., 1998). However, our study makes an important contribution to this body of work. Each domain of knowledge in mentoring for equity has a bi-level nature. Table 2, drawn directly from our analyses, shows how this knowledge base operates at two levels. Across knowledge domains, the bottom row of the table marks how Targeting Students rests at the foundation of mentoring for equity. However, the upper row (Targeting Teachers) shows how effective mentors also use nuanced approaches to addressing needs of the adult learner in context. To enact a bi-level knowledge base, the mentor assumes a *bifocal perspective* on teachers and students. Up-close the mentor focuses on the new teacher, what she/he

Table 2
A bi-level knowledge base for equity-focused mentoring of new teachers

| | Knowledge Domain | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | Pedagogy | Contexts | Learners | Self |
| Targeting teachers | Wide repertoire of mentoring strategies and stances for observation, assessment, feedback, critique in mentoring conversations that guide teaching reform; Commitments and practices to focus the novice on challenges of inequity in the classroom | Embedded professional contexts; Broader social contexts of schooling and teaching; Leadership and change agency | Assessment of novice assets and needs about issues of equity; New teacher as adult learner; Novice knowledge base, strategies, & cultural competence; Novice's reflectivity level & receptivity to change | Focusing the novice on own identity vis a vis student diversity |
| Targeting students | Wide repertoire of strategies to serve all learners; Repertoire of strategies to serve culturally and linguistically diverse youth and to promote equity | Local school culture: student, parent, community; Broader social & structural issues of inequity and discrimination | Assessment of students' funds of knowledge and challenges to deficit views; Learning theory and culturally responsive learning theory | Mentors' understanding of self related to student diversity and equity; Awareness of own biases, stances, and interactions with students |

knows and needs. The mentor simultaneously holds the big picture in view, which is the students, their learning, and their needs.

For the domain of pedagogy, in targeting students, effective mentors use knowledge of a wide repertoire of strategies to teach diverse youth and promote equity. However, to target work with teachers, mentors need strategies for observation, feedback, and critique focusing the novice on inequities in the classroom. For knowledge of context “targeting students,” the mentor uses an awareness of local and larger issues related to inequities. The upper row, however, marks how effective mentoring for equity always is embedded within a new teacher's multiple professional worlds (e.g., classroom, grade/department, school, community, district, state, etc.) that the mentor must help the new teacher negotiate, and at times, transform (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

In knowledge of learners, the bottom row shows how mentors need to know ways new teachers can learn about their diverse students. However, the

upper row shows how effective mentors also know their new teachers well to guide them in pedagogy that affirms equity for students. This involves assessing the teacher learners' needs, cultural competence, and receptivity to change. It involves “reading the mentoring situation” (Orland, 2001). Such readings reveal conflicts mentors face when confronting inequalities, as mentors respond to experiences of teachers and their professional contexts, while focusing on equitable results for students, a pair of concerns at times at odds. A participant in our study described mentor capacities as “pacing” and “leading”: Pacing is when the mentor listens to the new teacher and tries to stand side-by-side, understanding his/her concerns; leading is holding higher outcomes and a focused direction in mind. While a mentor builds rapport, understands an individual teacher's needs and readiness, the mentor also holds out larger goals and tries to lead the novice on a pathway. It is critical that the mentor not outpace the novice and thus lose her, nor fail to lead and miss an

opportunity to be educative. Sonya demonstrated such pacing and leading with Maggie, as she listened to her concerns about student independence, built on these ideas, and probed for changes in differentiation, expectations, and practices with ELLs in class. Finally, Table 2 shows the last column of knowledge of self. Effective mentors reflect on their own understandings and biases regarding diversity and equity and, in work with new teachers, promote similar reflection.

5.2. *Pedagogical learner knowledge in mentoring for equity*

In our study of induction leaders, we found the largest category of knowledge in mentoring for equity to be pedagogical knowledge for teaching students and for guiding teachers. In several of the most influential models of the knowledge base for teaching (e.g., Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987), this domain aligns best with general pedagogical knowledge. In our analyses of respondents' notions of knowledge needed to mentor for equity and as demonstrated by Sonya's practices in the case study, we were struck by how the pedagogical knowledge seldom was "general." Just as "pedagogical content knowledge" captures an amalgam of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, we found that the pedagogy our case and respondents described (for classroom teaching and for new teacher mentoring for diversity and equity) was deeply informed by knowledge of diverse learners and knowledge of contexts. These concepts resonated with a construct identified by Grimmett & MacKinnon (1992) as *pedagogical learner knowledge*. This includes "Knowledge that allows teachers to understand learners from different cultural, social, and family backgrounds, interpret properly what they say and do, and support effectively their development in cognitive, social, physical, and psychological dimensions" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, cited in Wang & Odell, 2002, p. 486). As an amalgam of general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners and contexts, pedagogical learner knowledge is "pedagogical procedural information useful in enhancing learner-focused teaching in the dailyness of classroom action" or the ways teachers interact

"rigorously and supportively with learners" (Grimmett & MacKinnon, p. 387).

Models of the knowledge base for teaching generally include some attention to this notion of differentiating instruction for various learners. Shulman (1987) used the notion of adapting and tailoring: A thoughtful teacher adapts a lesson to different classes of students, and within these classes, tailors instruction to meet varied students' needs. In the Teacher Assessment Project at Stanford, high scoring teachers in fact demonstrated greater ability to reflect on how instruction relates to individuals and groups of learners and to reconstruct a learning situation for different student groups as needed (Athanases, 1993). However, pedagogical learner knowledge adds something important. It begins with the assumption that there is a body of knowledge, skills, and dispositions particular to working with culturally and linguistically diverse youth in the 21st century in the US, and that knowing such things shapes one's teaching. Pedagogical learner knowledge contributes to our understanding of mentoring for equity and diversity.

Our analyses advance a theoretical understanding of a knowledge base for effective mentoring, particularly as it relates to diverse learners and to promoting educational equity. Mentoring for equity requires particular knowledge. Pedagogical learner knowledge is critical in places such as California where classrooms dominated by ELLs, for example, often are the norm. New teachers often begin ill-prepared to understand the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, and with limited repertoires of pedagogy and curriculum. Effective mentors are equipped to guide, question, and challenge these new teachers as they begin their careers. However, to mentor effectively in such contexts, it is not enough to possess general pedagogical knowledge. As a mentor, one must use an instructional repertoire that is informed by an understanding of larger social contexts that have shaped educational inequities, cultural norms for learning, and language development, and how they play out in class. A mentor needs to know what it means to break down complex texts, to make texts accessible in a learnable language for ELLs. Effective mentors use a vast repertoire of

differentiating and scaffolding strategies specific to very different developmental phases of ELLs. These include knowing cultural, linguistic, and prior knowledge of groups and individuals in classrooms. Thinking about equitable participation structures as they relate to development of language, self-esteem issues, and cultural norms is also key. Mentors need to know how to assess students' understandings in writing and speech, examining language development, comprehension, and the multitude of challenges to language acquisition. Mentors also need to understand the needs and competences of new teachers as learners, their receptivity to change and consciousness of equity concerns, and the organizational context in which the novice is embedded. Such knowledge deeply informs the pedagogical decisions they make and the mentoring stances adopted. A mentor thus uses a very particular kind of pedagogical learner knowledge of teacher learners to focus novices on equity and diversity.

5.3. *Challenges of enacting a knowledge base of mentoring for equity*

Enacting a knowledge base of mentoring for equity resulted in numerous challenges that participants in our study identified. New teachers may always be overwhelmed and somewhat reluctant to receive guidance that pushes them beyond their zones of proximal development or what they can manage during this early stage of a teaching career. There also are some particular challenges that we can predict will arise that mentors in our study helped us to understand. The first of these is how to focus novices on their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers in overwhelm or survival mode have a hard time moving their attention from their own performance to focusing on individual learners, and on ways to differentiate instruction for needs of highly diverse students. This includes identifying appropriate practices that sustain high expectations and readjust to learners' specific needs. Novices also require support in assessing ELLs' understandings and then adjusting differentiated instructional strategies to meet individuals' needs. An effective mentor must be equipped for this work.

The second challenge is confronting resistance and “dysconscious” assumptions (King, 1991) about linguistically and culturally diverse students. This is a moral challenge. It highlights how a knowledge base cannot be reduced to a narrow focus on technical skills alone. Rather, mentoring for equity, just as teaching for equity, involves moral dimensions (Hargreaves, 1995; Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004). Equity concerns prompt questions such as: Am I doing right by my students and teachers? We hear echoes of this dimension when Sonya described her vocation as “liberation work for kids” and in her naming of injustices in the inequitable treatment of students. Mentors, such as Sonya, at times must challenge new teachers' thinking and practices. They do a delicate dance of pacing and leading, of gauging novices' awareness and needs, yet moving them towards more equitable outcomes. They have to keep in mind the focus on students' learning, while addressing adult learners' needs. At times this involves mentors challenging novices' conceptions of students as “others.” Mentors can help new teachers see diverse learners' assets and possibilities, not just their deficits. Effective equity-focused mentors use a particular knowledge of supporting and moving possibly resistant adult learners in the context of race, culture, language, and equity. Mentors face moral challenges when they confront inequities in new teachers' beliefs and practices. They also need a repertoire of strategies to do so that goes beyond reflective questioning to more directive teaching.

A third challenge is critiquing the status quo and current institutional arrangements in classrooms, school, and even society—a political challenge. Mentors who engage in such an endeavor struggle with competing tensions about easing the transition of novices into the profession (socializing them into the culture of the school) and challenging the way things are done in schools. This issue raises questions about the purpose of mentoring. Is mentoring about transmitting knowledge of current arrangements or is it about knowledge transformation, where mentors help novices “learn to teach against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995). For example, while Sonya worked to change some inequitable

assumptions and practices of a single novice teacher, she was continually challenged to counter the larger school culture and structures that may have been reproducing inequalities through tracking and lowered expectations. Further, focusing on equity for students puts the mentor in a bind. Sonya had to consider that in trying to create more equitable conditions for students, she may be putting Maggie at risk by placing her at odds with the political context of the school's adult community.

6. Conclusion

This article identifies a complex mentor knowledge base for focusing novice teachers on equity. The study provides a number of lessons for practice, research, and policy in the area of induction and mentor development. Current approaches to teacher induction policy and funding, mentor recruitment, and professional development may lack supports necessary for development of such a complex knowledge base. Programs that recruit expert teachers and do not support their mentor development in the area of pedagogical learner knowledge for students and adults will leave mentors ill-equipped to focus novices on diverse learners' needs. The mentor leaders in our study were engaged in ongoing professional development and collaborative inquiry. Development included an explicit equity focus, with expert outsiders, readings, resources, examination and critique of practice, and construction of new knowledge as part of the learning enterprise. These mentors met in a community of practice to examine and critique their mentoring work. If we want to develop a complex knowledge base that many mentors never learned in their own pre-service or inservice development, then mentors may benefit from new knowledge, access to theory, case studies (like that of Sonya's), and practice. Also critical are opportunities to learn from other mentors through dialogue, observations, analysis of videos of practice, as well as opportunities to reflect on their own assumptions about equity and the struggles of focusing novices on equity. Such work requires a community of practice for mentors. Equity and diversity must be deeply

embedded in this work, rather than arising merely as add-ons.

Research on a knowledge base for mentoring for equity can be further developed through investigations in a range of contexts that feature varied (and intersecting) equity issues including race and ethnicity, socioeconomics, language, gender, and sexual orientation. This research must continue to go deep into the often unexplored terrain of mentor–mentee actual exchanges. This involves examining mentoring exchanges over time, capturing dialogue, and examining impact on beliefs and classroom practices. Such work can reveal both the complexities and possibilities of the endeavor.⁴

Finally, this study provides lessons for school and district policies. The work of educational equity goes beyond that of the mentor, involving administrator leadership and school restructuring to eliminate the kinds of tracking and lowered expectations evident in Maggie's school case. Districts may also want to examine mentor recruitment to reflect diverse student populations. Further, mentors must be given time and opportunity to develop cultural understandings of students and teachers with whom they work. Finally, schools and districts must provide time and resources for mentors and novices to meet continuously to conduct this complex work. If mentors hold a key to closing the achievement gap, then researchers, policy makers, and practitioners must turn their attention to articulating the knowledge base and supports necessary to foster the new teacher's focus on equity.

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⁴For those interested in reading about other cases of mentoring that speak to equity issues, see Achinstein and Athanases (2006), Achinstein and Barrett (2004), and Athanases and Achinstein (2003).

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