TEACHER CANDIDATES’ ENGAGEMENT IN EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTITIONER INQUIRY: NAVIGATING COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING TO TEACH

By

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To my husband, children, and all teachers and students
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have always been inspired by the Albert Einstein quote, “Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.” The inspiration comes, not from a disbelief in what education can offer, but in the promise of education’s potential to unlock life-long skills, strategies, and dispositions that far outlive objective content. Learning is alive and visceral, and I am forever grateful for everyone who has shown me glimpses of its beauty.

My husband, Jonathan, listened to and fed my wild ideas, played along with my deep discussions, and encouraged me to do hard things because they matter. My son, Charlie, taught me a profound love of the natural world, how to be still and feel deeply, and has shifted my entire view on mass schooling. My son, Jack, inspired me to always put my best effort into my work, to always make time to smile and play, and taught me that a good board game or movie can be a breath of fresh air when feeling overwhelmed. My daughter, Celeste, showed me how to fight through hardship, how to slow down and bask in the world’s wonders, and the glory of new discoveries.

My advisors, Drs. Nancy Dana and Gage Jeter, are incredible, and I will hold their wisdom near as I navigate each phase of my career. My entire cohort has shown relentless belief that all of us would succeed, which was essential in crossing each milestone. Special thanks to my dear friend, Marietta, my husband, Jonathan, and my mom, Melissa, for proofing pieces of work and talking me through challenging times. Thank you to everyone who kept my kids while I worked and pushed me to keep going.

I am an educator, through and through. My career’s work is dedicated to all teachers and students everywhere, in hopes that the beauty of learning will be revealed to all. I do not plan to stop learning anytime soon.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Practitioner Inquiry (PI)  Practitioner inquiry is the “systematic, intentional study of one’s professional practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009 as cited in Dana, 2013, p. 2). It is a process where teachers support one another in identifying context-specific problems of practice, reviewing relevant literature on the topic, collecting and analyzing data, implementing action plans, and sharing results (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011).
TEACHER CANDIDATES’ ENGAGEMENT IN EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTITIONER INQUIRY: NAVIGATING COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING TO TEACH

By
Aimee Hardy Barber

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Chair: Nancy Dana
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

Education in the United States is a different experience depending on where students live and go to school. The achievement and opportunity gaps illuminate disparities in the quality of education students of color and students living in poverty receive. When research is embedded within the practice of teaching, or practitioner inquiry, it has shown potential for building capacities for improved student learning, strengthening teachers’ practices, and contributing to school or district level decisions. Practitioner inquiry, with a focus on making education more equitable, has shown promise for student-centered district and school improvements.

The purpose of this study was to understand what happened when I brought an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience for teacher candidates in the teacher education program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Through the process of practitioner inquiry, I reflected upon my facilitation of teacher candidates completing internships for the culmination of a degree in elementary or early childhood education. The main sources of data included field notes taken during facilitation sessions, artifacts completed by interns throughout the process, researcher’s journal
entries taken immediately following each session, and participant interviews conducted after final presentations of work.

As I reviewed and analyzed my data, three overarching themes emerged: Building Equity Consciousness with Equity Consciousness, Promoting Pride and Agency in Teacher Interns through Practitioner Inquiry, and Navigating Resistance to Full Immersion in Equity-Focused Inquiry. This study describes how I facilitated an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in teacher internships, the decisions I made through formative data analysis along the way, the resulting actions of the facilitated sessions, and the unique experiences of each intern. I conclude by sharing 11 lessons learned which fall under three overarching themes and implications this study has revealed for my future practice as a teacher educator and for the field of teaching and teacher education.
CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND METHODOLOGY

Education in the United States is often criticized when compared to educational experiences in other nations. The 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results showed the United States fell below the international average scores in reading, math, and science and ranked 30th internationally when comparing the sum of the mean science, reading, and math scores (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). While our position in international education rankings is troubling, perhaps even more concerning is the variation of educational experiences within our nation itself.

Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out the enormous amount of energy focused on the achievement gap in America. The achievement gap refers to “discrepancies in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrant and White students” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p.1). Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have examined multiple ways to reduce the growing gap in academic test performance among students of varying backgrounds. However, many education stakeholders call for a shift in focus away from differences in culminating test scores to more closely examine the variance in educational and societal opportunities provided to children depending on where one lives and goes to school.

Darling-Hammond (2010) argued that we must sharpen our focus on the “substantial inequalities in access to educational opportunity that occur from preschool through elementary and secondary education, into college and beyond” (p. 22). The opportunity gap refers to differences in access to key educational resources such as high quality teachers and curriculum, personalized learning, necessary educational
materials, and plentiful information resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Students across the United States receive different educational experiences depending on where they live and where they go to school, resulting in an opportunity gap for different populations of students.

Lack of resources and political clout are a few of the many discrepancies between schools serving different social groups, and unequal educational services and accesses contribute to a wide and growing opportunity gap. Darling-Hammond (2010) described the opportunity gap as a major contributor to the achievement gap in our nation and called educators to pay more attention to the disparity in educational opportunities granted to students depending on where they live and go to school. In 2010, she reported only 1 in 10 low-income kindergartners would become college graduates. Instead of fighting for inclusive and equitable educational practices, many of our nation’s schools and districts may systemically, yet perhaps unknowingly, feed unjust societal norms by providing different educational opportunities to varying groups of children.

Upon learning more about the opportunity gap and inequitable educational experiences offered to students, I wanted to look closely at these issues to uncover potential opportunities that might play a role in mitigating them. Darling-Hammond (2010) said we must “teach our way out” (p. 3) of the opportunity and achievement gap crises, and Robinson (2015) called for a grassroots revolution of teachers to transform education. In order to impact positive and lasting change toward more equitable opportunity and access in schooling experiences, educators such as myself can take a
careful look at our own educational practices and how we might work to lessen the opportunity gap and its lasting effects on humanity.

As a university instructor in a teacher preparation program, I am in contact with approximately 90 future teachers every year who will soon enter classrooms filled with eager students. I recognized a great opportunity, in my position, to teach the knowledge and skills necessary for future teachers to identify inequitable practices in schools and work to find solutions. This dissertation study was designed to closely examine how I might better prepare teacher candidates to identify and improve upon factors contributing to the opportunity gap in their future school contexts. There is a clear need to do more to address inequitable educational opportunities, before teachers enter their careers, in order to equip them with the knowledge and skills to combat educational inequity.

After taking classes on practitioner research during my doctoral studies at the University of Florida and completing several readings by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle, key scholars on the movement and its role in preparing the next generation of teachers, I decided to bring practitioner research, or the systematic investigation of one’s own teaching practice, into teacher candidates’ final semester when they are completing internships in local classrooms. I wanted to explore how practitioner research might serve as a tool for identifying and addressing issues related to student learning while teacher candidates worked with students and a mentor teacher. To do this, I looked at the assignments interns traditionally completed during their internship semester, including one professional development assignment. This professional development assignment asked interns to identify an area of their teaching in need of
further development and then create a brief action plan on what they would do to develop that area of need. I noticed interns would complete the assignment quickly and without much depth. So, I decided to rethink the professional development assignment to include a closer and more systematic investigation of one’s teaching practice. Practitioner research would provide the systematic approach necessary for this investigation.

In the spring 2017 semester, I incorporated practitioner research into the professional development assignment of the internship. I reconceptualized the assignment to include four seminars to walk interns through the process of practitioner inquiry, focused on making student-centered change in their classroom contexts. At the end of the semester, interns shared what they learned about their practice with peers in an Intern Inquiry Showcase. They were proud of their work and eager to share what they had learned. One intern said, “As a result of this experience I will take into my teaching practice the ability to diagnose a problem and solve it. This helped me learn how to gather data about an issue in my classroom and use the data to solve it.” Another intern noted, “This experience made me feel ready to teach in the classroom because it made me more aware of the classroom issues that sometimes, as teachers, we overlook.” Another student claimed, “I feel more classroom ready because I know I'll be using this practitioner inquiry method as a first-year teacher. I know I'm going to run into problems that I won't know how to solve right away. I'll probably do what we did in this inquiry experience and start researching and experimenting with different strategies until I find a good solution.” These comments showed evidence of interns valuing the practitioner inquiry experience and seeing its usefulness in their future classrooms.
While the practitioner research experience showed promise, I was troubled by the somewhat superficial inquiry topics. Many teacher candidates chose to address issues focused on classroom management with a solution of a reward or consequence implementation. Some students focused on behavior management for one specific student and tried out individualized behavior plans or meeting with parents. Others addressed the lack of parental involvement in their school settings. Another noticed that kids never knew what kinds of books they wanted to check out from the library. While the problems of practice were important to the interns, they seemed to lack depth as well as a consciousness of educational inequity. I decided I needed to dig a bit deeper into how I might push interns’ thinking to approach more pervasive issues of educational inequity that may affect their teaching practice throughout their careers.

As a teacher educator, I wanted to work harder to equip future teachers to enter any classroom ready to advocate for all students they serve. It is with this in mind that I recrafted my efforts to bring equity-focused practitioner inquiry into the teacher candidate internship. To better understand the issues surrounding this problem of my practice, I began by seeking a deeper understanding of the issue from broad, historical, and local perspectives.

**Background and Significance of the Problem**

Through coursework from the University of Florida’s doctoral program in Curriculum, Teaching, and Teacher Education, I gained insight into some of the root causes for today’s educational opportunity gaps and inequities. I learned that inequitable policies, stemming from the formative years of America, kept students of color and students living in poverty in lower ranking social orders and out of schools. Early schooling efforts were reserved for the elite social class but paid for by public
monies (Rury, 2016). Schools were used as institutions to streamline values and identity in hopes of creating a more perfect society. By the end of the 19th century, almost no rural, Black, or Native American students were enrolled in public high schools. Though diversity increased in later years, events such as mid-20th century “White Flight”, or large-scale suburbanization of White people away from large cities, tested the efforts of progressive educators trying to bring more diversity into schools (Rury, 2016).

As an educator, I am concerned for racial and social injustice in schools today that is surprisingly similar to that of the mid-20th century. Although segregation policies have improved, families still tend to live in areas with predominately same racial and socioeconomic groupings. This segregation by fact of societal demographics, or de facto segregation, still leaves many racially and economically disadvantaged students in schools with fewer resources and virtually no political clout to come to their defense (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Social justice will only be possible when society has achieved a set of fair and equal principles for all people, along with respect for their basic human rights (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Some Americans may believe everyone is already equal in our nation, but a careful examination of our school demographics tells a different story. American society and schooling are still functioning under deeply rooted socially unjust norms that are virtually invisible to many.

Human-made systems continue to contribute to inequitable opportunities and access for the diverse populations of the United States. Milner (2015) described difficulties of poverty such as a lack of access to high-quality healthcare, healthy food, or high-quality education. He also pointed out that parent education and income levels can be predictors of academic success for their children. And while poverty is a
problem that affects all races, a disproportionate percentage of Black and Hispanic populations are living in poverty. According to the United States Census Bureau, 10 percent of White citizens were living in poverty in 2017, compared to 21 percent of Black citizens and 18 percent of Hispanic people (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018). Chang (2018) reported many school zones are becoming increasingly segregated, some as segregated as they were fifty years ago. As I examined my local context of my region and state, I recognized this de facto segregation and inequitable opportunities and knew I must work harder in my position of access to hundreds of future Louisiana teachers.

I wanted to foster more critical thinking among my teacher candidates to uncover potential educational inequities within field experiences and internships. I hoped they would feel drawn to seek out more information on the achievement gap. I wanted them to challenge norms and ask questions about the documented discrepancies in academic performance among different racial populations across the United States and in Louisiana. Recognizing the root causes of this gap requires much more digging than we currently require in my teacher education program, and I hoped to investigate ways I might create conditions for interns to look closely at this topic.

Darling-Hammond (2010) suggested paying more attention to the opportunity gap, or the “accumulated differences in access to key educational resources - expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources - that support learning at home and at school” (p. 28). Hall Mark (2013) emphasized moving away from work focused on eliminating a perceived achievement gap and suggested focusing on the many other
gaps that actually contribute to the disparities. Among those actual gaps, she named teacher quality, teacher preparation, challenging curriculum, and school funding as education related gaps. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (2006) warned that a sole focus on the achievement gap could bring about short-term solutions that are unlikely to address long-term issues of educational inequity.

In short, students least likely to have access to learning resources at home are also least likely to experience them in school (Darling-Hammond, 2010). While this description simplifies the idea of an opportunity gap and educational inequity, I turned to the literature to learn more about what true educational equity might encompass. I chose to use the definition provided by the authors of two books on conducting educational equity audits on schools and classrooms:

Educational equity: the educational policies, practices and programs necessary to (a) eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status: and (b) provide equal educational opportunities and ensure that historically underserved or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth. Educational equity knowledge and practices in public schools have evolved over time and require a comprehensive approach. Equity strategies are planned, systemic, and focus on the core of the teaching and learning process (curriculum, instruction, and school environment/culture). Educational equity activities promote the real possibility of equality of educational results for each student and between diverse groups of students. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as cited in Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich, 2009, p. 3-4)

After learning more about the opportunity gap and educational inequity, I turned my gaze toward my local context to determine the significance of these problems as they relate to my own professional practice. As a Louisiana educator, it is impossible to ignore the frequent criticism of our state’s lack of educational quality. A local newspaper recently reported that Louisiana was named the “worst state in the country,
according to a national analysis based on health care, education, infrastructure, crime and other quality-of-life measures” (Crisp, 2018, n.p.). While our state frequently appears at the bottom of lists when it comes to education quality, there are also many differences among schools within the state. In Louisiana, schools are given performance scores intended to help families make the best choice for their child’s education (Louisiana Believes, 2017). School performance scores are calculated based on state standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college credit attainment. However, elementary schools, specifically, are given school performance scores based completely on students’ standardized test scores. The Louisiana Department of Education website includes other information about schools such as the diversity of teachers, extracurricular offerings, and average student attendance (Louisiana Schools, n.d.), but each school is given an overall letter grade based on student performance on state standardized tests.

Each parish in Louisiana has a wide range of school performance scores. My parish of Lafayette is home to 40 schools. In 2017, that included “nine A-rated schools, 11 with ‘B’ scores, 12 with ‘C’ scores, seven with ‘D’ grades and one with an ‘F’ rating” (McElfresh, 2017, n.p.). Lafayette parish is unique because it is home to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, which is one of the largest producers of teachers for Louisiana schools (Louisiana Teacher Preparation Fact Book, 2017). The university sits near the center of the parish and graduated 172 teacher candidates in 2017. As a large producer of teachers for Louisiana, there is great opportunity to take a closer look at the broad range in standardized test scores within our parish, represented in the school
letter grades, as we engage future teachers in discourse on why these ranges exist and what can be done to improve educational experiences for all students.

I am an instructor in the College of Education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and teach teacher candidates in their third and fourth years of a four-year bachelor’s degree program in elementary or early childhood education. While our program is known for producing large numbers of teachers for Louisiana, we are always looking for opportunities to improve the quality of the teachers we send out to classrooms. Our recent improvement efforts were prompted by a new initiative from Louisiana’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) which requires a full year of classroom residency for aspiring teachers. According to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) website, the new regulations are meant to help with the current struggle to retain high performing teachers in Louisiana (Louisiana Department of Education, 2016).

As a member of the team working toward improving our program, I reflected on current issues occurring frequently with my teacher candidates. One area of particular concern was when teacher candidates expressed deficit-oriented views toward certain schools or populations of students when they discovered where they would conduct their internships. Deficit-oriented views frame particular populations as having problems or being at-risk without recognizing the structural, institutional, or systemic contribution to the issues (Howard, 2013). Several teacher candidates have complained when they learned they were placed in high poverty schools. I have heard comments such as, “I’ve heard the kids are like animals,” or “I'm freaking out. I got a really rough school.” These deficit-oriented comments place negative stereotypes on
populations of students and lack understanding that learning conditions can be improved upon by the professionals within the school. On the contrary, asset-oriented views focus on the “strengths, promise, and potential of students and can lead to opening up research approaches that delve into a more comprehensive, nuanced, complex, and authentic account of them” (Howard, 2013, p. 62). As a teacher educator, I can deliberately work to dispel myths about high poverty schools and students and replace those myths with a sense of agency to investigate the systemic and institutional contributions to educational inequity.

Many of our teacher candidates are placed in high poverty schools with large percentages of students of color. In some placements, teacher candidates are exposed to deficit-oriented approaches to teaching and learning and will sometimes assimilate to the practices they are witnessing in their placements. Deficit-oriented views of students can lead to inequitable practices, which makes it imperative that our teacher preparation program finds new ways to prepare teacher candidates to identify and challenge their own biases as well as the deficit-oriented views and practices within their internship placements.

Over the past six years, I have tried a few different approaches in my coursework to raise awareness of inequitable policies, systems, and ideologies. We have read Ken Robinson’s (2016) Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That’s Transforming Education and viewed his TED talk “Do Schools Kill Creativity?” (Robinson, 2006) as a way to initiate deep conversations about what teaching and learning could be and how school is experienced differently depending on student strengths, talents, or interests. I walked teacher candidates through the “Privilege Walk” (Young, 2006) activity which
gave them an opportunity to recognize inequities that have contributed to their own walks through their individual realities. My students are undergraduates who often have had little exposure to these types of discussions. However, they are generally very open-minded and honest once we have established a trusting environment where all perspectives are encouraged and challenging conversations are viewed as opportunities to grow and learn with and from one another. Inspired by coursework readings, activities, or documentary viewings, our time together has produced great discourse that provided glimpses of asset and deficit-oriented views and how our own life experiences contribute to how we see the world. However, I knew I could do more.

The discussions I have experienced with my teacher candidates empowered me to continue investigating how I might push my professional practice further in an effort to increase the equity consciousness of future teachers. I wanted to know what I could do to deepen my ability to guide teacher candidates to recognize and address deficit-oriented views and practices in ways that might encourage a developing sense of equity literacy. Equity-literate educators show high expectations for all students, recognize social bias placed on students and families, reject deficit views focused on fixing disenfranchised students, and believe that every student has the right to equitable educational opportunity (Gorski, 2013). I hoped to use this dissertation study to learn more about how I might improve my ability to produce more equity-literate early childhood and elementary teachers.

Milner (2015) stated "no area has more power to improve the life chances of preK-12 children living in poverty than strong teacher preparation that prepares teachers to teach effectively" (p. 143). Freedman and Appleman (2009) noted how
teacher education has the power to build a reflective stance of teacher researchers. When these two ideals came together, I found great opportunity, as a teacher educator, to equip future teachers with the knowledge and skills to make change when they identify educational inequities in their professional settings.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand what happened when I brought an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience for teacher candidates in the teacher education program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The process of practitioner inquiry, where teachers support one another in identifying problems of practice and collecting and analyzing data to find solutions, has shown evidence of improved student learning and a rise in teacher perception of professionalism (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011). Teacher candidates participating in their final semester of internship at my university already complete one cycle of practitioner inquiry. However, after looking closely at the experiences and products of teacher candidate participation in practitioner inquiry during internships, I noticed a few troubling trends. Teacher candidates learned about the practitioner inquiry process and its use for solving problems in their classrooms, but their topics often lacked depth. This was troubling because they were placed in school settings with exceptional opportunity for improving issues of inequitable education. From these experiences, I recognized a need to incorporate a more explicit equity focus within the practitioner inquiry cycles.

I would have liked the ability to carry these changes into the existing pilot program I implemented in the spring 2017 semester, which situated practitioner inquiry into teacher internships. However, the project was taken over and placed into a one-credit course required during the same semester teacher candidates are completing...
internships. In this course, titled *Reflections and Professional Growth*, large groups of 30-40 interns meet on campus four times during the semester. This course used to offer support on a number of assignments embedded in the internship experience. Since the practitioner inquiry pilot, the course was changed to solely offer support through one cycle of action research. The faculty member who has traditionally taught the course has continued to instruct it.

This change was discouraging, but I found a way to still run the practitioner inquiry project embedded in internship without having to work within the confines of how it was delivered in the *Reflections and Professional Growth* course. I requested to be assigned as a university supervisor for the spring 2019 semester. Along with this request, I asked to be assigned to a separate section of the Reflections and Professional Growth course with only my five interns enrolled in my course. I emailed the instructor for the traditional courses letting her know the list of names of interns who would not attend her class times and would meet with me instead. With these logistical items in place, I was ready to redesign the practitioner inquiry experience for my small group of teacher interns.

Hence, for the capstone project for the attainment of my Ed.D. degree in the professional practice doctoral program at University of Florida, I planned to systematically study how my efforts to bring a more explicit equity focus to my interns’ practitioner inquiry experience during the internship semester played out for the prospective teachers I supervised. Guided by the questions, 1) *In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their*
teacher education program? and 2) What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?, I hope to use this study to improve my practice as a teacher educator interested in understanding the ways bringing an explicit equity focus to teacher candidates’ inquiry experience might help them identify and address issues of educational inequity in their school settings.

The challenges of teacher candidates in internships are unique because their positions lack the power to enact substantial change, even if they have ideas to improve the learning experience for their students. The equity-focused practitioner inquiry assignment provided a safe space for interns to try out new strategies in placements that can sometimes feel restricted. As their university supervisor, I supported my interns in identifying one issue of educational inequity within their contexts, then facilitated one cycle of practitioner inquiry aimed at addressing the identified issue. We worked together through four scaffolded seminars to identify an equity-driven wondering, find existing literature on the issue, implement a plan, collect data, and analyze the data for evidence-supported claims. In this first chapter of my dissertation, I first discuss the literature related to practitioner inquiry and equity in teacher education. Next, I describe the equity-focused inquiry seminars and final project showcase I designed to incorporate into the internship. Finally, I share the research methods I used to gain insights into the ways my teacher candidates experienced the equity-focused inquiry assignment.

Learning from the Literature: Practitioner Inquiry and Educational Equity

To improve the inquiry experience in our teacher education program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I began by investigating the literature associated
with my research question in order to report ways others have included practitioner research in teacher education programs as well as ways in which equity has been included in these processes. In the following sections, I provide a review of literature that defines practitioner inquiry (PI), explores the connection between PI and teacher agency, looks at how PI has been used in teacher education, and highlights how PI can be a tool for exploring issues of educational equity.

Defining Practitioner Inquiry

To begin making sense of how I might implement practitioner inquiry within my context of teacher education, I focused on defining practitioner inquiry to gain a better understanding for myself and for my teacher candidates. As I searched for relevant literature concerning practitioner inquiry, I noticed that several terms were used interchangeably with practitioner inquiry, including action research, teacher research, and practitioner research. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) point out the term research can create feelings of baggage or heavy workload, so the term inquiry is sometimes used in its place to represent a disposition practitioners can take toward their own practice. I chose to use the term practitioner inquiry for this study in order to present a process that felt welcoming and accessible for teacher candidates.

Practitioner inquiry is the “systematic, intentional study of one’s professional practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009 as cited in Dana, 2013, p. 2). It is a process where teachers support one another in identifying context-specific problems of practice, reviewing relevant literature on the topic, collecting and analyzing data, implementing action plans, and sharing results (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011). With practitioner inquiry, professionals cross borders between inquiry and practice, blurring the lines between practitioner and researcher (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).
In a cycle of inquiry, practitioners develop a wondering based on problems or issues they are experiencing within their own practice. They look to relevant literature as data and analyze those data in order to develop an action plan to implement in their professional settings (Dana, 2013). Practitioner researchers continue to collect and analyze data as they implement new strategies, sharing their progress with colleagues along the way. The inquiry cycle never has to end, as one’s experience can lead to new wonderings that start a new cycle.

Figure 1-1. The inquiry cycle. Adapted from *Digging Deeper into Action Research: A Teacher Inquirer’s Field Guide* (p. 2), by N. F. Dana, 2013, Thousand Oaks, CA: Copyright 2013 by Corwin. Adapted with permission.

**Practitioner Inquiry and Teacher Agency**

Practicing educators who are conducting cyclical research about their own professional practice have shown capacities for initiating and sustaining educational change in their settings. Teacher research literature began with John Dewey (1903) and
his suggestion to remedy schools by adopting “intellectual initiative, discussion, and decision throughout the entire school corps” (p. 196). He found it beneficial to have all levels of education professionals play a role in decision making on matters of educational importance. The idea of teachers as researchers has been evolving for decades and remains under investigation today.

Jackson (1990) pointed out that true scholars are able to question tradition and challenge authority. Practitioner inquiry provides teachers with opportunities to have a voice in questioning components of schooling within their contexts. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) found that after experiencing feelings of successful problem-solving and contributing to a larger goal, many teachers developed increased problem-seeking and solving abilities and became further motivated to continue to impact their classrooms and schools. The systematic process of practitioner inquiry invites teachers to question their practices and the inner workings of the learning experience which may lead to motivation to continuously seek improvement for the sake of students.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) reported that teachers as researchers can “interrupt traditional views about the relationships of knowledge and practice and the roles of teachers in educational change, blurring the boundaries between teachers and researchers, knowers and doers, and experts and novices” (p. 22). Similarly, Nelson (2015) found that a teacher as a problem-solver has the desire to create new resources or systems to address contextual situations or problems. The literature shows evidence that teacher research can contribute to a sense of informed agency in educators as they work through cycles of problem solving and share their new knowledge with fellow educators.
Practitioner inquiry invites teachers to play decision-making roles for their students. Freire (1993) said that true human existence is to name the world in some way, to change it so that we begin to see the world and its problems as opportunities for new naming. As teachers strengthen their knowledge of the relationships between their decisions for teaching and student success and fulfillment, they may begin to find and trust their voices as knowledgeable professionals. For the teachers who adopt the mentality of seeing the problems and issues that arise within their contexts as opportunities for renaming, teaching may become a generative practice of freedom (Freire, 1993). A generative practice of freedom implies that teachers can generate and share new knowledge within their own contexts through the freedom to identify and address problems of practice that matter to them. Teachers dedicated to inquiring about their practice take on a role of knowledge generators in their professional settings, questioning and evaluating systems or policies which are often assumed (Dodman, Groth, Ra, Baker, & Ramezan, 2017). They begin to name their professional contexts in meaningful and informed ways.

Ravitch (2014) expressed the need for practice-based research as a way to speak to what is meaningful and useful within specific contexts and populations. Practitioner research can bring about deep knowledge and understanding from continuous, contextualized, and person-centered investigations. When this process becomes internalized, teachers may begin to hold inquiry as a stance taken toward relentlessly improving professional practice. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described inquiry as stance as “a grounded theory of action that positions the role of practitioners and practitioner knowledge as central to the goal of transforming teaching, learning,
leading, and schooling” (p. 119). In essence, an inquiry stance can conjure a professional sense of agency and the skilled confidence to continuously take action toward improving one’s teaching practice and the learning conditions for students.

Finally, Sagor (1992) identified collaborative action research as a process that enables teachers to improve their own practice as well as student learning. Because practitioner research among practicing teachers has shown promise for improving teaching and learning, I was intrigued to uncover how I might build the process into teacher candidate coursework. If teacher candidates are exposed to practitioner inquiry before entering the field, perhaps they will meet their first career placements with a budding inquiry stance. This led me to investigate how others have embedded the practitioner inquiry process into teacher education.

**Practitioner Inquiry in Teacher Education**

Donnell and Harper (2005) pointed out disparities between what and how universities believe teacher candidates should learn and what and how practicing teachers believe teacher candidates should learn. While some universities tend to rely more on theory, practicing teachers advocate for more focus on practice. The researchers found one significant way to bridge the two is to encourage teacher candidates to reflectively problem solve and critically consume professional research to become change agents (Donnell & Harper, 2005). Through practitioner inquiry, teacher candidates consume research and reflect on theory in order to make informed decisions about their developing practice. Embedding this process in teacher candidate internships allows developing teachers to situate their investigations within real contexts and with real students.
Cochran-Smith (2009) suggested establishing new cultures of inquiry and evidence in teacher preparation programs to bring renewed vitality to program curriculum and practice. Wolkenhauer and Hooser (2017) found that new teachers with a background in practitioner inquiry during their teacher preparation program were able to use the inquiry process to provide alternate ideas to administration when the school adopted a policy that seemed counter-productive to student success and fulfillment. New teachers accredited their confidence in approaching changes in policy to their experience with the inquiry process and the development of an inquiry stance during their teacher preparation experience.

Similarly, Nelson (2015) found efforts to solve real problems helped teacher candidates to develop intelligent dispositions toward responding to issues or problems as they arose in their contexts. When teacher candidates participate in practitioner inquiry during their teacher preparation programs, they may bring problem solving dispositions into their careers. Dodman et al. (2017) revisited teacher candidates, who had participated in practitioner inquiry during teacher preparation one year into their practice to investigate if and how their action research experience influenced their first year of teaching. The researchers found participants were still questioning their practice, using data to inform decisions, taking action for their students, and reflecting on teaching and student impact. The continuous questioning of one’s practice is important in the development of an inquiry stance, and those first year teacher participants held onto that questioning disposition as they transitioned from teacher candidate to in-service teacher.
Schulte and Klipfel (2016) reported the primary purpose of practitioner inquiry in teacher education is to help teacher candidates learn to think carefully about their own practice through continuous engagement in questions as they arise in the process. In their study, teacher candidates were encouraged to continually ask and answer questions as they worked through solving real problems. The inquiry process is not necessarily a linear process. The steps of the process can blur, allowing opportunities for learning at any stage. For example, the processes of data collection and analysis are iterative and should continuously inform decisions on next steps throughout the cycle of inquiry (Dana, 2013). The idea of a cycle invites the practitioner to naturally pull new wonderings from current investigations.

Dodman’s study revealed that incorporating cycles of practitioner inquiry in teacher preparation helped teacher candidates consider a systemization of their practice (Dodman et al., 2017). The systemized approach asked teacher candidates to focus on one question, which felt more approachable than trying to simultaneously meet all recommendations from observation evaluation feedback. Teacher candidates also recognized the importance of reflecting on their own teaching through action research. The systemization of practice was not just about improving student performance but also about looking inward at one’s teaching in order to reach more students effectively.

According to Ravitch (2014), practitioner inquiry holds the promise of new learning, emerging from local contexts, which may create a reinvigorated sense of evidence-based practice. When practitioners work from an inquiry stance, they often challenge school practices, questioning what counts as meaningful teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In the state of Louisiana, often ranked poorly
for its education system, my teacher candidates and future Louisiana educators might benefit from more knowledge of processes for how to evoke change in their professional settings. Research on the process of practitioner inquiry shows evidence that it may support the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to identify problems of practice and work through a systematic process toward improved student learning. Skills experienced during teacher preparation such as questioning one’s practice, using data to make decisions, and reflecting on one’s own role in teaching and learning can also filter into professional careers (Dodman et al., 2017).

While the literature has shown numerous benefits to bringing practitioner inquiry into teacher education, I needed to learn more about how I might deepen the practitioner inquiry in my professional context to include an explicit equity focus. I wanted to know how teacher candidates might use practitioner inquiry to investigate larger issues of social justice and educational inequity as they encounter them in their field experience settings. To find out more, I next turned my attention to literature focused on incorporating an equity focus into practitioner inquiry.

**Practitioner Inquiry for Educational Equity**

Milner (2015) reported a need for teacher education reform to give teachers of students of color, as well as those living in poverty, an equal chance at success and fulfillment. One mechanism to achieve this focus is engaging teachers and teacher candidates in practitioner inquiry to focus on addressing issues of equity. For example, Gore and Zeichner (1991) incorporated an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle during the final semester of a teacher education program to study the experiences of their teacher candidates. Though they found constraints in teacher candidate ability to
identify broad equity issues, they also noted all action research projects conducted had the potential to raise and address questions important to their developing practice.

The work of Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr, and Zeichner (2007) focused on practicing teachers in the Madison, Wisconsin school district and their experiences with equity-oriented practitioner inquiry. Caro-Bruce et al. (2007) compiled a representative group of ten action research studies with themes of equity, race, or achievement gaps. After describing each study, they reported practitioner impact and learnings. The ten studies ranged in grade level and studied diverse issues including student attitudes toward certain pedagogy, reasons for school dropouts, black male achievement and school experience, and culturally relevant teaching. After gathering data from each participant, the researchers discovered

- teachers are competent, capable individuals; teachers are a unique source of information and have much to add to the research base in education; individuals can, and do, effect change; [and] while district initiatives are important and shape the topics of study in the Classroom Action Research Program, teachers are respected as competent change-makers who add to the educational research base by developing unique questions and research projects that address the complex problems inherent in educating our nation’s youth. (Caro-Bruce et al., 2007, p. 278)

Equity-oriented practitioner inquiry holds promise to improve unfair issues of educational inequity in schools (Caro-Bruce et al., 2007). The authors reported the importance of equity combined with action research lies in the mutual learning that occurs when teachers use action research to better understand educational and social equity issues from within their schools and classrooms. The process invites a culture of continuous learning among and between teachers and other education stakeholders, which may result in a community of avid learners dedicated to improving access to high quality educational opportunities for all students.
Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) reported a general trend toward practitioner inquiry specifically focused on problems and issues related to equity, educational access, and agency in educational settings. This trend was not due to accountability requirements or mandatory inquiry expectations. Rather, the trend toward education for social change and social justice emerged from the broader scope of what it means to possess an inquiry stance. After developing the skills of practitioner inquirers for educational equity, teachers began to naturally take a stance toward addressing educational injustice as part of their professional identity.

While research has shown benefits related to equity when practitioner inquiry includes an explicit equity focus, I needed to find out more about how other teacher educators have infused equity into practitioner inquiry. I was inspired by Ullucci and Howard’s (2015) notion that "the site in which new teachers work is not simply a setting but content that requires particular unpacking" (p. 188). As teacher candidates enter into school and classroom settings for their internships, they may benefit from opportunities to look closely at academic, social, and behavioral offerings provided by the school as well as for whom those offerings are provided as they seek to uncover issues worth addressing in an equity-oriented practitioner inquiry cycle. Teacher candidates need tools to assist in identifying equity issues, so I turned to the literature once again to find what instruments have helped other facilitators of equity-oriented practitioner inquiry.

Groenke (2010) incorporated an equity audit into an action research course as a way to focus the inquiry more explicitly on addressing equity issues within professional contexts. An equity audit is a tool used to take a close look at a school’s programs,
teacher quality, and achievement data in a systematic way in order to evaluate the level of equity or inequity in each area (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009). Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) built a case for using equity audits to identify practical opportunities for increasing educational equity in one’s own context. While equity audits are commonly conducted in business, healthcare, and other settings, they also hold potential to inform school and district improvements (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). School leaders can use equity audits to determine possible directions to increase equitable educational practices, but classroom teachers can also use a variation of equity audits to identify opportunities for growth in their own classrooms.

Groenke (2010) studied a group of beginning teachers using equity audits in their schools. She found that teachers began asking more questions concerning issues of equity and questioning how school policies might help to maintain the status quo. The use of equity audits also led to new discoveries of inequitable policies and practices of which they were unaware as well as feelings of anger and surprise when uncovering these policies, practices, and unjust views communicated by students. Overall, the equity audits helped to raise the equity consciousness of the beginning teachers as well as ignite a sense of empowerment to improve learning conditions.

When teachers are encouraged to look closely at issues of equity through the systematic approach of practitioner inquiry cycles, they can make important contributions to the knowledge base on equity pedagogy and policy (Caro-Bruce et al., 2007). Through equity-focused practitioner inquiry, schools can capitalize on the collective and generative capacities of their teachers as problem solvers. Ravitch (2014) wrote, “local, site-based research that focuses on issues of equity and various
kinds of organizational learning and improvement is the promise for meaningful, sustainable organizational change and innovation” (p. 6). McKenzie and Skrla (2011) recognized teachers have the most impact on student learning and that schools and districts cannot maintain equitable practices if those practices do not exist at the classroom level.

Based on my problem of practice and all I learned from the literature, I determined the action I would take to bring an equity focus to the existing practitioner inquiry experience in my context. Combining all of the literature helped me formulate ideas for an approach to my study which would build an equity audit into a practitioner inquiry cycle with an explicit focus on improving educational equity. I used what I learned from this literature section to inform a design to introduce equity-oriented practitioner inquiry to teacher interns.

**The Action: Weaving an Equity Focus into an Existing Practitioner Inquiry Experience**

One of my professional assignments is to supervise teacher candidates, in their final semester, as they complete internships in local classrooms. A typical load for supervision at my institution is four to five teacher candidates completing their internships. As a supervisor, I am responsible for meeting my students as a group on a regular basis throughout the semester to check-in and provide instruction useful to the group as a whole. In addition, I complete an initial informal visit to their school site to meet the cooperating teacher and provide an orientation to the semester as well as conduct three formal observations. I carried out this study with the five teacher candidates I was assigned to supervise in the spring semester of 2019, after requesting
that I be assigned to supervision in high poverty schools in order to deepen the discussion about the relationship between inquiry and educational equity.

The discussions I had with the teacher candidates occurred in our regular group meetings, taking the form of four consecutive seminars followed by one additional showcase, spread out over the students’ 16-week internship semester. Table 1-1 offers an overview of what each equity-focused inquiry seminar included and a timeline of the sixteen-week semester. Each seminar lasted between 90 minutes to two hours. They were designed to build upon one another as I walked teacher candidates through the inquiry process with an explicit focus on addressing issues of educational inequity. I used a classroom equity audit (Appendix A) and an equity consciousness assessment (Appendix B) to assist interns in identifying equity issues in their internship placements (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009).

I also deconstructed the steps of the inquiry process in order to build out four consecutive seminars that supported interns in developing a wondering, collecting and analyzing data, taking action, and sharing their work with others (Dana, 2013). The seminars, planned based on the literature reported in the previous section, were intended to build interns’ abilities to articulate an issue of educational inequity within their contexts, craft an action plan to address the issue, collect and analyze data on the implementation, and report their findings to peers. In the following sections, I describe my plan of action for organizing, planning, and facilitating the four seminars and final showcase of work. Though I carefully developed a detailed action plan, several things changed along the way. Chapter 2 describes the action of the seminars and showcase as they occurred in reality.
Table 1-1. Equity-focused Inquiry Experience Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester Week(s)</th>
<th>Inquiry Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Initial Individual Classroom Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>First Seminar Meeting: Developing Equity Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Teacher Candidates Conduct Equity Audits in their Placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Second Seminar Meeting: Identifying a Wondering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Teacher Candidates Find Resources Connected to their Wonderings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Third Seminar Meeting: Developing an Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Teacher Candidates Implement Action Plan and Collect Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fourth Seminar Meeting: Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>Teacher Candidates Complete Equity-Oriented Practitioner Inquiry Action Plans and Assemble a Display to Tell their Stories of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Inquiry Showcase: Celebrating Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first seminar focused on establishing trust and rapport with participants as well as providing an overview of the practitioner inquiry cycle and expectations. Freese (2006) found that it is important to help students learn more about themselves as teachers by inquiring into their practice without feeling resentment toward the task. I tried to use the first seminar to develop relationships with the students and encourage open dialogue among peers so that they may see practitioner inquiry as a way to improve their practice, rather than just another assignment needed to pass.

I also used the first seminar to build background on potential inequitable educational opportunities in schools. During the seminar, participants completed an equity consciousness preassessment (Appendix A) in order to facilitate discussion on the need for high quality teaching skills aligned with an equity consciousness (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). In the following two weeks, teacher candidates conducted a classroom equity audit (Appendix B) to determine possible problems of practice they may choose
to address during the practitioner inquiry cycle. An equity audit is a tool that can help practitioners to assess systemic equity issues within schools as they create action plans for change (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009).

Two weeks following the first seminar, the second seminar invited teacher candidates to identify an equity-oriented problem of practice for investigation, derived from the classroom equity audit. We worked as a team to identify issues of equity and choose one that allowed teacher candidates to investigate the issue of most importance to them. Caro-Bruce (2000) asked practitioner inquirers to follow their bliss or identify an issue they are passionate about solving. I used this approach to guide teacher candidates to identify an issue for investigation. Participants were encouraged to select an issue that felt workable within the one semester timeline. Dana (2013) recommended that inquiry plans should collect “reasonable amounts and reasonable types of data” (p. 37). As the facilitator, I reminded teacher candidates of timelines as we discussed each issue under consideration.

Following the second seminar, teacher candidates had three weeks to review relevant literature to gain insight into what has worked for other practitioners investigating similar topics. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) suggested looking to literature in order to think about how one’s own work is connected to the work of others and situated within a large base of preexisting knowledge. Between the second and third seminar, teacher candidates located and read relevant literature to learn more about the issue under investigation as well as potential solutions that have worked for others. I encouraged candidates to think critically about the literature they selected and to evaluate each piece for its relevance to their initial wonderings and unique contexts.
Once at least three pieces of literature were selected, teacher candidates synthesized the information to bring to the third seminar. Teacher candidates looked closely at elements of their practice as well as how their wonderings fit into a larger scope of educational research.

The third seminar focused on creating an action plan and sharing data collection strategies with interns so they might determine the most effective ways to collect data during their action plan implementation. Candidates brought a brief synthesis of what they learned from the literature. From this, they worked collaboratively with peers and with me, their university supervisor, to develop an action plan to implement in their classrooms. Once an action plan was determined, we used the remainder of our seminar time to learn about data collection methods such as field notes, artifacts, interviews, focus groups, photos, videos, reflective journals, weblogs, quantitative assessments, surveys, and critical friend groups (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In addition to these data collection strategies, I encouraged teacher candidates to continue to look to the literature as their inquiries unfolded, as practitioner inquiry is recursive in nature and sometimes requires revisiting previous steps to best inform the investigation.

Following the third seminar, teacher candidates had four weeks to implement action plans and collect data.

The fourth seminar asked teacher candidates to bring in all data for individual and group supported analysis. I offered support to interns as they looked closely at their data for emerging themes and began to identify evidence-based claims. Formative data analysis should take place throughout the entire inquiry process, using data to inform next steps (Dana, 2013). The fourth seminar provided space to grapple with
summative data analysis where teacher candidates could step back and examine their collected data at the completion of one cycle of inquiry. After this data analysis seminar, interns had two weeks to work on telling the story of their inquiry projects and what they learned from their data. Finally, the practitioner inquiry cycle culminated in a showcase of work and brief presentation to their teacher candidate peers and university faculty.

In Chapter 2, I provide detailed plans of each of the four seminars as well as the final showcase. I also share insight into the rich discussions during seminars and my reflections on facilitating the process. In the following sections of Chapter 1, I describe the methodology used to conduct this study.

**Research Methods**

The purpose of my study was to understand what happens when I bring an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience for teacher candidates in the teacher education program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Teacher candidates’ engagement in practitioner inquiry was the subject of my study, but practitioner inquiry also served as the methodological approach I used as a teacher educator to understand my practice. This makes sense for a couple of reasons. As previously mentioned, practitioner inquiry is defined as a systematic, intentional study by educators of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009 as cited in Dana, 2013). As a teacher educator who seeks to continuously improve my ability to prepare future teachers, practitioner inquiry provided a vehicle by which to deeply investigate my own practice. Practitioner inquiry was used both as the subject of my study as it played out with teacher candidates and also as the methodology as I delved deeply into my actions as a teacher educator and the impact my actions had on the next generation of
teachers. This was a unique experience because it allowed me to model engagement in the practitioner inquiry cycle while my own students engage in it as well. To gain insights into my research questions, 1) *In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program?* and 2) *What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?*, next I share the ways I collected and analyzed data that emerged during this study of my practice.

**Data Collection**

According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014)

Meaningful teacher inquiry should not depart from the daily work of classroom teachers but become a part of their daily work. Hence, selecting the data collection strategies for your study simply means thinking about life in the classroom/school and the ways life in the classroom/school can be naturally “captured” as data. (p. 85)

Similarly, engaging in inquiry as a teacher educator did not depart from my daily work as an intern supervisor, but simply required thinking about the ways my work as a supervisor in the intern seminar could be naturally “captured” as data. To capture my work as a supervisor I collected data in four ways: observations, reflective journaling, artifacts, and interviews.

**Observations.** I used a researcher’s journal as a place to take notes to capture the action of the practitioner inquiry process. This included scripting dialogue as it naturally occurred among participants or noting participant reactions or body language during our seminar meetings. Field notes are not interpretations but should capture precisely what is happening among participants (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Because I hoped to maintain rapport by staying highly engaged with the participants, I
collected field notes as a complete participant, fully engaged with those under observation (Creswell, 2013). These data were naturally occurring, as I regularly take notes during my courses as I reflect on my teaching as it is happening. Figure 1-2 shows examples of field notes captured during seminars.

Figure 1-2. Seminar observation notes. Photo courtesy of author.

**Reflective journaling.** In addition to using the researcher’s journal to capture my observations during the seminars, I also recorded reflections immediately following each seminar and final presentation. I used the recommendation of a previous researcher to use prompts for each journal in order to structure the development of thinking over the course of the study and to keep my data more organized (Hill, 2013 as cited in Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). My journal prompts included:

- What did I notice today about my teacher candidates’ developing understanding of equity?
- What did I notice today about my teacher candidates’ developing understanding of practitioner inquiry?
- How might I fine-tune the next seminar based on what I noticed?
Figure 1-3 shows an example of the beginning of an entry into my researcher’s journal following the third seminar.

March 11, 2019

General Thoughts:

It is the middle of the semester. The students look drained and exhausted. They had a lot of questions about the other artifacts/requirements for their internship. I didn’t feel like we could dive into the project discussions until those questions were cleared up.

They also mentioned some concern with making changes and “stepping on toes” as they work to implement action plans. I tried to explain that they are simply investigating their own practice and looking for ways to remove barriers that might be holding back some students from optimal learning.

**Takeaway: I think it’s important to keep reiterating that this is about looking at what you can do to improve your own practice and ability to reach ALL of your students with high quality educational experiences.

What did I notice today about my teacher candidates’ developing understanding of Equity?

To begin our discussions in the third seminar, I showed the participants a video comparing the educational experience in Finland to our own in the United States. I wanted them to think about the differences and discuss comparisons. The video mentioned that it is illegal to set up schools in Finland that charge tuition.

When asked which schools are best, one woman said, “The neighborhood school is the best school. Here, all schools are equal. They are all great.” The interns pointed out discrepancies between a brand new high school built in a predominantly white middle class area of our community compared to the rundown high school in predominantly Black areas. We talked about the difference between charter, magnet, private, and public schools. They asked questions about funding differences, about rules that were harsh and teachers who scream at kids in the hallways. It feels like they are seeing some realities of educational inequity more clearly.

What did I notice today about my teacher candidates’ developing understanding of practitioner inquiry?

We went over some data collection strategies in the third seminar. They were very receptive of the possible strategies, and I encouraged them to choose about 2 or 3 to try out so that they would have some nice data to bring to our final seminar meeting where we will analyze together. There were some questions about needing
Artifacts. During the seminars, interns completed activities and assignments ranging from informal chalk talks to specific assignment formats. I collected those assignments as data. These artifacts were naturally occurring throughout the study and helped me to learn about how interns were making sense of the equity-oriented practitioner inquiry experience. At the final showcase, I also collected artifacts in the form of photos of student presentations and projects. Figure 1-4 shows a sample of one intern’s final presentation board. She created this board as a showcase of her work throughout each stage of the equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle.

Figure 1-4. Example of presentation artifact collected as data. Photo courtesy of author.

Interviews. After the semester was complete, I captured each intern’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry by conducting semi-structured interviews immediately following the final showcase (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to capture
the interns’ experiences and perceptions of their own sense of agency to solve equity-oriented problems of practice, I developed an interview protocol with a list of questions focused on gathering their thoughts and feelings about practitioner inquiry and issues of equity in education. I conducted the interview face-to-face with four of the five interns and over the phone with one intern who could not attend the final project showcase after being placed on bedrest for pregnancy complications. I recorded all interviews, with permission from the interns. Then, I played each recording back as I transcribed their narratives in Google Drive. Figure 1-5 shows a sample of the beginning of one interview transcript.

Figure 1-5. Sample of transcribed interview data. Photo courtesy of author.
Guided by my research questions, 1) *In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program?* and 2) *What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?*, interview questions included:

- What was your initial wondering? How did you choose it?
- In what ways, if any, did your understanding of educational equity change as a result of this experience?
- What insight did you gain about the actual process of teacher research in this cycle of inquiry?
- What insight did you gain about your own teaching practice during your cycle of inquiry?
- What issue(s), if any, would you like to explore in more depth as a result of your learning throughout this process?

In addition to the interview protocol questions, I asked the interns to reflect on their perceptions of the experience as well as the artifacts and assignments they completed throughout the process. To do this, I asked questions about some of the assignments completed throughout the semester. I also referred back to field notes taken during their final presentations to discuss their unique topics more specifically. By including reflections on artifacts within the interview protocol, I hoped to gain a more rounded understanding of their experiences and perceptions. Figure 1-6 provides a sample of field notes taken during final presentations which I used to refer back to interns’ work while conducting interviews.
Data Analysis

I used both formative and summative processes to analyze the data. Formative data analysis is defined as ongoing analysis that occurs throughout the entire study "and occurs as you are collecting your data" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 157). I formatively analyzed observation and reflective journal data after each seminar to make decisions on how I would approach each subsequent seminar. Formative data analysis of observations and journals helped me to look closely at my own practice as I made decisions on how to best support teacher candidates in their inquiries. Figure 1-7 provides an example of an excerpt from one journal entry following a seminar which shows formative analysis informing changes for upcoming seminars.
Summative data analysis takes place toward the end of a study, after the researcher has finished collecting data (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). At the end of this study, I began summative data analysis by first displaying all data on a large wall near my office. I began reading and rereading the entire data set to gain insight into the stories the data held. Figure 1-8 shows my data wall before I began analyzing.

Figure 1-8. Pre-analysis data wall. Photo courtesy of author.
Next, I jotted down initial codes within the data to capture my first impressions of possible themes or categories. Coding is a process of breaking down large amounts of data into manageable segments and attaching possible names to those developing categories (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). After coding the data, I went back through all of the codes and expanded on some of them using memos. Memoing allowed me to elaborate on codes by adding commentary to expand on the meaning of the code or to note developing patterns (Schwandt, 1997 as cited in Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). I used different colored markers to begin categorizing the descriptive memos to make sense of what the data were telling. Figure 1-9 provides an image of my process of coding and memoing.

Figure 1-9. Sample of data wall showing code categorization. Photo courtesy of author.
After multiple iterations of naming and renaming categories, I related each emerging theme back to the purpose and question of my study by attaching two different colors of sticky notes to each memo, based on its connection to each research question. I placed an orange sticky note near codes relating to research question one: *In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program?* I placed a blue sticky note near codes relating to research question two: *What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?* Figures 1-10 and 1-11 show sections of my data wall with sticky notes indicating relationships to original research questions.

**Figure 1-10. Relating code categories to research questions.** Photo courtesy of author.
Figure 1-11. Relating researcher’s journal code categories to research questions. Photo courtesy of author.
As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to understand what happened when I brought an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience in my teacher education context. Therefore, I used the named data analysis strategies while keeping in mind a connection to my purpose and guided by my research questions. I kept the research questions on display as I combed through and analyzed data as a reminder to stay focused on these areas. Figure 1-12 shows an image of my data wall after my initial analysis. I revisited my data many times throughout the process of writing this dissertation.

![Data wall following initial analysis. Photo courtesy of author.](image)

Once my categories were identified, I wrote out initial findings based on all data. I supported each finding with evidence and organized the data into several themes. This process served as additional analysis as I began to connect themes from intern interview data to my own reflective journals and field notes. This additional level of data analysis led me to the realization that I needed to share my findings in two parts. Chapter 2 shares findings embedded in the actualization of the four seminars and showcase while Chapter 3 looks closely at the unique experiences of each one of the
five interns. This deep dive into intern experiences and seminar actions led me to discover significant lessons learned that will continue to inform my practice as a teacher educator in the future. I will conclude this dissertation by illuminating those lessons learned in Chapter 4.

**Trustworthiness**

Teacher researchers often borrow from qualitative research methods to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of their studies (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Hence, I employed qualitative validation strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. These methods include triangulation, rich description, member checking, and stating positionality.

Triangulation is defined as the use of multiple data sources to develop themes with corroborated evidence (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation increases the credibility, or trustworthiness, of a study by showing multiple forms of evidence from different data sources that support themes or perspectives. In this study, I triangulated the interview data with my observations, journal entries, and teacher candidate artifacts to increase the trustworthiness of identified themes.

Thick description is defined as a writer providing rich detail in descriptions of observations of participants under study or when describing a case or a theme (Creswell, 2013). Thick descriptions increase the trustworthiness of a study by enabling the reader to decide whether the information provided may be transferable to other settings based on shared characteristics. In this study, I used rich textural description in the form of interview quotes, observations, journal entries, and artifacts to support each emerging or identified theme. Each seminar is described in detail, as well as each intern’s unique interaction with the equity focus of their practitioner inquiries.
Member-checking is defined as a researcher's efforts to obtain participants’
views on the credibility of the findings and researcher interpretations at the end of a
study (Creswell, 2013). Member-checking can increase the trustworthiness of a study
because participants play an important role in determining the accuracy of the findings
and interpretations reported by researchers which may help to decrease the effects of
researcher bias on the findings. I ended each intern interview with an open-ended
question asking if there was anything else they would like to add about their
experiences. After transcribing and analyzing all data, I emailed my interns with a list of
the lessons I, as a teacher educator, will take away from our experience together. I
asked the interns to look over my lessons learned and to provide any additional
thoughts or feedback related to those lessons. I hoped to elicit feedback or clarification
to determine their sense of the credibility of my claims as well as their thoughts on any
areas I may have missed or misrepresented. At the point of completing this dissertation,
I did not receive any replies from interns with further thoughts or feedback.

One additional way practitioner researchers establish the trustworthiness of their
work is to share their positionality with the reader to provide insight into the researcher's
background and general position in society. Takacs (2002) described positionality as
one’s effort to think carefully about where one stands with respect to power in our
shifting networks of relationships. Acknowledging my positionality allowed me to
recognize assumptions I carry, which have been crafted by my unique life experiences.
Wineburg (2010) encouraged humans to go beyond our own images and brief life
experiences to develop an awareness of how we know what we know. Doing so may
lead to a renewed sense of lifelong learning, rather than a fixed identity. Therefore, in
the next section, I offer a positionality statement to situate myself as the researcher conducting this study.

**Positionality Statement**

The prelude to my teaching career was a student teaching placement in a Lafayette parish public school with the highest percentage of students of color and the highest percentage of students living in poverty, as indicated by free and reduced lunch indications (Great Schools, n.d.). I had heard mixed reviews about the school but approached the experience with enthusiasm and optimism. It was one of the most valuable experiences of my life. I was able to see the inner workings of a school that served our community’s most dense population of students living in poverty. The discipline strategies were questionable, enrichment was sparse, and morale was often low. From this placement, I began my first teaching position as a first-grade teacher in the most expensive private school in my community. I essentially went from the highest poverty school to the most affluent within a matter of months.

Throughout my time in my first-grade classroom, I earned a master’s degree in gifted education, paid for by my school, and used my new knowledge and classroom autonomy to transform my practice into something of which I was very proud. Somewhere along the way, I became keenly aware of the variance between the teaching and learning experience at the school with the substantial price tag compared to the learning experience at the high poverty school where I completed my internship. I started to ponder how I might dedicate my work to improving the educational conditions for *all* students, and not just those who could afford to attend expensive private schools.

As a White, middle class female, I understand that my efforts to improve the conditions for students living in poverty and/or students of color could potentially come
across as efforts to “save” people who are different from me. In this approach to address educational inequities, which often pertain to students of color, I need to avoid the role of White dominance so that this oppressive ideal is not further internalized by myself or by my teacher candidates (hooks, 2009). I understand that I must hold fast to a critical awareness of my place of privilege and power in order to confront my own bias and approach each improvement effort with fidelity, sincerity, and truth.

I live in south Louisiana, known for its culture, food, music, and hospitality. However, our state is often associated with inequitable treatment and practices toward people of color as well as those living in poverty. Louisiana is consistently ranked near the bottom of education rankings in addition to crime rates, health care, and opportunity (U.S. News and World Report, 2018). South Louisiana is also a region with greatly varying political and social views, which sometimes make it difficult to discuss ideas around topics shrouded by politics. As a Louisianan, I have been stereotyped as deeply conservative in personal and professional spaces. Because of this misconception, and because of the ways in which I approach my teaching, I find it important to mention my independent political affiliation which I chose as a way for both sides to consider my thoughts. I tried to maintain this balanced approach in my facilitation of conversations around educational inequity, though I discovered through this study that it is often necessary to explicitly confront issues around social justice and equity when individuals or groups are othered.

My background experiences have led me to a determined inquiry stance toward reducing barriers holding students back, based on where they live or go to school. My teacher candidates brought varying backgrounds and beliefs into our discussions, so I
tried to maintain a facilitator’s role, pushing slightly yet steadily, as they began to recognize existing barriers and internalized stereotypes. I hoped they would construct their own realizations of educational inequities based on the content I presented. However, this process was complex. I learned many things about my efforts to facilitate rich discussion around difficult topics, which I will share in the final chapter.

In my current position as an instructor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I have great opportunity to equip future teachers with knowledge and skills to confront educational and social injustice. I take great pride and responsibility in this position and hope to spread my passion for improving educational equity to as many future teachers as possible. I learned so much about my practice throughout this study, including new ways I might use my position of power to effectively guide future teachers to awaken a new sense of their own positionality and agency to make positive change.

Overview of Dissertation

This study was bound as an investigation of one cycle of practitioner inquiry with teacher interns in their school placements in the final semester before graduation. It is important because it informs ongoing improvement of the internship experience for teacher candidates enrolled in my university. I gained substantial insight into ways I can better facilitate teacher candidates at UL Lafayette toward recognizing educational injustice and feeling equipped with tools to improve upon the educational experience of the many unique students they will serve in their future careers. This study also provides insights that may contribute to new directions or considerations for the field of teacher education and the research efforts of teacher educators.

I present this dissertation in four chapters. This first chapter provided an overview of the entire study. In the next three chapters, I will provide rich detail
describing different aspects of the study as it unfolded. Chapter 2 describes plans for each seminar, what actually happened, and my reflections immediately following. Chapter 3 looks closely at each unique intern and her experience and interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry seminars and project. And finally, Chapter 4 describes each of the 12 lessons I learned about my own practice as well as implications and necessary change I will take into my future practice as a teacher educator.
CHAPTER 2
ACTUALIZING EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTITIONER INQUIRY SEMINARS AND SHOWCASE

As discussed in Chapter 1, the background for this research was centered on improving high quality educational access and opportunity through practitioner inquiry. I shared my plan of action as well as how I collected data over sixteen weeks of the spring 2019 semester when I embedded one cycle of equity-focused practitioner inquiry into teacher candidate internships. My efforts to design and implement four equity-focused practitioner inquiry seminars and one final project showcase were aimed at providing insight into my research questions: 1) In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program? and 2) What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?

In this second chapter, I will provide detailed accounts of what happened in each of four consecutive seminars as well as a final practitioner inquiry showcase. Based on my experience facilitating practitioner inquiry embedded in teacher internship in the past, and enhanced by the review of literature from the previous chapter, I designed four seminars meant to gradually build and scaffold five teacher interns through one cycle of practitioner inquiry with a focus on educational inequity. I hoped to guide my interns to discover issues of educational inequity within their own contexts and then equip them with the tools of a practitioner researcher to investigate the issues and determine potential solutions.

The process proved trying as I worked through possible avenues to align the realities of intern expectations and pre-existing viewpoints with my own project goals to
expose and take action against educational inequity in their contexts. In the following sections, I provide the focus and summary of what happened during each seminar meeting. This information comes from my outline of activities, originally prepared for my dissertation proposal, combined with data from my researcher’s journal. For the privacy of participants in this study and the schools in which they were situated, all intern names and school names are pseudonyms.

**Seminar One: Developing Equity Consciousness**

For the first seminar, I reserved a meeting room at the main branch of the Lafayette Public Library for two hours. The campus at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette offers limited parking, so I tried to find a space where parking was easy and was somewhat centrally located for my five teacher interns located in different schools around Lafayette, Louisiana. I arrived a few minutes early and greeted each intern as she walked into the room. We had met previously on my first visit to their classrooms the week before, and I had also taught two of the five interns in previous courses. Table 2-1 shows my original plans for the first seminar. Next, I will describe the actual events of the first seminar in action, which strayed from the plan quite a bit.

Once everyone was settled, we began the line items I had prepared in a presentation on my laptop. I began with a discussion, asking the interns to think about

- How has the internship been going so far?
- What have you learned in relation to your coursework?
- What are some challenges?

We spent some time discussing their experiences, their relationships with mentor teachers, and their school placements. They laughed at stories and related on many
levels. Aside from a few placement switches, internship was a positive experience for each of them at this point.

Next, we moved into a chalk talk to discuss the challenges in further depth. I wrote two headings on a white board in the room and asked the interns to group their felt difficulties into two categories: 1) challenges pertaining to whole school or district policy and 2) challenges pertaining to classroom and/or instruction. In my researcher’s journal following the first seminar, I wrote

They wrote their initial thoughts on potential problems they thought might be worth addressing. I had them separate their ideas into one side of school/policy related issues and one side with classroom related issues. This helped with discussions on identifying issues both big and small. I was able to reference their own examples rather than making up my own. I felt like the interns really valued hearing each other’s stories. They are in four different schools. (Journal Entry I, February 6, 2019, p. 1)

One intern, Maria, had called on her way over. She was driving back from Baton Rouge, where she had just taken the Praxis exam for about the tenth time. I will share more on this story in Chapter 3, but she showed up right on time and shared her concerns passionately in our first seminar. Maria was working with a dual immersion classroom for Spanish and English and held deep concerns for the future of her Spanish as a first language students after noticing they were not passing a test at the same rate as her English as a first language students. She was visibly passionate about this issue already.

A second intern, Jill, told us her school was considered a transformation zone school because they were given a failing school letter grade. The school was now part of a grant, but she was unsure as to where the money was going. All she saw was that the teachers were under strict requirements to adhere exactly to the curriculum. The
Louisiana Department of Education issued the grant, so they visited the classrooms frequently. I noted in my journal that Jill had already started digging into this issue before our first seminar because I had mentioned the practitioner inquiry project to her at my initial classroom visit. She wanted to know what the grant was all about, where the money was going, who made those decisions, and why teachers were not allowed to stray from the scripted curriculum.

I noted in my researcher’s journal that Rose, another intern, became more intrigued as the seminar went on. She talked about the lack of freedom to stray from curriculum in her own setting as a piggy back on what Jill was discussing. Another intern, Faith, was very quiet during this first seminar but seemed to be engaged and thinking. She approached me after the seminar to tell me a few ideas she had concerning issues she would like to address. One of them had to do with not having enough book copies for all students to follow along with the read-alouds in the scripted curriculum. Faith and Jill were located at the same elementary school.

The final intern, Sara, was very engaged in others’ conversations and offered valuable feedback and questions. I wrote in my journal, “[Sara] was the one who I wasn’t sure about bringing up this project to when I first visited [her classroom]. Today, she seemed all in” (Journal Entry I, February 6, 2019, p. 1). When I first visited Sara’s classroom, she seemed very uncomfortable talking to me and seemed to lack confidence in what she was doing. It was an uncomfortable first meeting for me as well. I answered all of her questions, but I chose not to bring up the practitioner inquiry project just yet so that I would not overwhelm her even more. However, she seemed very intrigued by the project during the first seminar.
During our discussions of issues in their classroom placements, someone brought up a question of whether they might be met with resistance if they were addressing a topic that pointed to their mentor teachers or another faculty member. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote

I explained a scenario [Maria] brought up about some of her students not passing an English test in order to qualify for the Dual Immersion program. She talked about another ELA teacher coming in late to read English stories to the Spanish speaking kids. I could tell she was passionate about the problem but did not want to disrespect the ELA teacher. I explained that they could use this project as a way to approach a discussion. [They might say], ‘I’m working on an action research project for UL to address a problem I’ve identified within my practice. I’m interested in learning more about how we can help our Spanish-speaking kids learn the English they need in order to qualify for the dual immersion program next school year like all of their English-speaking peers. I want to know what I can do in my practice to better prepare them for the assessment.’ This frames the scenario as an investigation of their own practice and not as a way to investigate the practices of others. (Journal Entry I, February 6, 2019, p. 1)

I also noted that we could have used more than two hours for the first seminar, as interns began drumming up more ideas for possible wonderings near the end of our time together.

After our discussions of possible challenges they might investigate, I turned the focus to an introduction of practitioner inquiry. I started by providing background on high quality professional development as embedded in one’s practice and professional learning communities as collaborative spaces where teachers support one another. Then, I introduced the process of practitioner inquiry as a series of steps that begin with a wondering or felt difficulty and gradually work toward a potential data-driven solution or further wonderings to explore in more depth. I had created a presentation to walk
them through each of the steps. I related back to the examples they shared earlier when talking about the process. In my journal, I shared

I was able to give them an overview of the practitioner inquiry project and gave some background on how practitioner inquiry offers all of the qualities of high quality professional learning. Overall, I think they left with a good understanding of what practitioner inquiry is and they all seemed pretty positive about going through this experience. (Journal Entry I, February, 6, 2019, p. 2)

The next task I moved into was asking the interns to think carefully about and fill in an Equity Consciousness Preassessment (Appendix A). I set the stage by saying I would not look at their answers, and I would not ask them to share their responses with anyone. I wanted them to be completely honest and self-reflective in their evaluations of their own equity consciousness. I set them up for this task and ended up letting them take it home to complete on their own. We were running out of time, and I wanted them to feel like they could take their time on this task. I also discussed the Classroom Equity Audit (Appendix B), and assigned the audit to be completed before our next seminar.

The two audits ask a series of questions to invoke thought on the fairness of the educational experiences of students in a classroom and the potential biases living in our own consciousness.

In my reflection immediately following the first seminar, I discussed possible changes I would make to my upcoming seminars. I wrote

I will request access to the projector in the library room so that we are not all looking at my laptop screen. I will also send [interns] an email a few days before with a reading about deficit vs. asset views. Toward the end of the seminar, one intern was talking about a boy in her class who has ‘severe ADHD’ and is having a lot of trouble in class. They are having a hard time getting in touch with his mom. She said, ‘Mom doesn’t come in when we ask her to. Grandma answered the phone one day and said mom was still sleeping.’ I told her that we have to assume that the boy’s mom cares and could possibly work nights or something. We cannot
assume the worst, and we must stay the course with helping the child. I told her she could choose to investigate this topic.

I would also like to bring in some readings to be done just before our seminars or maybe even during the first part of the seminar. I found these two articles to bring to next seminar or maybe give to interns just before they come. I will add in some discussion of the difference between asset and deficit oriented thinking. (Journal Entry I, February 6, 2019, p. 2)

Our discussions were rich and took longer than I had anticipated. I wished I would have set a timer to keep us on schedule, but I also found the conversations natural and valuable. I decided to assign the interns to watch the documentary outside of seminar time, on their own. We would discuss the content in our second meeting.

The documentary was called *Teach Us All* and is described in an Education Week article as “poignant observations about the state of our schools, focusing on Little Rock in 1957 and today, as well as equity issues in New York City and Los Angeles public schools” (Walsh, 2017, n.p.). The full film can be viewed on Netflix. I chose to include this documentary as a way to expand intern perspective on the realities of variance in schooling experiences depending on where one lives and how this is related to students living in poverty and students of color. They all watched the documentary following the first seminar and reported back to the second, ready to discuss.

**Seminar Two: Identifying a Wondering**

The second seminar took place on February 20, 2019. This time, the dean of my college of education offered to reserve a room for me at our early childhood research lab after hearing about what I was doing for this study. This was an optimal location because it has plenty of parking, and the room was quiet with little distraction. *Table 2-2* provides an overview of the activities I hoped to accomplish in the second seminar. In the following sections, I will describe what actually happened during our time together.
The interns made it to the second seminar with ease, we settled in and said our hellos, then we got started. Maria needed to leave early to go to a funeral, so she asked if she could talk first about the topic she wanted to study. She spoke passionately, with determined eyes, sitting straight up in her chair, and her hands moving rapidly while she spoke. No one said a word, assumedly sitting in awe of Maria’s passion. Maria, a Latina woman native to Panama and only moving the United States three years ago, was adamant that her Spanish speaking students were not afforded the same opportunity to continue in the dual immersion program as their English speaking peers. When she left the first seminar, she went straight into her investigation. Now, she had a space to air her grievances, and she was ready to go to her principal with ideas for change. She was already talking to her teacher about it, and she seemed emboldened to enact change now.

I had chills while Maria was speaking. I honestly almost cried. She was doing it; she was digging into an issue of unjust educational opportunity, and I was so proud of her in that moment. However, as her university supervisor and facilitator of this process, I also felt the need to protect her from potential pushback by reminding her that we must treat this as an investigation of our own practice. I assured her that she would absolutely get the opportunity to speak to her principal about this issue, but that we might want to wait until she was further along in the practitioner inquiry process. I encouraged her to use this inquiry as a way to develop a trial plan, on which she could collect data to bring to her principal when she was ready to discuss. She listened intently and agreed that data would help in her delivery. This was an incredible start to, in my view, the most powerful seminar.
We moved into a discussion of the classroom equity audits they conducted. I presented three prompting questions for discussion:

- What was your experience conducting the equity audit?
- In what ways, if any, did the equity audit challenge your thinking?
- What did you learn about your school and/or your teaching practice from conducting the equity audit?

I was underwhelmed with the discussion that came from the equity audits. I may not have spent enough time explaining the expectations. They may have also been preoccupied with the content they had just consumed from the *Teach Us All* documentary. Or, maybe it was my own sense of time, feeling like I needed to rush through the equity audit discussions to get to the documentary and guide the interns toward their wonderings.

We moved into the documentary discussion naturally during our time on the equity audits. It just happened. It began when one student referenced it, and then it took hold. By this time, Maria had left, and I was disappointed not to have her voice and perspective in the room for what came next. The discussion of the documentary started off casual. Everyone agreed it revealed some new truths to them they had not considered before. Rose, my only Black intern, said she already knew most of the presented issues existed but it was eye-opening to see them all in one spot and in chronological order. Then, Sara and Rose got into a discussion about the issues presented in the documentary and the relevance of those issues to their developing teaching careers. In my researcher's journal, I wrote

Sara said, 'Can I, as a White person, help him?' referring to one of the students in the video. 'I'm on the outskirts. I'm removed from it.' Rose [wondered] 'How do schools get funding?' How is funding different [from
school to school? Sara said she didn’t see why this was relevant because she was just trying to learn how to become a teacher and this is a huge societal problem that she cannot fix. She also pointed out that she didn’t think she is the right person to ‘help’ students and/or people of color because she is a White person. She talked about prominent figures in the Black community begin the ones who might be able to inspire other Black people to improve the conditions [of education for Black students].

(Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 1)

This conversation, for me, was equally as compelling as Maria’s audacious prelude, but much more nerve-wracking, as I grappled with how much to interject. As the facilitator, I had hoped to provide a space for my interns to come into realizations on their own. However, I watched as Rose, my only Black intern, proudly but sometimes uncomfortably, stood her ground on the urgency of need to both recognize and solve these unjust educational issues. I decided to chime in when the conversation felt it was not moving forward. It felt stuck in the quick sand of internalized bias, so I inserted myself as a possible lifeline for the important conversation. My intent was not to dominate but to guide us back to a place of mutual respect and an open space for self-realized bias and assumption. In my journal, I recorded my interjection

I gave an example of women fighting for their rights. I said, ‘We are all women in here, so this is something we can all view from a common experience as women. Women were fighting for the right vote, work, get equal treatment as men. Of course women gained serious ground on their own, but imagine what happened when men started realizing the reality of the barriers in place for women and started to fight alongside them. Not as their superheroes who were swooshing in to save them, but right alongside them. Do you think [other] men were more open-minded once they heard the ideas coming from the mouths of fellow men? What does that mean for us as teachers of students living in poverty? Or [teachers] of students of color? (Journal Entry II, February 6, 2019, p. 2)

Everyone was listening and nodding, and it seemed this comparison related to each one of the interns.
It is important to note that Jill and Faith were sitting at the same table, within arm’s length from the rest of us. They were not saying a word. Both White women, I wondered what they were thinking and if they would ever share their thoughts with us. They did not say very much on this particular topic, but they were ready to chime in when we began relating the content of the documentary to our local community and their own school placements. I noted in my journal

They talked about things happening in our area. A brand new, beautiful high school was developed in a mostly White, middle class area of town. They talked about their own schools, one which supposedly is part of a grant to ‘transform’ them from a failing school. Jill asked, ‘Did we get any money? If so, I don’t know where it went.’ Faith also noted that some companies are getting together to deliver supplies and paint their walls. ‘That’s really nice of them, but we really need more books in order to do these lessons they want us to follow. We don’t have enough books for the kids to partner read like the lesson says’. These examples allowed us to look at the graphic on equity, equality, and liberation. We talked about the fence as a barrier standing in the way for some more than others. The term ‘barrier’ felt like something that they could understand. I found myself using that term over and over again. (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 3)

After this discussion, Sara pushed back on the idea of centering her project on equity. I wrote about this pushback in my journal, saying

Sara said, ‘I’m just trying to become a teacher. I’m new at this. I’m just trying to learn. I just want to figure out how to get my students to listen to me when I’m teaching.’ I asked Sara to rephrase that idea into a felt difficulty, asking herself what the problem is that she is experiencing now. She decided the problem was that students were not listening to her lessons because they are daydreaming or not paying attention. I asked her to focus on that problem and begin to think about and dig into what has worked for other teachers who have experienced a similar problem. I asked her to consider that maybe whole group instruction was not reaching all students. Maybe some students would learn better in small groups or with one on one support. If that were the case, then maybe the mostly whole group focused lessons were presenting as a barrier in the way for some students to find success. By working to eliminate that barrier, maybe she might improve the learning conditions for groups of students who do not learn best in a whole group setting. She nodded and seemed to realize then that the idea of removing barriers was actually
more closely connected to her practice than she has originally thought. (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 3)

This was an interesting crux of the second seminar, as I tried to determine the best path for moving forward. I wondered whether I should allow this free and open discussion to continue, but the upcoming line items pulled at me to stay on top of my agenda and protocols. This would continue throughout the seminars. I decided to bring our focus back to developing our wonderings: the purpose of the second seminar. I asked the interns to look closely at their lists of possible wonderings and to use the wondering litmus test (Appendix C) to help determine which wondering they would ultimately investigate.

After thinking through which wondering was most focused on their developing teaching practices and student learning, connected to their own passion or interest, and showed a clear connection to educational equity, I asked each intern to select one wondering on which to base her study. I asked them to take turns sharing their wonderings and telling us why they chose them. As they began sharing, it became more of a grappling with which idea they would choose. They were not sure if their final choice was focused on educational equity or if their mentor teachers would be okay with the investigation into a particular topic. We talked through several examples, and I reminded them this was an investigation of their own practice, not of their mentor teachers’. One intern, Jill, reflectively stated, “It’s not just a project. It’s something that we can use to keep inquiring throughout our careers” (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 4).

Our time was running short, but I wanted to prepare them for gathering resources on their own before the next seminar. We ended our wonder share, and I asked them
to use the wondering litmus test (Appendix C) to continue thinking about their top three wonderings. Once they made a decision, I asked them to dig into resources on what has worked for others with a similar problem of practice. I encouraged them to look to journal articles, online resources, and also professionals in practice. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote

We also talked a little about the types of resources they might dig into as they move into that phase of the cycle. I wanted to make sure they understood the quality of resource fellow educators could be. I gave [Maria] an email address for someone I know who specializes in dual language in Texas. She said she had just taken a professional development course on dual language and would get in touch with the presenter. I wanted them to understand that we can look to scholarly journal articles, online resources, AND professionals in our field of study. They seemed to appreciate this as they started to think of people they could talk to. [Faith said.] ‘I love my master teacher. She’s so helpful. I’ll talk to her about it.’ (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 4)

The interns left the second seminar with several tasks to complete before we met again. First, they needed to select a topic for investigation based on their own interests and the topic’s relevance to the prompts in the wondering litmus test. Then, I asked them to find three resources that would help them to develop an action plan, based on methods that have worked for others. This seminar did not go as planned, so I left feeling a bit perplexed about whether I handled the changes appropriately. The discourse we had was valuable, but it also consumed time intended for discussions on the practitioner inquiry process and steps that may have provided more comfort in moving forward.

Reflecting on this seminar, I realized some of my interns were going to go into more depth in their inquiries than others. The stark contrast between Maria’s passionate sense of agency and Sara’s resistance to the idea that educational inequity was at all related to her ability to become a teacher, led to a bizarre reflection as I
unpacked the juxtaposition I has just experienced. This variance remained throughout the process and gradually led to the uncovering of several complexities living within an investigation of educational inequity as a part of undergraduate teacher preparation which I will discuss in Chapter 4. Following the second seminar, I followed up with interns by sending an email with two articles and several links for more educational equity content. I realized that many of them would not even click on the links, not because they were not interested, but because of the many other to-do list items that could not fall to the wayside.

Figure 2-1 shows the email I sent to the interns following our seminar. I wanted to provide more resources to support a case for investigating and finding solutions for educational inequity. I chose to send the articles shown in the email because they provided broad background on the topic. The other links found at the bottom of the email include three completely different resources. The first is a link to the second seminar presentation, the next one is a documentary podcast story of two completely different schools located only three miles from one another, and the last is a book that changed my perspective on mass schooling from the past and its hold on education of today.

In retrospect, I would have liked to incorporate the listed resources more into the series of seminars and showcase. However, the one semester time frame for this project limited the amount of depth we could seek. The ideas, events, and issues surrounding educational injustice really require more of a progression along the entire matriculation in order to dig into topics to the depths necessary for recognizing the past, present, and potential future of educational injustice.
Hi Interns,

Thanks for a great discussion yesterday. I apologize for not managing the time better so that we would have more opportunity to discuss your individual projects. However, these topics take time to sift through, so I'm happy that we were able to sit with them for a bit.

To recap, I would like for you to send me a list of your top 3 wonderings you are currently considering for this project. Remember, it can be a HUGE wondering or felt difficulty, or it can be a seemingly small issue you are experiencing in your classroom. What they should all have in common is that your concern has developed from a student-centered focus. In other words, your issues matter because they concern barriers that are currently holding some or all students back from the best educational experience. Again, that may have to do with policy, but it also may have to do with teaching style as we grow in our ability to deliver high quality lessons.

After you have narrowed it down to three, please use the "Wonderings Litmus Test" to evaluate each of your ideas. I will also send you my thoughts or ask you to talk on the phone to chat about each. Once you feel great about the issue you have selected, you can complete section 2 of the PD Plan artifact. This is where you look outward to what has worked for others. You may look online, in professional journals, and should definitely talk to real people who are experiencing the issue or have found ways to overcome. Bring your completed Section 2 to our next seminar.

Here are some resources for you:

- Seminar 2 Presentation
- Three Miles Podcast
- I attached two articles that explore some of the myths we may hold about students and families experiencing poverty. We will discuss these articles at our next seminar as we make sense of how to frame our problems of practice so that they are focused on assets rather than on deficits of students. The article citations are below in case you want to use either of them as a resource in your section 2.
- Education and Social Change: I mentioned this book concerning the history of American Education. I highly recommend it. It helped me to form a clear perspective on several different things as I continue to learn about these complex problems plaguing education. The book is expensive on Amazon, but it actually lets you read quite a bit of it if you click on "Look Inside" right above the image of the front cover.

Thank you for your depth of thinking as we go into these deep waters of educational issues. I believe teaching is the most incredible career anyone could choose, not because of the number of minutes one delivers lessons but because of the potential to walk alongside little humans as they uncover their own versions of success and fulfillment. Thank you for your dedication to your deserving kids.

Aimee

Figure 2-1. Email correspondence following second seminar. Photo courtesy of author.
Seminar Three: Developing an Action Plan

Between the second and third seminar, the interns and I corresponded via email concerning questions and possible wonderings. I also provided the interns with my mobile phone number, so they texted and called with questions as well. Maria and Rose identified a problem to investigate rather quickly, Jill needed to talk things out but eventually settled on a final wondering, Sara seemed to fight with the idea of choosing any topic that would be remotely equity related, and Faith timidly seemed to have an idea she would investigate, without much desire to talk about additional possibilities. Through email, phone calls, and texts, all interns had determined a topic worth investigating. However, some topics were more explicitly focused on improving high quality educational access than others. Eventually, I felt like I became fairly loose on what would constitute an equity focus and let the interns continue the process with a topic that felt comfortable and doable.

They came to the third seminar with their topics as well as a brief synopsis of what they learned from the literature and other resources. I was prepared, once again, with a line-up of activities. While we strayed from the agenda as usual, this seminar was probably the most closely aligned to my original plan. Table 2-3 highlights the list of activities I had originally prepared. Next, I provide a play by play of events as they were experienced in reality during the third seminar, focused on developing an action plan for implementation in classroom settings.

For our third seminar, we met at the main branch of the Lafayette Public Library once again. Everyone came in, one by one, noticeably more exhausted than the first two seminars. I noted this observation in my journal by saying
It is the middle of the semester. The students look drained and exhausted. They had a lot of questions about the other artifacts/requirements for their internship. I didn’t feel like we could dive into the project discussions until those questions were cleared up. They also mentioned some concern with making changes and ‘stepping on toes’ as they work to implement action plans. I tried to explain that they are simply investigating their own practice and looking for ways to remove barriers that might be holding back some students from optimal learning. (Journal Entry III, March 11, 2019, p. 1)

After some initial questions, I decided to begin with a short video clip as a way to recenter our equity focus. The video is a clip from the Michael Moore documentary, *Where to Invade Next*, and can be found online under the title *A Documentary on Finland’s Schools*. This nine-minute video compares the educational experience for children in Finland’s public schools to that of the United States. They compare clips of students working in their classrooms and also speak to teachers who have taught in both countries. I wanted my interns to get a glimpse of another take on what schools could offer. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote

The video mentioned that it is illegal to set up schools in Finland that charge tuition. When asked which schools are best, one woman said, “The neighborhood school is the best school. Here, all schools are equal. They are all great.” The interns pointed out discrepancies between a brand new high school built in a predominantly white middle class area of our community compared to the rundown high schools in predominantly Black areas. We talked about the difference between charter, magnet, private, and public schools. They asked questions about funding differences, about rules that were harsh and teachers who scream at kids in the hallways. It feels like they are seeing some realities of educational inequity more clearly. (Journal Entry III, March 11, 2019, p. 1)

The video seemed to trigger their own interpretations of how schools here are unfair. They quoted some of the lines in the video and offered stories of their own experiences that supported the ideas from the clip. I am unsure if it was their fatigue or the somber realization that our schools have so much opportunity for improvement, but this seminar was the most subdued out of the four. They were burnt out and felt the
culmination of the semester fast approaching, which inevitably meant they would have to complete all assignments necessary for graduation within the coming weeks.

However, we were able to shift our focus back to the practitioner inquiry process as a way to provide details and steps for the interns to feel more comfortable about completing this project. My main goal for the seminar was to give an overview of data collection strategies and work with each intern to determine the most appropriate data collection methods for their unique projects. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) list and define numerous data collection strategies for practitioner researchers, which I used as a reference when equipping my interns. The list included:

- Literature as Data
- Field Notes
- Documents/Artifacts/Student Work
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Digital Pictures
- Video as Data
- Reflective Journal
- Weblogs
- Surveys
- Quantitative Measures
- Critical Friends Group

With each data collection strategy displayed on one slide in a presentation, I described each one and gave examples of scenarios when each might be useful and appropriate. The interns made notes of strategies they thought might align with their projects and asked if I would share the presentation with them, which I did in a follow up email the day after the third seminar. All interns seemed to gain some new clarity after the strategies were explained.

Once the strategies were explained, I encouraged the interns to choose two or three that best aligned with their ideas for an action plan. Some were concerned that
their data had to be numerical and pre/post test driven. I assured them that data can take many different forms. They were only trying to capture the experience of the action plan exactly as it happened as well as their own reflections on the experience. In my journal, I wrote about their concerns and realizations when I said

There were some questions about needing a pre/post test or some form of numerical data. I explained the difference between qualitative and quantitative data and explained that they should choose the data collection strategy that made the most sense for gathering information about their action plan implementation. Their data collection strategies may not include any numerical data but rather all qualitative if that is more fitting. The goal is to capture what actually happened and not necessarily to prove that anything is the ultimate solution to a problem. You are simply telling the story of what you tried and helping the audience to get a view of what happened when you tried something new by the data you present. We will look at all of your data together in our next seminar. I feel like the listing and description of data collection strategies really helped them to see data in a different light. I also think it may be more likely to stay with them into their careers since you choose a data collection strategy that best fits your action plan rather than feeling there is only the route of quantitative. (Journal Entry III, March 11, 2019, p. 2-3)

Providing a list of data collection strategies, along with definitions and examples was really helpful in easing concerns. They seemed to value the step by step process and trusted it to lead them to the next stage in the process. Several interns made relieved comments as they moved away from the idea that data had to be numerical and formal. They talked about it just becoming a natural, informal thing they were doing to improve their teaching. This felt like a big moment, as a facilitator of this process. The realization that data could be natural and informal is something that makes practitioner inquiry easier to see as having a place in a real classroom and teaching career. The data collection methods felt doable, which took some of the weight off of the notion of research. For example, in a follow up email after the third seminar, Jill still
had concerns about what would count as data. After I responded to her, she replied saying

Thank you so much for getting back to me so quickly! I think I had a misconception of what the data needed to be. For some reason I keep thinking that data needs to follow a set of strict rules. It seems like you are saying that data does not need to be so rigid. I have attached a copy of the survey to this email. Also, I was thinking that I could talk with a few of the students and jot down some notes on things that they are interested in or would like to see more of in math lessons. I was planning to track my data/effectiveness of the Action Plan using scores on exit tickets. Would I need to track every student's exit ticket scores or just those students in the focus group? (Personal Communication, March 20, 2019, p. 1)

After going over data collection strategies, I asked the interns to take about ten minutes to go through the research they had found to begin piecing together an action plan. After those fifteen minutes, we went around the circle for each intern to share her ideas. The idea was for everyone to have a chance to share their ideas on an action plan and then receive feedback from peers and me. Once again, we were running out of time, so we only had about five minutes for each intern. This was not nearly enough time, but I wanted to honor the time we had set aside for the seminar without going over. Nonetheless, each intern shared ideas and left the third seminar with the beginnings of an action plan to implement in the next few weeks.

Though this seminar went well, it did not get to everything I had hoped. I also felt like I did not put a strong enough emphasis on educational equity when everyone shared their projects. I encouraged each intern to email, text, or call me with any and all questions and concerns as they went about implementing their action plans. Several of them took me up on that offer, and we were able to tweak plans until they felt ready to implement.
Seminar Four: Data Analysis Party

The fourth, and final seminar took place at a coffee shop centrally located between all interns’ schools. The rooms at the library were booked, so the coffee shop was the next best thing. I pulled two tables together, and set out a basket of different colored pens and highlighters. I wanted this seminar to be a bustling workshop of data analysis.

The interns did not seem quite as stressed when they walked into this seminar. They still had lots of questions at the beginning, which I answered as thoroughly as possible. I know it is a stressful time when trying to get everything prepared in order to graduate. Maria still had not passed the praxis exam, and this was becoming a mounting issue. I had a steady stream of email messages between Maria, the Dean of our College of Education, the Praxis office, and the Louisiana Department of Education. This sort of became my own equity-oriented practitioner inquiry, as I felt I needed to reveal the unjust nature of requiring someone who has only lived in the United States for two years to pass the same American History content as an American-born person who has sat through countless hours of the subject in school.

I will share more on this story in Chapter 3, but I wanted to point out the external stressors with which interns entered this third seminar. Faith was now noticeably uncomfortable at eight months pregnant, and Rose had to get extra babysitters for her newborn. All interns were confused about graduation requirements and deadlines. I did my best to answer as much as I could, once again taking away time from my intended seminar activities. Table 2-4 shows the activities I had originally planned for the final seminar.
For me, data analysis is like a treasure hunt. It is exciting, revealing, and requires a completely open mind from the researcher. I hoped to facilitate this seminar in a way that might invite my interns to see data analysis in a similar light. I began the seminar by asking interns to share the data collection strategy that worked best for them, one thing they learned while collecting data, and one thing they hoped to take into their teaching careers. They shared their items and generally exhibited a positive sense for each category.

Next, we set out to analyze data. I described the process as messy and asked them to take some time to read through all of their data on their own. They began reading and immediately starting talking to each other about their implementation and what they gathered in their data. They were excited to share. However, I encouraged them to stay true to the process and read through the data carefully, making notes in the margins if something stood out. They worked quietly for about ten minutes.

Then, I offered the collection of colored pens and highlighters as possible tools for beginning to look for common themes in the data. As they read through the data again, I asked them to write more notes in the margins and begin to color code if they noticed themes emerging. To help explain this approach to memoing and coding for themes, I showed some examples from my own data analysis work. Figure 2-2 shows samples of data analysis I conducted on another project with teacher interns. I showed them how I took several quotes from an open questionnaire and connected those quotes to make one claim. The data clearly supported the claim. I also showed an example of color coding and then making sense of my codes in a data set of open responses.
I set them up with explanations and examples and then asked them to work individually for another ten minutes. Again, they could not help but share what they were seeing. After about seven minutes or so, I asked them to share with a peer what they were beginning to uncover in their data, if anything. They did not need to make overall claims yet, but I wanted them to talk it out with a partner to see if their themes...
were supported clearly with evidence from the data. Again, I turned to my examples of claims and showed them how several data supported each one. I noted in my journal:

> Although they were distracted by logistical concerns, I felt like they were really excited about data analysis. I showed some examples which seemed to help a lot. I also emphasized that they are not trying to “prove” anything and that they are not trying to say that something worked or didn’t work. They are simply telling their stories. Some of them were concerned because their research shifted through their process. I assured them that that was a part of the research story and that they should share those shifts and what led to them as a part of the final showcase presentations. (Journal Entry IV, April 10, 2019, p. 2)

Though the interns were able to experience data analysis in a supportive, collaborative setting, this seminar still did not live up to my expectations. In my researcher’s journal following this fourth seminar, I noted:

> I thought we would be able to analyze all of their data together, but there were a few issues with this idea. First, we didn’t have enough time to completely analyze their data and I didn’t want to send the impression that an hour and a half was sufficient for full data analysis. I think this was okay. We were also doing this seminar in a coffee shop because I couldn’t get the room at the library I have been reserving. It would have been nice to have more space to spread out, and I was also worried about people getting annoyed at us talking. When I do this again, I will reserve the room at the public library with the large conference table for every seminar data right at the beginning of the semester. (Journal Entry IV, April 10, 2019, p. 1)

> I also noted a fading away from the original equity focus. It was still there for some, but I stopped pushing as hard on the equity focus of the project as we approached the end. It felt like they really needed support with what data collection and analysis were in general, examples of each, and feedback on how they might best implement these methods. With these concerns taking the forefront, as well as external logistical questions, the equity focus sort of faded. I reflected on this sentiment in my journal, saying
Today, I noticed from the beginning of the seminar that the focus of equity had really started to fade. I recognized early in the seminar that I needed to remind my participants of this focus. I realized in a previous seminar that it helped to use the phrase “eliminating barriers” when trying to discuss this idea of improving equity in their classrooms. I decided to stop and remind them of our purpose. I think this was important at this point in the practitioner inquiry process because they were kind of nodding as they related the idea of removing or lessening barriers for their own students and within their own projects. It was a good reminder for me, as the facilitator, to not get caught up in the weeds of logistics as well. That being said, no one questioned whether or not their projects were working to address an issue of educational equity like they were in the beginning. They seem to have an increased general understanding of what educational equity means. I hope my interviews will help to reveal more insight into how, if at all, their ideas of equity have grown or changed. (Journal Entry IV, April 10, 2019, p. 1)

The data analysis went well, but we were not able to completely dig into all of the data together. I gave them more examples and direction before they left and then showed them what I was expecting out of their final presentations in about three weeks. They needed to complete the equity-oriented practitioner inquiry action plan (Appendix D) and then create a physical display or electronic presentation with the requirements shown in the equity-oriented inquiry showcase display example (Appendix E). While I showed examples and explained everything thoroughly, I wrote in my journal about possible changes in the future when I said

I think I might restructure the format of every seminar next time I do this to include 10-15 minutes of general/logistical questions before beginning the equity-focused practitioner inquiry components. When I send the reminder email about dates and times of seminars, I might ask for any questions concerning assignments, hours logs, dates/times, etc. I will prepare the answers ahead of time and address them first thing so that these items do not sabotage our time spent on the practitioner inquiry project.

I think I might also restructure the seminars to begin each with a reminder of our shared purpose to improve educational equity by eliminating or lessening the barriers holding some kids back from high quality educational opportunities and/or from realizing their full potential. We might start with that reminder, one piece of content (article, video, image)
to spark discussion, and a request to name one thing you did this week to help improve access in your context. If they know this is coming, they might work during the week in preparation to respond to these prompts. (Journal Entry IV, April 10, 2019, p.2)

Though the seminar did not go according to my original plan, the interns worked hard to prepare the stories of their processes to share at our final showcase. As they worked through data analysis to uncover evidence-based claims, I think they discovered value in the process of inquiry. One intern, Jill, texted me saying

The next few weeks are going to be very busy for me, so I decided to work on and finish my presentation for the symposium. I am looking forward to sharing what I learned! Putting all of this work together was very exciting! Thank you so much for all of your help. (personal communication, April 19, 2019)

Each of the five interns prepared their presentations and would be ready to present at our final showcase.

**Practitioner Inquiry Showcase**

On May 4, 2019, I arrived at The Picard Center located on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. I helped turn a large meeting room into a space where student projects could be showcased on tables while attendees walked around to hear the learnings of a group of students who were so close to graduation. This was it: their final project before the big day.

The students started to arrive; dressed up, with coffee and display boards in hand. It felt like a rite of passage, like something they had prepared for and were ready to face head on. They talked with friends and repositioned boards and artifacts before the showcase began. Then, they were ready to share their work. My interns were part of a larger group of interns sharing their action research projects embedded in internships. I was part of a group of university supervisors who piloted a program
bringing practitioner inquiry into internship a few years ago. While others engaged in action research, my interns were the only ones with the intended focus on educational equity.

Table 2-5 describes the event as it was originally planned in my mind. I based this format off of a previous inquiry showcase I put on, which was a great success and left teacher candidates feeling proud of their accomplishments. In the following section, I will describe what the event looked like in reality.

The interns were broken up into three different groups. The idea was to have them walk around to view one another’s inquiries while they waited for their own scheduled showcase time. I was focused on listening to my five interns’ presentations first, and then had some time to observe other presentations as well as the event as a whole. It was interesting to observe because the interns were not walking around to hear everyone’s stories. They were grouped together with friends, chatting about life and excited about graduation. From an outsider looking in, they seemed done. They were not there to learn from their peers. Rather, they were there as a rite of passage.

Many of the interns presenting were former students I had taught in other courses. I walked over and waited while they scurried back to their projects, smiling and willing to share their stories with me. One intern, Allie, told me she thought her project could have been so much better, but it became something she just got through. She spoke of the class size being too large to really dig into the discussions of what problems they wanted to solve. The interns not under my supervision were part of one of two courses with thirty plus interns in each class. This course is where the action
research project normally resides. It is worth one credit and meets four times in the semester.

Another university supervisor, and colleague of mine, asked for a list of my interns so she could visit each of them. She was writing down topics and titles as she moved around the room. This colleague, Mary, had worked with me on designing the pilot for practitioner inquiry embedded in internships. We noticed a common theme of interns choosing topics centered on behavior management, often with extrinsic motivational strategies as their solution. Mary was curious if this was still the case, so she walked around to find out. At the end of the showcase, Mary mentioned that while my interns varied on the depth of their projects, none of them presented projects on extrinsic motivators. It was her perception that, overall, my group went into more depth in their projects than others in the room as a whole.

Sara set up an artifact from her action plan, where she collected student book suggestions for their classmates as well as her laptop with an electronic presentation. Faith called me the day before the showcase to tell me she was on bedrest and to ask if she should still try to make the showcase. I told her to stay home, send me pictures of her final presentation, and we would talk by phone when it was a good time. Rose set up a hand-written trifold board with minimal data references. Jill displayed a tri-fold board, complete with images of data and lesson plans, annotated with changes as part of her action plan. And finally, Maria stood next to a thorough display with samples of student work and action plan changes. Maria’s mentor teacher even attended the event to show her support and to gather information for their interested principal.
Each of my five interns presented very different projects and at varying depths. I met with each one immediately following the showcase to interview them about the full experience of equity-focused practitioner inquiry throughout the semester. They all showed some level of pride or accomplishment in their work, but the stories they told painted significant variation in their experiences throughout the semester.

**Conclusion**

This second chapter provided details of what happened in each of four consecutive seminars as well as a final practitioner inquiry showcase of student work. In the next chapter, I share the unique experiences of each intern by describing the five interns separately. I provide background on each intern, a description of the context in which she was placed, and the topic she chose to investigate as an inquiry. Additionally, I share my own interpretation of each intern’s work and the facilitation findings I will take from each intern’s unique encounter with the project.

Each description was synthesized based on intern interviews, my researcher’s journal, field notes, and observations. Because their experiences varied greatly, I deliver their stories on a continuum based on each one’s alignment to the original intent of the equity-focused practitioner inquiry process. On this continuum, I present the stories of Maria, Jill, Rose, Faith, and Sara, starting with the intern most aligned with the original intent of the study and working toward the intern most disconnected from the original project goals.

This progression along a continuum of project goal alignment is intended to provide a framework to follow along with my analysis of each intern’s unique experience. Those who fall near the end of the continuum do so because their experiences did not align with my original intention for the project under investigation.
However, some of my most valuable learnings came from those misaligned experiences. I share those learnings in Chapter 4.

Table 2-1. Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry Seminar One Focus and Initial Intended Summary of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar 1 Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing Equity Consciousness</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Discussions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How has the internship been going so far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have you learned in relation to your coursework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are some challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalk Talk: Let’s break our felt difficulties into two groups. Interns jot down challenges pertaining to classroom on one page and challenges pertaining to school or policy on another page. Intern comments will serve as a discussion starter for identifying problems of practice and thinking about what role we, as teachers, play in solving these issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Us All Documentary: The facilitator will encourage interns to add to the chalk talk or jot down their own notes if the video reminds them of new issues in their school placements that they may not have considered before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion &amp; Equity Consciousness Survey:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are your initial reactions to the stories in the documentary?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How are these stories related to education today and to your developing career as a teacher in the US?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will each take a few minutes to complete the equity consciousness survey (Appendix A). The responses are for intern reflection and do not need to be shared. The facilitator will use the prompts for open discussion without asking for specific intern responses to the survey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Practitioner Inquiry: The facilitator will provide an overview of practitioner inquiry and professional learning communities as a vehicle for solving issues of educational equity in our professional settings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment: In the next two weeks, interns will conduct an equity audit (Appendix B) on their schools and classrooms to bring in for discussion at the next seminar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2-2. Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry Seminar Two Focus and Initial Intended Summary of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar 2 Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying a Wondering</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; General Equity Audit Discussion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What was your experience conducting the equity audit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In what ways, if any, did the equity audit challenge your thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What did you learn about your school and/or your teaching practice from conducting the equity audit?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partner Work - Looking Closely at Equity Audits: With one partner, interns will explain the details of their equity audits while creating a brainstorm list of wonderings centered on how some of their findings might be improved upon. The facilitator will listen to intern discussions and offer probing questions to encourage depth of thought in equity issues addressed.

Individual Work – Developing a Wondering: Interns will read through their equity-oriented list of wonderings as they recall their experience conducting the equity audit. They may add new wonderings and/or adjust wording as necessary. They will star the top 3 wonderings they feel most passionate about addressing.

Wonder Share: Interns will share their starred wonderings while their peers and university supervisor provide feedback on how each wondering addresses an issue that affects the teacher or school's ability to meet diverse student need. Listeners should provide feedback on whether the wondering is focused on student learning, a dichotomous question, and whether it feels doable within the given time constraints of one semester.

Wondering Litmus Test: Interns will circle a top wondering to put through a wondering litmus test (Appendix C) to determine if the wondering might help in gaining insight into ways their own teaching practice might better reach the unique needs of all students.

Assignment: In the next two weeks, interns will explore resources to find what other educators and/or schools have done to address the issue under investigation. They should collect at least three sources that connect to their wondering. Interns will bring the three sources as well as a one-page write up synthesizing and summarizing what they learned from the sources.
Table 2-3. Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry Seminar Three: Focus and Initial Intended Summary of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar 3 Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Developing an Action Plan | Welcome & Whip Around: We will begin our time together by filling in the blanks to three questions:  
- One word that describes how I am feeling about my internship is __________.
- One word that describes how I am feeling about being in my own classroom is __________.
- One word that describes how I am feeling about my equity-oriented practitioner inquiry project is __________.

The facilitator will read each sentence starter and then ask the interns to whip around and finish the sentence one at a time. We will briefly discuss the responses after each sentence.

Learning from the Literature: Each intern will share her wondering, why she chose it, and what she learned about the wondering through an exploration of literature and what worked for other educators and schools.

Data Collection Strategies Overview: The facilitator will provide an overview of potential data collection strategies for interns to ponder ways best suited for collecting data on their wonderings. The data collection strategies covered will include literature as data, field notes, artifacts, interviews, focus groups, photos, video, reflective journals, weblogs, surveys, quantitative measures, and critical friends groups (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Developing an Action Plan: Interns will work independently to determine a plan for implementation informed by the literature. After 15 minutes of individual work time, this will become an interactive discussion to work through plans and strategies with peers and university supervisor.

Assignment: In the next week, interns will complete blocks 1-4 of the Equity-Oriented Practitioner Inquiry Action Plan (Appendix E). Once emailed to their university supervisor, interns will receive feedback and an invitation to move forward with their intervention and data collection. Interns will have 4 weeks to implement action plans. They will bring all pieces of data to the next seminar.
Table 2-4. Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry Seminar Four Focus and Initial Intended Summary of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar 4 Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Party</td>
<td>Data Collection Debrief: Interns will finish the following sentences:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The data collection strategy that worked best for me was ______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One interesting thing I learned while collecting data was ______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One thing I will take into my teaching is ______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis Overview: The facilitator will give an overview of data analysis as a way to read through your data to make sense of what story the data are telling. We will work together to make claims based on evidence from your data.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Work – Reading and Sense-making: Interns are encouraged to lay out all data sources as they read over the data to make sense of what they have collected. Once read through, they should think about the big picture of what is happening in the data. Interns will jot down notes on what they initially noticed. Next, the facilitator will invite interns to begin to organize data by themes and categories. Using highlighters and/or post-it notes, they should read through the data once again while organizing into themes and creating codes, or words or phrases in the margins, to help in identifying emerging themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis Examples: The facilitator will show examples (Appendix F) of how one might organize her data in search of themes. The examples show strategies for coding as well as how multiple pieces and types of data can help to make a statement of learning more trustworthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Work – Making Statements of Learning: Using your codes and notes, begin to play with possible statements of learning. Statements of learning should clearly communicate what you learned based on what you gathered directly from the data. You may have 1-3 statements of learning, or claims, and should have evidence from the data to support those claims. The facilitator works with each intern individually as they work to articulate claims backed with evidence. To help develop these statements of learning, the facilitator will display the following prompting questions:</td>
</tr>
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Table 2-4. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar 4 Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Party</td>
<td>• What is most interesting about these data?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would I describe these data to others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have I learned about myself as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have I learned about my students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have I learned about the larger context of schools and schooling? (Dana, 2013, pp. 56-57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Claim Share: Each of the four interns will share her claims and tell what evidence supports it. Peers and facilitator are listening to provide feedback on whether the claims are clearly supported by data. The facilitator may find an opportunity to introduce interns to the terms trustworthiness, triangulation, and rich description as the interns fine-tune their evidence-supported claims.

Fine-Tuning Claims: Interns work individually to fine-tune claims after receiving feedback from facilitator and peers. Each claim should have multiple data pieces under it to serve as evidence to support the claim.

Discussion: This process of practitioner inquiry never really ends. Rather, it is a cycle of continuous learning and a stance taken toward practice that means we are committed to continuous improvement focused on student learning and increased educational equity. Let’s close with some discussion on the following questions which will help you to think through what to include in your final presentation:

• What are the implications I have learned for my practice?
• What changes might I make in my practice?
• What new wonderings do I have? (Dana, 2013, p. 57)

Assignment: The next meeting will be our “Intern Inquiry Showcase” where you will present the story of your inquiry cycle to your fellow interns and college of education faculty. In the next two weeks, you will complete sections 5 and 6 of your Equity-Oriented Practitioner Inquiry Action Plan to turn in at the showcase. You will also create a display that helps to tell the story of your learning. The facilitator will hand out a template for the display (Appendix G).
Table 2-5. Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry Seminar Four Focus and Initial Intended Summary of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Showcase Focus</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Learnings with Peers</td>
<td>Interns will set up display boards around a room in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette student union, joining numerous other interns who have completed the previously existing inquiry seminars. They will present their work alongside peers with a rotating audience of peers and university faculty. Welcome: The facilitator will welcome all practitioner inquirers and guests and provide an overview of the practitioner inquiry journey. She will also encourage all participants to continue inquiring about their practice as they work to become exceptional teachers who push for high quality educational experiences for all students. Inquiry Showcase Round 1: Group A (1/2 of interns) present their work as group B interns walk around to view each of the presentations. Inquiry Showcase Round 2: Group B (1/2 of interns) present their work as group A interns walk around to view each of the presentations. Closing Remarks: The facilitator will share stories of the first year of teaching and the importance of finding fellow educators who will support you in your efforts to improve. One option is to share the article “Find Your Marigold: The One Essential Rule for New Teachers” (Gonzalez, 2013) found at this link: <a href="https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/marigolds/">https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/marigolds/</a>. The article encourages new teachers to find and connect with those who will support you and help you grow. End with group picture and awarding completion certificates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3
INTERN INTERACTIONS WITH EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTITIONER INQUIRY SEMINARS AND SHOWCASE

The focus of this study was to understand what would happen when I brought an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience for teacher candidates in the teacher education program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. As a teacher educator, I wanted to consider ways I might facilitate a cycle of practitioner inquiry, centered on improving educational equity within teacher candidate internship placements. In the first chapter, I provided background and a review of literature centered on these topics. I also shared how I collected data over sixteen weeks of the spring 2019 semester as I considered my research questions: 1) *In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program?* and 2) *What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?* These data included a researcher’s journal, in which I captured observations by recording notes during our meetings and responded to structured questions immediately following each of four meeting times, participant work artifacts as interns completed assignments for the course in which this study was embedded, and semi-structured interviews held immediately following the final showcase of their work.

The second chapter looked closely at the design of each seminar as I provided a detailed account of what occurred during each of four seminars and a final project showcase. This third chapter will now turn attention to the diverse experiences of each intern throughout the process. The uniqueness of each intern’s experience ultimately led to the learning I share in Chapter 4.
Context

Before I describe the details of my interns’ varying experiences, I will provide some context through which I carried out this study. As a teacher educator, part of my work includes the supervision of teacher interns during their final semester before graduation. Teacher interns are placed in local public schools to teach and learn under the guidance of an experienced mentor teacher. My role, as their university supervisor, was to observe lessons, provide actionable feedback for improvement, and instruct them on the completion of several assignments, including an action research project. With prior experience as a university supervisor, I wanted to explore opportunities to deepen the action research project to include an equity focus situated within each intern’s unique context. So, I embedded this study into the facilitation of the action research project, or practitioner inquiry, and focused my facilitation on examining issues of educational inequity as the interns worked to investigate an issue within their own practice and context.

It is important to note that my interns had received varying background knowledge on content related to educational equity in past coursework. Two interns, Maria and Rose, were completing a traditional four-year program toward a bachelor’s degree and had taken one course prior to internship titled *Teaching in a Diverse Society*. This course provided background on rethinking multicultural education, understanding one’s own identity, restorative justice practices, the school to prison pipeline, and other topics related to educational inequity. The other three interns, Jill, Faith, and Sara were completing the alternate certification for elementary teaching and did not receive any coursework related to teaching in a diverse society prior to their internships.
I kept this in mind as I thought through what content I might provide throughout this experience. As I designed each consecutive meeting for facilitating practitioner inquiry, I used several books, articles, and videos to inform the design of scaffolded meetings to assist interns in looking closely at potential barriers in the way of student success and fulfillment. Each resource, as well as my own reflective journals and observations, guided my facilitation focus as I chose what to do for each meeting. The intern experiences I share come from analyzing all data for themes and subthemes to reveal overall claims that were uncovered through the systematic data analysis process discussed in the first chapter. In the following sections, I share a glimpse into each intern’s unique interactions with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry seminars and showcase.

**Teacher Interns**

As a university supervisor for teacher interns, I was assigned five interns to work with in the spring 2019 semester. I requested to have interns who were placed in state identified, high needs schools because I wanted them to be able to relate to the educational equity related resources presented in our seminars. I received five interns: Sara, Faith, Rose, Jill, and Maria (all intern names are pseudonyms). They were located in four different schools situated around Lafayette parish. In the following sections, I will provide background information on each teacher intern, information concerning their specific teaching placements, the topic each intern chose to investigate, as well as some insight into each of their unique experiences with the equity-focused seminars and project.

The purpose of this study was to understand what happened when I brought an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience embedded in teacher
candidate internships. I hoped the project would offer an opportunity for interns to recognize practices contributing to unjust educational opportunities for students in their settings. Then, practitioner inquiry would offer a process for developing potential solutions to design and test. I hoped they would feel empowered by the experience and equipped to enter their professional careers with tools for combatting educational inequity.

Though some of the five interns experienced some level of empowerment and agency to uncover and work to solve issues in their contexts, this study revealed a wide variety of experiences among the five. Some were emboldened from the beginning. Others remained disconnected until the very end. I set out on this study to learn ways to improve my own practice as a teacher educator, and the interns’ variation of alignment to my original hopes and goals provided significant learning that I will take into my practice.

In this chapter, I share the interns’ stories on a continuum I identified based on their level of alignment to the project’s goals of recognizing educational inequity in one’s own school context and using the practitioner inquiry process to test out potential solutions and share learnings with peers. Figure 3-1 shows the interns along the continuum upon which I will describe them in upcoming sections. I begin with Maria’s story, whose passionate drive for her students was most closely aligned with my goals for the project. Later, I will end with Sara’s story, not only because her experience did not align with the project’s mission, but also because of the rich insight she revealed as to why her thinking was disconnected from the goals of the project. I have also
attached a short descriptor to each intern’s name as a way to capture my overall take on her unique experience.

![Figure 3-1. Continuum of interns based on alignment to original project goals. Image created by author.](image)

Within this continuum, I share each intern’s story using a parallel structure with common categories for consistency. These descriptions will paint a picture of who each intern is and how she experienced the equity-focused practitioner inquiry project. I provide the following information for each intern:

- Background and School Context
- Inquiry Topic Chosen to Investigate through Practitioner Inquiry
- Interaction with the Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry
- Facilitation Findings from Each Intern’s Experience
- My Interpretations as Facilitator

**Interns at a Glance**

Table 3-1 shows interns at a glance with informational backgrounds on each. All demographic data presented in Figure 3-1 was collected from a database on Greatschools.org (Great Schools, n.d.). The interns are presented along a continuum.
based on how closely their experience aligned to the project’s goals of recognizing and working to address issues of educational inequity in their school placement.

### Table 3-1. Intern Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Intern</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Placement Description and Demographics</th>
<th>Title and Wondering of Inquiry Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Latina, female, Early Childhood major</td>
<td>Riverside Elementary (Public School with magnet Spanish immersion program)</td>
<td><em>Balance in Dual Immersion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28% ELA Proficiency 33% Math Proficiency 16% Science Proficiency</td>
<td>What can I do to help dual immersion students have a balance in both languages, Spanish and English, and help them improve before taking the IPT test?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43% White students 31% Black students 58% Low Income students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>White, female, alternate certification</td>
<td>Carson Elementary (Regular Public School)</td>
<td><em>Making Eureka Work for Students in Third Grade</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21% ELA Proficiency 19% Math Proficiency 11% Science Proficiency</td>
<td>What could I do in my practice to help students engage and connect more while also increasing their scores on exit tickets?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21% White students 52% Black students 72% Low Income students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Black, female, Early Childhood major</td>
<td>Fieldview Elementary (Regular Public School)</td>
<td><em>Tired of Yelling Yet?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20% ELA Proficiency 16% Math Proficiency 9% Science Proficiency</td>
<td>Do students respond better to individual reprimanding or whole group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% White students (no data) 90% Black students 88% Low Income Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Intern</th>
<th>Background Description</th>
<th>Placement Description and Demographics</th>
<th>Title and Wondering of Inquiry Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>White, female, alternate certification</td>
<td>Carson Elementary (Regular Public School)</td>
<td>Technology in the Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21% ELA Proficiency</td>
<td>With the ever-growing advancement of technology, how can I better utilize the resources that I have available to me to help the students to gain a better understanding of the lessons being taught?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19% Math Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11% Science Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21% White students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52% Black students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72% Low Income students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>White, female, alternate certification</td>
<td>Joseph Elementary Magnet School of the Arts (Students must enter a lottery system to attend this school.)</td>
<td>Reading is Better Than Sliced Bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48% ELA Proficiency</td>
<td>What are some ways that I can promote reading enjoyment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54% Math Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31% Science Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51% White students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42% Black students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59% Low Income students</td>
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Table 3-1 provided a quick look into each intern’s story. In the next sections of this chapter, I will share an in-depth account of each intern’s unique interaction with the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus of the seminars. To begin, I will start with the intern most closely aligned to the original goals of this study. Here is the story of Maria.
Maria: Passionate Student Advocate

I placed Maria first on the continuum of alignment to the goals of the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus because she remained passionate about advocating for her students and breaking down existing barriers from the beginning to the end of the process. Her experience represents an ideal portrayal of what I hoped to watch unfold with this project. In the next few sections, I will describe Maria’s distinctive involvement with the practitioner inquiry process and the equity-focused seminars.

Maria’s background and school context. Maria is a Latina female. A native of Panama, she moved to the United States in 2016 to pursue an early childhood education degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She had dreams of teaching in the United States for a few years before bringing all of her learning back to students of Panama, perhaps as a future administrator. Maria was placed as an intern in a two-way immersion, pre-kindergarten classroom in Riverside Elementary School (all school names are pseudonyms), a regular public school with a built-in magnet program for students choosing to partake in two-way Spanish immersion.

Two-way Spanish immersion means students who speak English at home are mixed with students who speak Spanish at home to learn both English and Spanish simultaneously (Lafayette Parish School System Magnet Academies, n.d.). To gain access to this program, families must enroll in the Lafayette Parish School System Magnet Academies lottery. In order to remain in the program, pre-kindergarten students must pass the Idea Proficiency Test which is designed to monitor progress in language learning to determine placements and potential interventions (Idea Proficiency Test, n.d.) This requirement would become a part of Maria’s passion and drive starting in our very first meeting.
**Maria’s inquiry.** Maria ultimately chose to investigate the pros and cons of learning two languages in a 90 percent Spanish and 10 percent English two-way immersion Pre-Kindergarten program. Her wondering developed as a result of noticing more native English speaking students were passing the assessment required to remain in the two-way immersion program in kindergarten, while fewer English Language Learners were able to pass the same exam. She was driven by the injustice of the differing outcomes and expressed the desire to make change early on in our practitioner inquiry seminars. The title of Maria’s inquiry was *Balance in Dual Immersion* where she investigated the question: *What can I do to help dual immersion students have a balance in both languages, Spanish and English, and help them improve before taking the IPT test?*

After choosing her wondering, Maria studied the assessment used to recommend students for continuing in the two-way immersion magnet program. She examined the assessment to gain more insight into general areas the students would be asked to demonstrate understanding. Then, Maria developed a series of general lesson topics to incorporate into their English Language Arts time. She received approval to extend the English Language arts lessons by ten minutes and taught her newly developed lessons each day.

Upon completion of her four week implementation, Maria noticed improved engagement and participation from both English and Spanish speaking students. She also noticed an improvement in the students’ communication skills, both in the classroom and on the playground. During her presentation of her work, Maria shared

I saw one of my Spanish speaking students talking to a native English speaker in English. I almost cried because it was like true dual immersion.
It’s supposed to be dual but if you don’t pair them, they’re just going to go with who they feel more comfortable with. (Journal Entry, May 4, 2019, p. 1)

She ended her findings with a new wondering concerning teachers in dual immersion programs encouraging students toward proficiency in both languages equally in order to equitably equip students of varying backgrounds for future success and the opportunity to move forward in immersion programs if that is their choosing.

Maria’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry. Maria jumped in right away with a discussion of the obstacle of a seemingly unfair assessment that was preventing her English Language Learners to move to the next grade level of the two-way immersion program. In my researcher’s journal after the second seminar, I noted

Wow! [Maria] has already been talking to her teacher to find out more about her wondering. I can sense her passion growing and her courage to act on the problem seemed emboldened. I reminded her to look at this as a way to investigate her own practice but also to keep in mind larger scale changes that could be made. She wanted to go to her principal now. I explained that she should treat this as a trial and could use this project as data to bring to her principal later to perhaps inform larger scale change. She is ready to act on this issue NOW! on a much larger scale than what this project is asking of her. (Journal Entry II, February, 20, 2019, p.1)

Maria immediately recognized an issue as a barrier for only certain groups of students. She had already talked to her teacher and was itching to talk to her principal about her ideas to remove the barrier preventing some students from furthering their experience in the two-way immersion program. She was eager to make change and spoke with such passion for her students. This display of enthusiasm, for bringing justice to her students, helped move us into an excellent discussion about potential issues the other interns might choose to investigate.
Maria was very proud of the work she did for her English Language Learners. She felt a sense of accomplishment, which she described in her interview saying:

At first I was just making my lesson plans to see how it went, but then I tested them and saw that they had improved. I was relieved that I actually did something to help them, and it is actually working. I had tears in my eyes because I saw one of my Spanish speaking kids talking to another child in English. One day I saw her during free play. Two of her friends were calling her to go to the library, and she said no. She was playing with two children who only spoke English. I wondered if they were going to understand each other. When I got closer, I realized she was speaking in English to them. Happy tears. (Interview IV, May 4, 2019, p. 23)

Maria’s principal and mentor teacher also took note of her efforts. She shared a time when the principal of her school walked into her classroom while she was implementing the action plan of her practitioner inquiry. The principal asked what she was doing and sat next to her to observe. She asked Maria to come to her office to talk more about it. After a short conversation, she asked Maria to broaden her mind about potential changes. So, Maria brought her final presentation to show her principal what she had investigated. She was very supportive of Maria’s work, and this made Maria feel proud that a school administrator was interested in her ideas.

Maria’s interview data showed evidence of a significant sense of agency toward bringing more justice and opportunity to her English Language Learners. She expressed an interest in remaining curious about ways to potentially continue making positive change for students who speak Spanish as their first language. When asked what issues, if any, she would like to explore in more depth as a result of this process, Maria said:

I would like to figure out what is the right percent of English that should be integrated into the classroom. Once there is a decision about it then try to make the Spanish programs balanced: still do more Spanish than English.
but teach the basics in English that they should know by pre-K. (Interview IV, May 4, 2019, p. 24)

Maria presented her completed work to her peers as well as her principal and mentor teacher. This had a significant impact on Maria’s sense of pride, accomplishment, and professionalism. Educators in positions of power over her showed an interest in her work and even asked to attend the final showcase. As I think through my future facilitation strategies, I would like to find ways to encourage mentor teacher and principal involvement in this process of practitioners’ investigation of practice.

**Facilitation findings from Maria.** A native of Panama, Maria’s story is unique because she moved to the United States in 2016 to pursue a degree in education. Her dream to teach in America for a few years and then take back what she has learned to teach and lead in Panama would be challenged during her final semester when she struggled to pass the American History portion of the praxis exam. This barrier kept her from graduating and held her back from obtaining a two-way Spanish immersion teaching placement at the school where she conducted her internship. Without realizing, Maria was experiencing a barrier just like her students. Perhaps this provides some insight into why Maria became so passionate about eliminating barriers for her students.

The irony of this barrier pushed me, as her teacher, to launch my own inquiry on how I could help reduce this unfair barrier that would eventually prevent this passionate and effective teacher candidate from obtaining her degree and a Spanish immersion position her principal was ready to hire her for. I talked to my department head, my dean, the Louisiana Department of Education, instructors of Praxis preparation courses, and the Praxis office. Each time, I explained Maria’s story and requested individualized
support specific to the components of the exam where she needed improvement. On a policy level, I was met with the firm policy that she could not graduate without a passed praxis exam. From the Praxis company side, I was sent a generic email similar to ones Maria had received with generic information pointing her to study more in areas vast enough to warrant a four-year succession of American History coursework. Still, she would leave school every day to study and create timelines as she worked to learn every aspect of American History. She had the support of the dean and received personalized assistance from social studies methods instructors and praxis workshop providers.

Maria would end up taking the Social Studies portion of the Praxis exam fifteen times, an hour away from her home, at a cost of 60 dollars per test. This brings her total Praxis investment to $900, more than 45 hours of testing or traveling to and from the test site, and countless hours studying for and worrying about her test performance. She was late for the first seminar because she was rushing back from taking the exam in Baton Rouge. She had failed by only a few points and would end up not walking across the graduation stage with her peers. As the facilitator of this experience, it was interesting to consider how external stressors might hold teacher candidates back from really digging into their professional passions. I reflected on in my researcher’s journal immediately following the very first seminar when I said,

On the way to the seminar, one intern called to tell me she would be a few minutes late because she had driven to Baton Rouge today to take the Praxis. She failed by one point. She made it within 3 minutes of start time. I wondered how she could possibly focus on our conversations and topics knowing that she would have to pay for another test, drive to Baton Rouge again, and live the high stakes experience of having to take the test again in order to graduate. Another student was taking her newborn baby to the doctor, so she was a few minutes late. I can’t help but think
about all of the hoops we ask students to jump through to become teachers with a 46% attrition rate, little salary, no real career ladder, little autonomy, etc. (Journal Entry I, February 11, 2019, p. 1)

On Wednesday afternoon, June 19, 2019, I received a text message from Maria letting me know she was finally able to clear the Praxis hurdle. She cried the whole journey home from Baton Rouge and would now be able to graduate in August. After many exclamation points and talk of margaritas, she shared that she would return home to Panama after graduating instead of teaching in the United States like she had hoped. Although this decision could have been made based on a number of factors, I cannot help but think of the wonderfully passionate and capable teacher our community missed out on because of an unjust barrier placed on potential teachers who grew up in countries outside the US. The two-way Spanish immersion position that her principal wanted Maria in had to be given to someone else.

My interpretation of Maria’s experience. Maria’s story was both beautiful and gut-wrenching to watch. I placed Maria at the top of my continuum aligned to project goals because her fierce fight for the just treatment of the Spanish-speaking children in her class was abundantly clear from the very first seminar meeting to the final showcase. I felt as though she connected with the students in her classroom on a very personal level as she simultaneously dealt with her own fight to pass a praxis exam with unjust barriers for herself, a Panama native with minimal background knowledge on American History. The irony of these two experiences happening alongside one another was something that really struck me, as the facilitator of this process, and will stay with me as I push myself to better serve my own students, working to reduce barriers as they appear.
I placed Maria at the top of the continuum not only because of her tenacious effort to reduce barriers for her students, but also because of her professionalism throughout the process. She followed the steps of inquiry, talked to her teacher as a resource, found ways to get her hands on materials she needed, and ultimately got the ear of her principal. Maria’s mentor teacher was fully in her corner, even attending the inquiry showcase at the end of the semester. Another irony was that Maria, sitting at the top of a continuum for her unique efforts to remove barriers in place of student opportunities and potential, would be the only one of my five interns not to graduate in May because of her praxis scores.

Maria lived the barriers of educational inequity while fighting to remove them for her students. Without her insight during seminar discussions, this project would have been so very different. I am so thankful to have witnessed Maria’s process unfold, as I hope to use her experience to improve my own ability to facilitate educational equity content and processes for solutions.

**Jill: Empowered by Data**

I placed Jill second on the continuum of alignment to the goals of the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus because she was highly curious and vocal about what she thought should change in order to reach all of her students with each lesson delivery. Her experience represents how practitioner inquiry can empower future teachers to use data to inform classroom, and eventually school, decisions. In the next few sections, I will describe Jill’s involvement with the practitioner inquiry process and the equity-focused seminars.

**Jill’s background and school context.** Jill is a White female pursuing an alternative certification in elementary education. Her school placement was in a fourth
grade classroom at Carson Elementary, a traditional public school in a rural area of Lafayette parish. Carson Elementary houses about 80% students of color and about 72% of its students are living in poverty. This school placement is unique because it was placed on a list of “Transformation Zone” schools because of an overall school performance score of D in 2016 and 2017 (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

In Louisiana, low performing schools are those with letter grades of D or F. The Louisiana Department of Education assigns school performance scores based 75% on student performance on state standardized tests and 25% on how much students have improved throughout the year, or the student progress index. Based on these data, schools are assigned a letter grade. Though Carson Elementary had received a D school performance score for the previous school years, they were able to pull the score up to a C in 2018 (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.). This growth should have removed them from the list of transformation zone schools, but somehow they were still under the requirements.

The transformation zone is the work of a $1.2 million grant awarded to the Lafayette Parish School System in June of 2018 by the Louisiana Department of Education. The grant’s purpose was to increase student achievement through professional development on curriculum implementation for teachers, professional development for administration through the National Institute for School Leadership, and the thorough implementation of a Tier 1 curriculum (Lafayette Parish School System, n.d.) The bulk of the funds were allocated toward curricular materials and professional development on curriculum implementation.
These mandates would become a driving factor for Jill’s equity focused investigation. Many of the initial wonderings shared in our seminars had to do with frustrations with the use of scripted curriculum and state or district expectations to follow the script with fidelity. Jill was adamant that whole group instruction was not working for her class and wanted to change it as a part of her practitioner inquiry. When she asked if she could make changes to the lessons to use small group rotations, she was told the state would not allow it and they would get in trouble if the state popped in for an observation. She wanted to know why this was a policy and who she needed to talk to about changing it. Jill saw this policy as a barrier preventing some of her students from experiencing academic growth.

**Jill’s inquiry.** Jill ultimately chose to investigate the concern that school policy was asking teachers to move on from one lesson to the next to maintain the curricular schedule, without ensuring mastery for all students before moving on to more complex topics. She also expressed concern for a new school policy requiring teachers to annotate each lesson and then upload images of those annotations to a database every day. In her interview, Jill shared

> They have to keep to these strict guidelines. They don’t even write the lesson plans, they just annotate. So my initial wondering was about [the curriculum] and I could tell that it wasn’t working for my students. What could I do to really improve my teaching in order to help them do better and have more confidence and achieve higher scores? (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 18)

Jill noticed limitations in the expectation to move on to a new lesson regardless of whether or not students showed mastery on the previous lesson. She went to the research to find out more about helping students master concepts. During our interview, Jill reported
The research says a lot of students take multiple days to gain concepts. One of the things I taught through my action plan was fractions. That was huge and completely foreign and abstract to students. I would have one day to talk about a concept in fractions and then I had to move on. I’m not allowed to remediate, and I want to know why and where that idea came from and why that’s okay. One article told me to give them multiple days, give them time and go back and use different strategies, you need multiple strategies. So I want to know why I can’t if I know that’s what works and I know that’s what they need and they could have scored higher on tests. Why not take a day to go back and practice and learn more about it? (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 20)

Jill also noticed a reliance on background knowledge in several of their lessons. She ultimately decided to investigate what she could improve about her practice in order to help her students engage and connect more with each other and with the curricular materials while also increasing their exit ticket scores. She titled her project Making Eureka Work for Students in Third Grade and investigated the question: What could I do in my practice to help students engage and connect more while also increasing their scores on exit tickets? Eureka is the name of the math curriculum used in the Lafayette Parish School System.

She began incorporating more images, videos, and locally relevant examples to help her students connect with the information from the lessons. She also pulled together a small group of students with traditionally low exit ticket scores to gather data on small group effectiveness. In my observations from the final showcase of her work, I noted Jill’s action to remove background knowledge barriers for her students by incorporating videos and images to build background while also connecting topics to local contexts such as sugar cane fields which are located right next to the school building.

Jill collected data in the form of field notes, a researcher’s journal, and exit ticket scores. She took notes on student engagement associated with her changes to the
curriculum script as well as student engagement in her small group. She also put exit
ticket data into a table to compare the exit ticket scores of her small group students with
scores from the rest of the class.

Jill took many implications for her future practice away from this experience.
From her data, Jill found her efforts to teach in small groups improved student
understanding of the math topics covered and may have contributed to their consistently
higher exit ticket scores compared to the rest of the class. She discovered that she
wants to become a teacher who asks about student interest and uses that information to
make lessons more meaningful to them. She also hopes to implement rotating stations
of small groups in her future math instruction because this action allowed her to pinpoint
student needs with more precision and to clear up misconceptions efficiently.

Jill’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry. In her final
interview, Jill shared some insight into her unique experience throughout the study. She
articulated her views on our seminars’ equity-oriented discussions as well as the
practitioner inquiry process and the connection of both with her future as a teacher. In
the next few paragraphs, I will share some of the insight Jill communicated.

The first aspect of Jill’s experience I will discuss is her sense of pride in her own
feelings of professionalism. Through her work with data collection and analysis, she
came to feel more comfortable with the idea of going to a principal, or someone else in
authority, because she now had data to back up her ideas. She had initial concerns
about what data she needed to collect and worried the data needed to be formal.
Through email correspondence, I was able to help Jill see data as the actual action that
occurred and her own reflections on the action. She ended up becoming very proud of
the data she had collected and analyzed and valued the data-driven nature of practitioner inquiry. In her interview, Jill shared

I have the data to back it up, to show the annotations that I made from a particular day and then show them the exit ticket scores. [I can] show that those exit scores were high because I veered from the script. I worked with a focus group to see if stations would help. It's a strategy I chose to include, and I can show that the focus group scores were consistently higher. I created tables with the data. I would feel more comfortable going to a principal or someone in authority and presenting it because I have the data to back it up. It's not just me saying or reading an article. I put it into practice and I have the numbers which seems to hit them a little better than just the words. You're not saying trust me, you're saying here it is.  

(Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 20)

Jill also expressed a desire to continue to use practitioner inquiry in her future classroom after seeing improvements in her own teaching because of it. During her interview, Jill shared that she felt uncomfortable with the practitioner inquiry project at first because she thought it might mean she was not doing a good enough job. She realized through the process that it was more about growth. In her interview, Jill shared

It wasn’t that I wasn’t doing a good job, but I could be better. Realizing just because you find ways to improve doesn’t mean you aren't good and you’re not doing what you need to do. It just means you could be better and do more to help them. Keep going even when you make a mistake. (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 19)

She made the point that every teacher likely reflects on lessons on their way home in the afternoons, but practitioner inquiry provided a cycle to move through in order to evaluate what is not working well. In her interview, Jill shared

I think [practitioner inquiry] is something I need to continue doing, especially as a new teacher who doesn’t have twenty years of experience in the classroom. I feel like I need to reflect because it made me better at what I was doing. My students were way more engaged after I would include my action plan and do things to help them. So if I know it works, why wouldn’t I continue to do it and become even better in my practice. The day you stop asking questions and you stop trying to be a better
teacher, you should probably find something else to do. (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 19)

The week before our first seminar, Jill and her mentor teacher watched, and attempted to keep teaching, as six Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) personnel walked into their classroom unannounced. Sitting in the back of their classroom with an observation checklist, they were there to ensure the curriculum and curricular materials were soundly implemented. They walked around the room flipping through student workbooks during the lessons to ensure pages were completed. I was able to obtain the observation checklist (Figure 3-2) used by state personnel, which helped to confirm Jill’s frustration with balancing her efforts to improve her teaching practice specific to student need and the expectations of the LDOE.

Figure 3-2 shows the observation tool used by the LDOE to ensure the curricular materials are being used with fidelity. Each line item calls for either a yes or no response as an indicator of whether or not each was met during the observation. The items listed on the observation tool attend to whether the teacher is on the right lesson according to the curriculum pacing guide, students have completed all pages in the workbook accompanying completed lessons, all curriculum recommended scaffolds and supports are used, and the curriculum is being utilized as intended.

When I found the observation tool shown in Figure 3-2, I was perplexed by the differences between what I, as a teacher educator, see as great teaching and the line items of this tool. If this is what professionals at the state level are observing for, what does this mean for inservice teacher expectations? And, what does this mean for the perceptions of teacher candidates as they complete internships within school contexts steeped in these kinds of assessments and observations?
While I believe some schools allow more freedom to adapt lessons based on an educator’s professional attention to student need, this particular school seemed to have a strict policy against veering from the details of the lesson in any way. This may be due to the requirements of the Transformation Zone grant, but Jill and her mentor teacher were not sure. In short, these curriculum-centered policies prevented Jill from exploring a student-centered issue she was very passionate about addressing.

Though Jill came to the seminars ready to share ideas about what she wanted to change in her context, some of her initial wonderings were centered on deficit-oriented views. For example, I made a note in my researcher’s journal following the first seminar that she initially spoke of a lack of parental involvement as the reason some students were underperforming. I brought in some articles to help facilitate discussion of equity consciousness as educators which helped bring our discussions to a place where we were willing to depart from assumptions and focus on building students through asset-oriented efforts.

**Facilitation findings from Jill.** Jill valued the small group collaboration and feedback opportunities offered in the seminars. Traditionally, the action research project embedded in internship is facilitated in large groups of 30-40 interns with one instructor. Jill appreciated the intimacy of a smaller team. She liked having the seminars and felt she was able to talk more in depth and more comfortably about her project than if she were doing so in a larger group. As the facilitator, I feel like this was especially important since I was asking them to put an explicit equity focus on their projects and to discuss big issues related to educational inequity.
When I asked Jill specifically about ways her understanding of educational equity changed as a result of this experience, she spoke about her own experience in school. She compared her education and background to what she sees as the realities for students in her current setting. In her final interview, she shared

I went to private school. I don’t know how my mom paid for it, but she did. I didn’t necessarily have blinders on, but I wasn’t really exposed to educational equity. Being at the school I was at and seeing how little opportunity they had and were given, and then going to seminars and watching the videos that we watched and watching the teacher documentary, opened my eyes to the fact that this was a huge issue that I didn’t figure existed. It allowed me to delve more into the action project and try to remove some of those. Until you get into the schools, you don’t realize how bad it is. They don’t have much of anything and then on top of that their education is affected. You have much different background knowledge. They aren’t able to go on field trips. I loved going to school. It was always interesting and fun, and we were always up and moving. Why did it change? If that worked in the past, why did it have to be different? (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 18)

Though only time will tell whether Jill will continue to investigate issues of educational inequities and utilize practitioner inquiry to combat them, her interview revealed a few important takeaways. The content consumed and discussed in the seminars improved Jill’s awareness of current educational inequities and she valued practitioner inquiry as an active vehicle to counteract the inequities she uncovered in her practice. Though she began the experience with some talk of deficit-minded assumptions, she ultimately expressed implications for her practice centered on tapping into student assets by capitalizing on their interests and finding gaps in understanding by working in more intimate groups. Overall, Jill ended her interview with more questions she wanted to answer and a confidence that research-based, data-driven action would help her to do so.
My interpretation of Jill’s experience. I chose to place Jill second in line of the continuum of alignment to project goals for a few reasons, but the most significant reason was her appreciation for the practical side of the practitioner inquiry process. While Maria was incredibly passionate about eliminating barriers for her students, Jill’s power came in the form of a process with steps to follow and confidence empowered by data.

Jill questioned school and classroom issues from the beginning, but she also did not see, at first, how she could really do anything to make significant change. She emailed me quite a bit with questions. One particular email chain was focused on what counts as data. She was learning that data do not have to be formal or quantitative but can actually be quite natural and a part of our everyday practice. She acknowledged her misconception of data and later talked about her new sense of pride and confidence in her ability to use data to present ideas to future administrators.

Jill’s project worked to make lessons more student-centered through small group work and incorporating student interest. While this topic was not quite as focused on educational equity as Maria’s, she still recognized her own role in improving the educational experience for all students in her classroom. And for Jill, the process of collecting and analyzing data empowered her to feel as though she may one day affect change in her own teaching career.

Rose: Skimming the Surface of Student-Centered Change

I placed Rose third on the continuum of alignment to the goals of the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus because she started off strong with her discussions of limitations occurring in her school and classroom context, but she ended up only skimming the surface on really bringing change to remove or reduce those barriers. Her
experience represents seeing injustice but lacking the position of power or the resilience to bring substantial and lasting action to the issues in practice. In the next few sections, I will describe Rose’s involvement with the practitioner inquiry process and the equity-focused seminars.

**Rose’s background and school context.** Rose is a Black female pursuing a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education. Rose was placed in a kindergarten classroom at Fieldview Elementary, a regular public school. Fieldview Elementary serves a student population of 90+% students of color, and 88% of students are living in poverty (Great Schools, n.d.). They received a D for their 2018 school performance score (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.) which places the school in the Transformation Zone, requiring similar expectations as those outlined for Carson Elementary.

I think it is important to note my previous work with Fieldview Elementary. This school served as my own context for my teacher internship back in May of 2005. I worked in a first grade classroom and a third grade classroom and fell in love with my students. I still have a group picture of us on a field trip at the zoo in my office. The irony is that it was very difficult to find an opening in a public school position at the time, so I ended up taking a maternity leave and eventually securing a spot at a different school about 4 miles away from Fieldview Elementary. Within the same year and in the same parish lines, I went from working in the school with the highest percentage of students living in poverty to a brand new private school charging the highest tuition. This experience has remained at the forefront of my professional conscious throughout my career and played a significant role in my decision to pursue a doctoral degree and
to conduct this study. In short, the educational experiences of these two different groups of community children are vastly unjust.

I was excited to tell Rose that she would be working in the same school I did as a teacher intern. She was excited about her placement as well and had enjoyed interactions with her mentor teacher and students so far. Rose delivered a baby girl via cesarean section only two weeks before the start of school but still managed to attend every seminar and complete all requirements to graduate.

Rose’s inquiry. During our seminars, Rose shared her frustration for the amount of yelling she was experiencing around Fieldview Elementary. The yelling bothered her, and she wondered if it was even effective in managing behaviors. For her equity-focused action research project, Rose chose to investigate student responses to different behavior management strategies. In her interview, Rose said

I chose to investigate if students respond better to individual reprimanding versus whole group reprimanding or yelling, more so. I chose to do that because where I was placed I did hear a lot of yelling and also in other schools that I attended I heard a lot of yelling. I saw a lot of yelling. So I really wanted to see which one students respond better to. (Interview III, May 4, 2019, p. 20)

She titled her project Tired of Yelling Yet? and investigated the question: Do students respond better to individual reprimanding or whole group? Rose implemented a plan to take a more individualized approach to managing misbehavior. She collected data in the form of weekly behavior documentation logs and field notes immediately following an encounter where a behavior management strategy was used. Rose found that by individualizing her behavior management strategies, she was able to reduce distractions in the classroom. She also felt that she took away the sense of hurt pride
for students, therefore avoiding follow up outbursts that, prior to her study, sometimes occurred after a student was yelled at.

Rose focused her practitioner inquiry project on one particular student. She worked to uncover some background on why this student was consistently getting in trouble in class. She focused on an issue she thought was preventing this student from achieving success in her classroom. Then, she took it upon herself to change it. In her interview, Rose said

I really don’t believe students act out for no reason. That’s what I want to look into, more of a counselor role figuring out why the child is misbehaving. And, taking away the yelling. What happens in my class when we yell or reprimand a lot on one student? Usually two things happen: the student feels picked on because the other students may be laughing or they may be looking at them or giggling, so that student continues to lash out and now [the teacher is] lashing out at the students and everybody else. But in turn the other students in the classroom are almost sitting there in shock. I started to say if we have someone misbehaving in our classroom we ignore them. We don’t address it, we just don’t worry about it. Just wait and let the teacher handle it. That took away a lot of the yelling. I took away a lot of the back and forth between the students and allowed them to say [the teachers are] going to handle it, I just need to focus on my own work. I think I made progress because I chose to only work with one student in my classroom because that’s the student that I noticed was constantly getting in trouble. That’s what made me latch on to her for my project. I do feel like we addressed it because I feel like the more I started working with her, the more communication the teacher had with the mom. I think we were able to at least find a ground to say this is why we thought she was acting out and this is what she’s doing. So now we’re able to handle her situation a little better. (Interview IV, May 4, 2019, p. 22)

Rose felt proud of the progress she made with her students. By trying to get to the root of what was causing the misbehavior, she reduced the yelling and created a more peaceful learning environment for her students. Rose said in her interview that she felt she took away a lot of the back and forth banter between teacher and students. While Rose gained new insight into how she will approach misbehavior in her future
classroom based on the findings of her study, she also contributed greatly to our equity focused discussions for the seminars.

**Rose’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry.** Throughout the series of equity-focused seminars, Rose was able to connect broader examples of educational inequity to her own context fairly quickly. She noticed and questioned yelling as something that might be more distracting than helpful for her students. She saw it as a barrier preventing learning and worked to dismantle it. She also came to seminars prepared to discuss the educational inequity related resources in depth.

During the second seminar, the interns discussed things happening locally that related to the content in the *Teach Us All* documentary. They discussed a brand new, beautiful high school developed in a mostly White, middle class area of Lafayette. They talked about their own schools and the trustworthiness or reform efforts, grant money, and who was making decisions. Our discussions greatly benefitted from Rose’s willingness to speak her truth. When I asked Rose in what ways, if any, did her understanding of educational equity change as a result of this experience, she shared

> I think it more so changed when you showed us the *Teach Us All* film. I was aware of all of the stuff they said in there but it’s different when you can visually see it. So that’s when I really became aware of educational equity because they showed real things that were happening, they gave the Baton Rouge situation and then they showed the different sides of Arkansas and all and that area. So that’s when I was like, ‘okay’.
> (Interview III, May 4, 2019, p. 21)

**Facilitation findings from Rose.** As the facilitator of the discussions, I was incredibly grateful to have a diverse group of interns. While all five interns were female, three were White, one was Black, and one was Latina. I wrote about my appreciation for this in a journal entry and noted that I wanted to provide the space for my interns to speak their own unique truths without me, their facilitator, speaking for them. I really
tried to let the interns own the conversations and talk through disagreements. One of the most powerful moments occurred between Sara and Rose as we discussed the documentary *Teach Us All*.

Sara and Rose dominated the discussion, and I tried to act as a sort of guide on the side as I listened to the back and forth of the two interns. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote

This is harder than I thought. I’m trying to facilitate through probing questions in an effort to let them construct their own knowledge. I know that when people come into ideas and realizations on their own, they are more likely to hold them as true and important. However, I was confronted with a discussion that showed a lack of empathy and recognition of injustice. I let the interns take over the discussion as much as possible, but I did share some information on several occasions in a more direct approach when I saw that it might contribute to the discussion. I want them to grapple. I want them to be honest. However, I also want them to have good information and resources as they grapple, rather than working from opinions or previous beliefs. I cannot always rely on constructivist approach when the issues are this important. Sometimes, a more direct approach is necessary so that we can prevent the construction of false truths. (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, pp. 1-2)

Rose, a Black female, spoke to her truth and lived experiences as Sara confronted the idea that racial educational inequities had anything at all to do with her as a developing teacher. Rose spoke about the students in Sara’s future classrooms. She told Sara that she was glad she knows where she stands with her feelings and she encouraged Sara to teach in a place where she felt comfortable with the students and not in a place where they would need her to offer something she did not think she could. As mentioned previously in Sara’s story, I felt the need to intervene when Sara seemed to constantly push back on Rose’s ideas with a lack of empathy and openness.

It was after this seminar that I realized two things that I think will change my teaching practice as a teacher educator. I realized that my efforts to facilitate
discussions with a constructivist approach was a good strategy, but I cannot always rely
on students to construct a solid equity consciousness, recognizing their own biases and
assumptions. Sometimes, a more direct approach is necessary so that I might prevent
the construction of false truths. My other big takeaway following this seminar came to
me while reflecting in my researcher’s journal. When Sara shared again and again that
it was not her place, as a White person working toward a teaching certificate, to do
anything about racial educational inequities, her honesty struck me. Upon reflection, I
came to the realization that it is not enough to just learn to teaching methods in teacher
preparation programs. We cannot learn to be a great teacher without recognizing the
humanity in our classrooms and dedicating ourselves to serving our unique students.

My interpretation of Rose’s experience. Because Rose was placed in the
same school I had completed my student teaching, I was aware of the potential to
identify numerous instances of unjust educational practices. However, I wanted her to
make her own discoveries and develop her own wonderings, so I did not talk about the
many issues I saw in her school placement. I had high hopes for Rose, but she only
managed to skim the surface of the issue of the overuse of yelling as a behavior
management strategy.

I would have liked to see Rose dig deeper into restorative management practices
and try out some more structured approaches to eliminate the negative effects of yelling
at students to conform. In a previous course I taught Rose, she conducted a project on
the school to prison pipeline, so I knew she had some background knowledge on this
idea and thought she would bring in the connection between yelling and punitive
management practices to the larger idea of the pipeline. However, this only came up
once in a seminar as part of a discussion. I did not do a good enough job supporting Rose in making connections between her own inquiry and the larger issues we were discussing in seminars.

Rose contributed substantially to our equity discussions but ultimately fell short in the execution of her action plan and reporting her findings with data. Her presentation was lacking passion and purpose and looked like something she threw together the night before. So, I chose to include Rose third on the continuum of project goal alignment because the potential was present, but she failed to dive below the surface.

**Faith: Overcome with External Distractors**

I placed Faith fourth on the continuum of alignment to the goals of the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus because she shared ideas with potential to affect considerable student-centered change in her classroom, but she became overcome by pregnancy complications and the desire to keep her mentor teacher comfortable. These distractors led Faith to lose sight of the equity focus of her practitioner inquiry topic and project. In the next few sections, I will describe Faith’s experience with the practitioner inquiry process and the equity-focused seminars.

**Faith’s background and school context.** Faith is a White female working toward an alternative certification in elementary education. She was placed as an intern in a fourth grade classroom at Carson Elementary, the same rural public school as Jill. As a reminder, Carson Elementary serves about 80% students of color, and about 72% of its students are living in poverty. This school was considered a “Transformation Zone” school because of an overall school performance score of D in 2016 and 2017 (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).
Faith’s inquiry. For her action research project, Faith chose to investigate the question: With the ever-growing advancement of technology, how can I better utilize the resources that I have available to me to help the students gain a better understanding of the lessons being taught? In her project titled, Technology in the Classroom, she began by looking to the research for ways the use of technology in classrooms affects student learning. She also talked to teachers she observed as well as her own mentor teacher. She requested brief tutorials from teachers after watching their technology-integrated lessons and collected data by taking notes immediately following each tutorial. Next, she tried several of the new strategies in her classroom and took notes on how the students reacted to the technology-enhanced lessons.

Faith learned that the use of technology during her lessons helped her to feel more connected to the lessons she was teaching. She felt her lessons were more organized and easier for students to follow. She also noticed students were excited to walk up to the interactive white board to share their responses, and their excitement fueled both Faith and her mentor teacher. Faith hoped to utilize similar forms of technology in her future classroom to maintain student engagement and achievement of learning goals.

Faith’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry. While Faith’s practitioner inquiry project led her to new learning and implications for her future career, there was an evident shift away from an explicit equity focus somewhere around the third seminar. This might have happened for a few reasons. Faith began the semester six months pregnant and ended up on bedrest for about two weeks before the end of her internship. She was worried about the safety of the baby and had a hard time
investing substantial time and thought into the equity aspect of her project. As a mother of three who ended up hospitalized for a month only a year ago because of pregnancy complications, I did not push the issue and encouraged her to rest and focus on her health and the health of the baby. This external factor likely played a significant role in the lack of depth in Faith’s study.

Another interesting contributor to Faith’s stray from an equity focus was discomfort in suggesting and implementing significant changes in her mentor teacher’s classroom. During the first two seminars, Faith wondered why she needed to follow a scripted curriculum and why her classroom did not have enough books for every student to follow along, when the curriculum asked them to listen to a portion of a story read aloud. She seemed to jump right into the idea of barriers keeping students from the highest quality educational experience.

However, Faith felt her initial wondering, concerning why all students did not have a book to follow along while something was read aloud, was too intrusive to her mentor teacher. She saw the barrier but felt unqualified to challenge it in someone else’s classroom. I encouraged Faith to talk to her mentor teacher about our project as a way to investigate how we can improve our own practice by working to remove or reduce barriers that might be holding some kids back from their academic potential. Ultimately, Faith chose to change her topic to something she felt more comfortable implementing.

She switched her focus to discrepancies in technology availability and frequency of use between classrooms and schools she had visited. She noticed one school made heavy use of devices that kept track of student responses, showing answers in pie
charts to display percentage of class understanding. In her interview, she questioned why such tools are not available in all schools when she said

I noticed at one school they use clickers to take quizzes for formative assessments. It shows a pie graph of how many got it right. It’s a great tool to let teacher see the percentage of class getting the information. I noticed it’s not available in all schools. I wonder why. Is there a way to get it? (Interview V, May 4, 2019, p. 25)

Faith explained, in her interview, that she ended up using her mentor teacher as a resource for her project. She changed her wondering to a technology focused topic that would go along with the Language Arts curriculum she was given. Faith was able to connect the notion of barriers to her context, but ended up addressing an issue that was not connected to her initial equity-focused wonderings. During the final interview, she admitted that she had lost sight of the equity focus when she shared, “Sometimes I lost track of educational equity as something I needed to focus on. I don’t know that my project did anything related to improving educational equity” (Interview V, May 4, 2019, p. 25).

**Facilitation findings from Faith.** Between Faith’s discomfort encroaching on her mentor teacher’s professional space and her own personal challenges with pregnancy, Faith offered insight into possible barriers preventing full immersion into an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship. All interns were dealing with external stressors and often had numerous questions about other internship requirements as they approached graduation. Several interns also shared Faith’s hesitation to question traditional practice and try something new in their mentor teacher’s classroom.

Though Faith noted a lost equity-focus in her practitioner inquiry project, she learned some things about her own teaching practice from the experience. In her final
interview, she expressed the realization that she is not afraid to try new things and see how they work. She said

If something is not working, it’s not a big deal to change it up. I learned I can roll with the punches and make changes. When there are days something doesn’t work, I can come up with a backup plan. (Interview V, May 4, 2019, p. 25)

Faith learned to trust the process as her wondering took many different shapes and forms before she really committed to a topic.

She also offered insight into the facilitation of the seminars. Faith appreciated our time spent in small group seminars. She enjoyed the feedback from her peers and hearing where everyone was in the process. She said, “I enjoyed the seminars and wouldn’t have minded meeting more often” (Interview V, May 4, 2019, p. 25).

My interpretation of Faith’s experience. Faith seemed to recognize issues with educational access for her students from the very beginning. She thought it was unfair that the curriculum required students to follow along with material read aloud, but the class did not have enough books for every child. She questioned this practice as well as other school-wide policies, such as not allowing talking in the hallways. However, when it came down to selecting a problem for her inquiry, Faith succumbed to external stressors and chose a topic unrelated to reducing educational inequity.

Faith was worried about trying something new in her mentor teacher’s already established classroom. She did not want her teacher to feel as though she was questioning her practices. Because of this, Faith ended up with a topic looking into ways she could use more technology in her lessons. It was a far stretch to consider this as an issue that might reduce barriers for students. Faith was also seven to eight months pregnant during this process. She ended up needing to go on bedrest toward
the end of the semester. Her health, and the health of her baby, took priority and the fidelity to the equity-focus of her project fell toward the end of the list.

**Sara: Insightful Disconnect Between Equity and Practice**

I placed Sara last on the continuum of alignment to the goals of the practitioner inquiry process and equity focus because she resisted the idea that she, as a developing teacher, could play any part in dismantling educational barriers in place of student success. She also pushed back against the idea that practitioner inquiry was something she might use to inform her practice as a real classroom teacher. Her experience represents an ideal portrayal of what I hoped would not happen. However, Sara’s story became the most powerful while immersing myself in data analysis because Sara’s experience produced the most significant learnings and takeaways for me, as the facilitator. In the next few sections, I will describe Sara’s insightful interaction with the practitioner inquiry process and the equity-focused seminars.

**Sara’s background and school context.** Sara is a White female with a bachelor’s degree in Biology who entered the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s alternative certification program to become an elementary teacher. For her spring semester internship, she was placed in a fourth grade classroom at Joseph Elementary Magnet School for the Arts and Technology. As a “school of choice” in the district, this school is fully populated by a lottery system. Families can sign up for the lottery online during a two month period over November and December the year before the child enters school (Lafayette Parish School System Magnet Academies, n.d.). The webpage describes the lottery system as a computerized system that randomly selects students from a list of completed applications. Transportation is provided through satellite stops if parents submit a request.
As I begin to share stories of Sara’s interaction with the equity side of the action research project and seminar discussions, it is important to note my own involvement with Joseph Elementary outside of this study. During the same semester as my study, I worked with a group of teacher candidates enrolled in my math methods course in an after-school tutoring program located directly across the street from Joseph Elementary Magnet School. Many of the kids attending after-school tutoring lived in the humble neighborhood directly adjacent to the tutoring facility. While leaving one day, I noticed a sidewalk running from Joseph Elementary right up to the entrance of the neighborhood. I was disheartened to discover that since the sidewalk-connected school had become a magnet academy, most of the students living across the street are now bussed to a public school located 4.5 miles away and that received a school-wide grade rating of D (Louisiana Schools, n.d.). The sidewalk to the C-rated academy for arts and technology is rarely used.

I share this story because the context in which Sara was placed held huge potential for identifying issues of equity. However, Sara had an interesting journey through the process of learning about, identifying, and addressing issues of educational inequity in her school setting. In the next section, I share Sara’s inquiry and findings about her journey.

Sara’s inquiry. After grappling with different wonderings, Sara chose to investigate ways she could promote an enjoyment for reading in her classroom. As someone who loves reading herself, she was discouraged by her students lack of interest in books. In her project, titled *Reading is Better than Sliced Bread*, Sara investigated the question: *What are some ways that I can promote reading enjoyment?*
She implemented a research-based action plan promoting student choice, students sharing book recommendations, and teacher read-alouds for increased reading enjoyment. She chose a humorous book to read aloud and offered a poster where students could leave recommendations for their peers. She also reminded them to choose books they wanted to read when they visited the library.

She collected data in the form of comments during read aloud discussions, poster recommendation contributions, and pictures captured when students' library selections were connected to book discussions during read-alouds or to their own interests. Sara noted that students began asking daily if she was going to read to them once she began reading aloud. She took pictures of students eager to read the book recommendations of their peers. The implications Sara will take into her own teaching practice, based on this experience, were: 1) Read funny books and give students time to talk about them, 2) Have Accelerated Reader (AR) books that are accessible for struggling students, 3) Value variety and provide different types of books and magazines to pique student interest, 4) be active in helping students find books they enjoy, and 5) value student interest by having a showcase of recommendations in the classroom.

Sara’s interaction with the equity-focused inquiry. Sara struggled to connect the realities of her role as a teacher to the huge, national issues of school quality variance and discrepancies between educational opportunities available to minority students living in poverty compared to their affluent, White peers. Sara saw big issues as untouchable, political, and having nothing to do with the realities she would enter as
a teacher. When I asked Sara about why she did not see overlap between large issues of educational inequity and her own career as a teacher, she stated

I think it’s naturally built into it. Like, it’s just this huge system and there are issues. I’d love to be able to share my views with other people. To me that would be where your change would come from, but who cares? It sounds political, but no, I’m just looking at it from a data perspective. We honestly know these things don’t work. We know other countries are doing different things, so why are we spending large amounts of money into these systems that don’t work and why isn’t anyone saying anything about it? If I’m at the school that’s doing these things and I can’t say anything, then where does my fight even start? (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 6)

She recognized educational inequity as a real problem but became overwhelmed by the resources shared in seminars and why this was relevant to her becoming a teacher in the already established system. During one seminar, Sara voiced she was “just an intern, trying to learn to be a better teacher.” She did not see any overlap in being a better teacher and how that relates to making education more equitable. In Sara’s final interview, she shared

I guess, to me, the whole video we watched [Teach Us All documentary] was just distracting to me. It was just too much to think about. I’m not going to solve big problems like this, or untouchables. We all just live in the system. I don’t see it as something that’s going to be front and center any time soon. I think that your video was too black or white: polarized. It made me feel a certain way about the education system, where those aren’t issues that are going to change. That’s the way the system is. Me being a better teacher and helping the students in my class isn’t going to change segregation. It’s not going to change big ticket issues that you could sit around and talk about all day. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 7)

Sara did not deny that problems exist in education, but she saw no connection between the big ideas in the documentary and the real happenings and expectations within her current and future teaching context. Sara was looking at the practical aspects of the real career and field she was hoping to enter. The reality was that having an inquiry stance and carrying out processes for improving educational equity was just not
something that would help her get a job, show colleagues her professional value, or break into giant, deeply rooted system issues. Sara needed to prepare herself to enter a career in the real, present day system for schooling and had no room to be distracted by the idealist nature of improving educational equity.

Though Sara effectively carried out an inquiry cycle to boost student reading enjoyment, she did not anticipate any future need to use the practitioner inquiry process as a teacher. To Sara, there was no connection between using practitioner inquiry as a process to remove or reduce equity-related barriers for students and the skills desired by administrators of their new in-service teachers. In her final interview, she shared:

> When we went to our [seminars], I could see what everyone else was doing and changing and what they were talking about. It made it feel like more of a collective effort. Like okay, we’re coming together to share what we’re going over and what we’re finding. Having you at the head to kind of lead the discussion has been really beneficial. That’s why I probably wouldn’t do it, because I don’t have anyone who would be in the room to say ‘yeah that’s great, or you can try this instead’. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 13)

This response was jolting to me, as I realized Sara had a point. Practitioner inquiry, a process which asks us to address issues within our own teaching practice, find what worked for others, try something new, collect and analyze data, and then share our learning with peers, could seem irrelevant in an environment that may not offer time or support for finding and improving flaws within our practice. Educators working together to make collective decisions for comprehensive, student-centered improvement is simply not a norm in public schools in Lafayette parish. If cycles of inquiry were a norm, Sara may have felt drastically different about this project. I shared with Sara what some schools have done to turn their professional learning communities...
(PLCs) into time given to teachers to inquire about their practice and share their new ideas with peers. Sara then said

Yeah, I would like to see other people as interested as I am in reading books and sharing books with me. I haven’t seen people attacking books like I do. In a way, I feel like it’s better to just keep reading my books and trying to figure stuff out on my own. At the same time, reading these books is exhausting. I study these books. I make notes and highlight and summarize and go back and reread it several times. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 13)

Sara, a voracious reader of teaching-related books, strives to become a master of her teaching craft for the sake of her students’ academic success. However, she saw no room in her future career to admit her own professional need for improvement to colleagues. This might be viewed as a weakness, and it is certainly not a part of school cultures and teacher expectations. Instead, the solitary culture, where teachers perceive to have mastered their practice and function within the confines of their classroom walls, seemed more appropriate for Sara’s notions of how to improve. She would keep reading her books and figuring it out on her own.

Sara also expressed concern with discussing educational equity issues with potential principals because the political nature may prevent her from getting hired. She saw her role as someone who goes into the school, teaches the curriculum she is given, gets evaluated by those in charge, and should be focused on showing kids how to learn. She saw larger issues of educational inequity as separate from a teacher’s professional expectations. I used the example of standardized testing to discuss the possibility of taking a large, seemingly untouchable topic, and turning it into something you may be able to address in smaller ways, such as giving more choice during class time or perhaps building a case for more recess or free time in order to reduce some of the
stress associated with standardized testing. My goal was to highlight ways a huge issue can be taken down to the classroom level. Sara responded with

Yeah, but if I take that stance, who’s going to hire me? If I openly express the way I feel about standardized tests, people will say, ‘I’m not going to hire that person.’ And I know that they won’t because they use those scores to evaluate teachers. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, pp. 4-5)

Sara felt if she shared an idea or took a stance against issues that could feel political, she could be putting her future career in jeopardy.

Another interesting aspect of Sara’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry seminars and project was her claim that her participation in the ideas we were discussing and the processes we used to improve practice and eliminate barriers may paint her as a weak and incapable teacher to her colleagues. Sara could not envision herself ever using the practitioner inquiry process as an in-service teacher, nor could she see herself discussing educational inequity with her colleagues and administration. When asked if the process of practitioner inquiry was something helpful that she might use again, Sara responded with

No. I wouldn’t use the wondering thing again. I just don’t see a need. [Reading books] is just to keep ideas coming in. I don’t have anywhere to go and talk about it and report it. I enjoy being here and talking because talking about it gave me more ideas. In school we don’t really have a chance to express what we’re trying because then other people would be like, ‘Oh, that person doesn’t know what they’re doing?’ So, it makes sense to protect yourself in a way of not talking about those things you’re doing because other people are going to see it as a weakness. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 13)

Sara did not see why discussions of and videos about racial inequities in education were relevant to her becoming a teacher or to her as a White person. She saw it as a huge societal problem that she could not fix. She did not feel that, as a White person, it was her place to “help” students of color. She talked about prominent
figures in the Black community being the ones that might be able to inspire students of color to improve their conditions. To offer some perspective, I gave an example of women fighting for their rights, which I shared in the previous chapter. While women made significant strides on their own, their progress was strengthened when men joined in their movement to fight alongside them as allies. This example seemed to provide some clarity into our diverse positions in society and the ways in which we might use positions of privilege to bring more awareness to unjust barriers.

Sara found the final inquiry showcase especially useful because of the feedback she received from someone in the audience. She was excited to hear someone connected to her project’s topic and even hopes to use his ideas in her classroom. Sara also shared her perception that this opportunity to share one’s work is lacking in schools and classrooms. She struggled to find the significance of this project to her career because she will likely not find an environment that provides the time and support to work collaboratively on issues of one’s practice and then share findings with colleagues.

**Facilitation findings from Sara.** One facilitation effort that seemed to help with making connections to interns’ own practice and context was the use of the term *barrier*. When I used the idea of eliminating barriers for students who are not experiencing academic success, or even a joy for learning, the task became a little less foggy and perhaps felt easier to manage. While Sara still showed resistance to the idea that the smaller, more actionable, issues she noticed in her own classroom were at all connected to the larger issues discussed during our seminars, she did see herself as
someone who could make improvements in her instruction in order to meet the needs of all of her students. In the same interview, she said

I need to get them smarter. How do I do that? And like seeing that as a barrier, I think you really have to see the barrier of learning before you can start figuring out what your plan of attack is. How are you going to attack the problem if you don’t recognize that there’s a huge barrier there? (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 12)

I asked Sara to give an example of what she meant by barrier. She explained that she saw it as a barrier that she was unable to create her own lessons for her students. The inability to change a lesson to meet individual student needs is a barrier to student learning. Sara saw this barrier easily and appreciated the times when she had more freedom to plan her own lessons for social studies. I think these examples will help in future seminars to share how giant and broad educational inequity can be while also sharing examples of how very small, and seemingly disconnected, issues can contribute to the larger ones. The idea of eliminating barriers helped Sara, as well as other interns, to discover more relevance in the idea that educational inequity could exist within their own contexts in different, yet connected, ways compared to what they were learning from the seminar resources and discussions.

Another aspect concerning Sara’s interaction with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry project and seminars was her realization that huge issues happening nationally are actually relevant right where she stands. I shared the story of the neighborhood kids living across the street from Joseph Elementary getting bussed to a school with a lower letter grade and less opportunities. Because I wanted my interns to think for themselves and come to their own realizations about their contexts, I waited until the final interview to share the story with Sara. After sharing, she said, “If you had research
on that kind of stuff, I’d probably be more into that. Like wow, that’s interesting that you know that and we could talk about that” (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 8).

When asked if specific local examples immediately following the larger scale examples in the videos would have helped her to see the relevance in her practice, she said the local examples would have helped because she would have been able to see how the huge issues are happening locally. Though I wanted the interns to come up with context-specific examples of inequity on their own, with the help of resources, equity audits, and peers, more specific local examples may have pushed their thinking earlier and more deliberately than my efforts to provide a more constructivist approach.

**My interpretation of Sara’s experience.** As the facilitator, watching the ups and downs of Sara’s experience was both exhausting and enlightening. While other interviews lasted about twenty minutes or so, Sara’s interview went on for an hour and a half. Though I do not think I showed it in the interview, I was internally frustrated at her inability to see any connection between her developing practice and larger issues of educational inequity and lack of access to high quality educational opportunities depending on where one lives and goes to school. It felt like we kept going in circles.

What I mainly hoped she would take away from this process was that she may never feel pulled to tackle the giant issues related to educational inequity, but that she could work to reduce or remove barriers blocking the students in her own classrooms from success or fulfillment. The more I tried to give examples to her, the more we just looped in circles. She ultimately ended the interview because she wanted to be in the main room when they announced the door prize winners. I wonder how long we would have spoken if that deadline was not present.
For me, the real learning happened after our interview was complete and after the last boards were removed from the showcase room. It was in my reflection upon her words that I really uncovered some of my best learning from this whole experience. So, while Sara’s story is located last on my continuum because of a disconnect from my goal for this project, her story also offered the most insight into my future practice as a teacher educator.

Sara compartmentalized educational inequity in one box and her own developing teaching practice into another box. There were no pathways between the two, in her mind, and she shared some valid reasons for this thinking. For her, the teaching profession was already established, and she was simply looking to join in. If she questioned the existing system, she may run the risk of not getting hired. If she actively spoke about inquiring about how to improve her own practice, fellow teachers would think she did not know what she was doing. Sara said she would never do practitioner inquiry again because that was not something in the job expectations of teachers, so she would not have anyone to share ideas and possibilities.

The system is the way it is, and Sara saw this project as a distraction to her ability to enter into it. Once I transcribed her interview, I knew there were several gems of learning inside. I also knew that the learning would be painful because they would reveal the complexities of trying to bring a focus of educational equity and inequity to an undergraduate teacher education program in a mostly conservative state with mostly White females entering its programs. Though these realizations were sobering, I am so thankful for Sara’s persistence in explaining her point of view so that I may take the
insight she provided and turn it into lessons learned that will certainly influence my future practice as a teacher educator.

**Conclusion**

This third chapter delivered in-depth accounts of each intern’s unique experience with the equity-focused practitioner inquiry seminars and final showcase. Stories were reported along a continuum of alignment to the goals of practitioner inquiry and of improving educational equity, based on multiple forms of data collected throughout the process. I used a parallel structure in order to paint a clear picture of each intern and also to look across all five interns’ similarities and differences within their processes. The structure provided information on intern backgrounds and school contexts, inquiry project topics, each intern’s interaction with the equity focus of the practitioner inquiry, my facilitation findings from each experience, and finally my interpretation of each intern.

These stories, synthesized with the seminar accounts shared in Chapter 2, led me to uncover several lessons learned that I will take with me into my future practice as a teacher educator. In the next chapter, I will share those lessons learned by providing thematic overarching ideas for my learning followed by detailed discussions of the specific lessons that fall under those broad themes. I also provide connections to literature shared in the first chapter and also new literature that supports the lessons learned and connects each one to a broader base of research. Chapter 4 will conclude with what these learnings mean for my own practice, how they have contributed to new professional wonderings and future research, and what they could mean for the field of teacher education.
CHAPTER 4
ONE DOZEN LESSONS LEARNED: COMPLEXITIES IN BRINGING EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTITIONER INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine my efforts, as a teacher educator, to bring an explicit equity focus to an existing practitioner inquiry experience embedded in culminating internships for the elementary and early childhood degree programs at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. In the first chapter, I provided some background and a review of relevant literature which led me to the action I chose to investigate. I shared data collection and analysis methods, all aimed at uncovering insight into my two research questions: 1) In what ways do teacher candidates come to understand issues of equity in education through engagement in an equity-focused practitioner inquiry experience as a part of their teacher education program? and 2) What did I, the facilitator of an equity-focused practitioner inquiry cycle embedded in internship, learn about facilitation during this study?

The second chapter shared the action within each of four consecutive seminars as well as the original plan I intended to follow. The four seminars were intended to lead interns through the steps of one practitioner inquiry cycle as they investigate a problem of practice related to an issue of educational inequity. The second chapter ends with a description of the final showcase where students presented their work. Chapter 3 looked closely at the unique experiences of each intern by describing her background and context, inquiry topic, interaction with the equity content in the seminars, and my interpretation of her experience with the project. Upon presenting intern experiences and a glimpse into each seminar based on data collected throughout this study, I am left with a series of lessons learned that I will take into my future
practice as a teacher educator dedicated to building a more just educational experience for all students.

This fourth and final chapter will share those lessons learned. This study illuminated several important complexities situated within guiding novice teacher candidates to recognize, and then dig into, real issues of educational inequity happening in their teaching contexts. Embarking upon using the process of practitioner inquiry as a tool to bring new teachers toward a deepened awareness of educational inequity was challenging, messy, strained, and complex. At the same time, it was enlightening and rewarding.

In the following sections, I present 11 detailed, evidence-based lessons learned, categorized under three overarching themes. Then, I share implications for my future practice as a teacher educator and new wonderings that have emerged as a result of these lessons learned. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with potential considerations for future research and implications for the broader field of teacher education.

To begin, I share an overview of all 11 lessons learned, which fell into three overarching categories. The three overarching areas I will use to frame my lessons learned include:

- Building Equity Consciousness with Equity Consciousness
- Promoting Pride and Agency in Teacher Interns through Practitioner Inquiry
- Navigating Resistance to Full Immersion into Equity-Focused Inquiry

Under each theme, I share the related lessons learned. Under each lesson, I share data-driven insight pulled from previous chapters as well as additional data related to each lesson, including relevant literature. I also describe how each lesson was unearthed in relation to the experiences of my five teacher interns as well as myself as
the facilitator. Table 4-1 provides a first glance at the three overarching themes along with the corresponding 11 lessons learned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching Theme</th>
<th>Lessons Learned within Each Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Equity Consciousness with Equity Consciousness</td>
<td>Lesson 1: As a facilitator of complex conversations on educational inequity, I need to find a balance between an open, constructivist discussion format and directly addressing oppressive assumptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson 2: Small, diverse, collaborative groups promoted rich discussion on complex equity topics.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lesson 3: When facilitating equity-focused practitioner inquiry, I need to use protocols effectively.</td>
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<td>Lesson 4: When teaching about large issues of educational inequity, I will explicitly connect broad issues to local examples.</td>
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<td>Lesson 5: Describing educational Inequity as barriers in the way of student success or fulfillment supports teacher candidate understanding of the idea of inequity and what it can encompass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting Pride and Agency in Teacher Interns through Practitioner Inquiry</td>
<td>Lesson 6: Practitioner inquiry provided a pathway for teacher interns to question norms in school and classroom contexts.</td>
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<td>Lesson 7: The data-driven nature of practitioner inquiry boosted feelings of professionalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navigating Resistance to Full Immersion into Equity-Focused Inquiry</td>
<td>Lesson 8: Finding ways to avoid or offer support for personal and logistical barriers might aid in maintaining the focus on goals of the project.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lesson 9: Interns experienced discomfort enacting change as novices amongst professionals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lesson 10: Recognizing and working to reduce barriers associated with educational inequities were not perceived as valued skills desired by potential administrators or colleagues.</td>
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</table>
When sharing each lesson learned, I drew upon data shared in previous chapters and revisited some of the literature that informed my study. Each lesson is the product of multiple rounds of data analysis and triangulation of multiple data sets. I also pulled in new data that helped to capitalize on my learnings, and I connected each learning to literature centered on practitioner inquiry and equity-focused approaches to teaching and learning. In addition to details about how I came to each lesson learned, I also provide how I plan to take each lesson into my future practice. In the next section, I share the first of three overarching themes and the lessons embedded within.

**Building Equity Consciousness with Equity Consciousness**

When introducing the equity-focused inquiry project to teacher interns, it was critical to balance my role as a facilitator and my role as an equity conscious teacher educator. I learned that in order to build equity consciousness in my teacher interns, I must model equity consciousness as their teacher. Educational equity consciousness is defined as an awareness of four central beliefs:

1. That all children (except only a very small percentage, e.g., those with profound disabilities) are capable of high levels of academic success.

2. That *all* children means *all*, regardless of a child’s race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning differences, culture, language, religion, and so on.

3. That the adults in schools are primarily responsible for student learning.
4. That traditional school practices may work for some students but are not working for all children. Therefore, if we are going to eliminate the achievement gap, it requires a change in our practices (Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich, 2009, pp. 82-83).

I hoped to create a constructivist learning environment, where interns formulated their own beliefs, based on ideas of educational inequity presented in seminar content. However, I recognized my own role in sustaining an equity conscious approach to each discussion and to all feedback. I was constantly challenging my potential responses, in my mind, as I carefully chose each word before speaking. This was hard, but I recalled the work of Gorski (2013) which reminded me that equity-literate educators show high expectations for all students, reject deficit views on fixing disenfranchised students, acknowledge social bias, and believe every student has the right to equitable educational opportunity. I approached every conversation with this in mind as I tried to model equity consciousness for my students.

I recognized my responsibility as a facilitator and potential influence on internalized ideologies held by future teachers. That realization was frightening, yet powerful, as I understood I must present the same vulnerability I was asking them to reveal. Once these walls were broken down, the conversations, albeit still complex, flowed with more ease. I had to put myself into the complex matrix of social bias and deficit-minded assumptions. When I became more transparent, my interns followed suit.

Most interns came to recognize inequity in their local settings, but some did not. Those who expressed a deepened recognition of educational inequity also questioned why certain policies were in place. Several felt a sense of agency to make changes for students. However, some interns admittedly lost the equity focus or were never sold on
the idea that educational equity had anything to do with their developing careers. Several lacked the buy-in to the idea that they could play a role in solving the seemingly daunting issues discussed.

Throughout the messy process of making sense of new ideas and then relating them to experiences in their settings, the ups and downs meandering toward equity consciousness required the same consciousness from me, as the facilitator. My efforts were aimed at supporting interns on their journeys toward equity consciousness and their developing abilities to use practitioner inquiry as a process toward solutions. I learned so much through this process, and there are several ways I will improve my approach to facilitation in the future. My learnings related to this theme are highlighted in the sections below.

**Lesson 1: As a Facilitator of Complex Conversations on Educational Inequity, I Need to Find a Balance between an Open, Constructivist Discussion Format and Directly Addressing Oppressive Assumptions**

I approached this process with the hope of facilitating seminars around open conversations, where I provided resources and an open area to discuss real issues and ideas concerning educational inequity. I did not want interns to feel like I was coercing them into certain beliefs. I hoped they would share their own real experiences, compare them to the educational equity content we were digesting together, and then naturally uncover inequities happening within their own contexts.

I learned that an open, trusting environment was, indeed, essential to having tough, and sometimes uncomfortable, conversations. However, I also learned that I, as the facilitator, needed to offer direct feedback when potentially oppressive assumptions were made or when the words of an intern with a dominant characteristic could potentially oppress the words of another intern’s reality and shared views. In my journal
entry following the second seminar, I wrote, “My realization: I cannot always rely on a conductivist approach when the issues are this important. Sometimes, a more direct approach is necessary so that we can prevent the construction of false truths” (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 1).

This realization came after a conversation between Sara, a White female interning in a magnet school for the arts, and Rose, a Black female interning at a traditional public school with the highest percentage of students living in poverty and students of color in the parish. Sara pushed back on the idea that she could play any role in improving the educational experiences of people like those seen in the Teach Us All documentary. I documented my thoughts on the discussion in my researcher’s journal by saying

I wasn’t sure how much to take control of the conversation because I wanted my Black intern to respond if she wanted to. However, I didn’t want her to feel like she had to take on this tough discussion on her own. I was very careful about chiming in and let her speak as long as she seemed comfortable speaking. This is harder than I thought. I’m trying to facilitate through probing questions in an effort to let them construct their own knowledge. I know that when people come into ideas and realizations on their own, they are more likely to hold them as true and important. However, I was confronted with a discussion that showed a lack of empathy and recognition of injustice. I let the interns take over the discussion as much as possible, but I did share some information on several occasions in a more direct approach when I saw that it might contribute to the discussion. I want them to grapple. I want them to be honest. However, I also want them to have good information and resources as they grapple, rather than working from opinions or previous beliefs. (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 1-2)

Though my intentions to approach each discussion with the idea that one is more likely to maintain an open mind to new or challenging ideas through an open discussion where varying points of view are encouraged, the reality presented opportunities to address oppressive biases that would have been left unquestioned had I removed
myself completely from the discussions. Finding a balance between an open, trusting environment and directly addressing potential bias was challenging and necessary.

This learning connects to literature concerning deficit versus asset minded views. Howard (2013) found that deficit-oriented views can categorize particular populations of humans as possessing generalized traits or problems without seeing or questioning the structural, institutional, or systemic contributions to the issues they might experience. My role as a facilitator pushed me to address deficit-minded views as they emerged in our discussions. I was able to use the term *asset-oriented approach* as a pathway around deficit-minded assumptions. Howard (2013) described asset-oriented views as focused student strengths, promise, and potential as we approach research opportunities that build on assets rather than working to fix deficits.

This lesson informs my future practice, as a teacher educator, because complex discussions are present and encouraged in every course I teach. I will now approach every class discussion with the idea of balance in mind. While I still hope to maintain a constructivist format, open to all ideas, I will also remind myself of my responsibility to build an equity consciousness in every potential teacher I reach. When discussions arise that could perpetuate oppressive views or biases, I will speak to those directly to avoid contributing to their survival.

**Lesson 2: Small, Diverse, Collaborative Groups Promoted Rich Discussion on Complex Equity Topics**

The small, collaborative nature of the seminars provided more opportunities for discussion and feedback centered on each intern. Holding challenging discussions in a larger settings could potentially become a barrier for students unwilling to share biases,
experiences, or ideas. As an equity conscious facilitator, I will keep this in mind when designing future equity-related experiences for teacher candidates.

During the final interviews, all interns expressed some form of appreciation for the opportunity to learn and grow collaboratively through our small seminar meetings. Maria enjoyed listening to the advice of her peers concerning the possibilities of what she could try as possible action plan steps. Rose shared her appreciation for the small size of our seminar groups. She only regretted that we did not have more time with our small groups.

During the final showcase, a former student who was taking the traditional companion course that goes along with internships, told me she wished she could have worked in smaller groups on the action research project. She felt the classes of thirty or more students did not get to dig into the projects as much as they would have liked. It just became another project they needed to get done. With the addition of the equity-focus in my project, I do not feel the interns would have shared their ideas as freely in a larger setting. Some of my interns still did not talk very much during conversations even though we were in a group of six.

Sara enjoyed hearing about the topics everyone else was working on. Talking through everything gave her more ideas for an issue she might investigate as well as new ideas to try out in her classroom. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote about a need for more time to discuss ideas. I also noted the interns enjoyment for hearing stories from their peers. It was helpful to have the smaller groups when allowing everyone the opportunity to share ideas and receive feedback from me as well as their peers.
The collaborative nature of the seminars also supported the interns in grappling with the educational inequity ideas presented to them in the articles and videos as well as the issues they were experiencing in their settings. They shared things they were experiencing in their settings, discussed current events they had heard about and connected them to the content we were consuming, and built upon one another’s comments in mostly very open and respectful ways. The collaborative nature also extracted bias and assumptions in some cases. These scenarios made me really appreciate the diversity of my group of interns.

The educational inequity issues presented had clear connections to racial inequities, so it felt very fitting that we had a diverse group of interns with which to discuss. I expressed my gratitude for this diversity in my journal when I wrote, “In my group of five interns, 3 are white, 1 is Black, and 1 is Latina. I got chills multiple times during the conversation and was so thankful to have these different races in my group” (Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 1). While maintaining diverse racial representation in future groups may be challenging, it is worth considering if rich, real discussion is to unfold.

The teaching force in the U.S. is predominately made up of White females. According to a 2010 study by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), more than 80 percent of teachers awarded bachelor’s degrees were non-Latino White, and about 75 percent of all bachelor’s degrees in education went to women (Deruy, 2013). My interns fit the generalized population in their full female representation, but went against general statistics with the presence of Maria, a Latina female, and Rose, a Black female. This makes me wonder why more non-White
college students are choosing to become teachers and what a majority White workforce means for students of color.

This lesson also connects to previous work on courageous conversations about race. Singleton (2014) created protocols for encouraging conversations about race among large groups. As a part of the protocols, ideas are first discussed in small groups before sharing with the larger crowd. His ideas push my own thinking into how I might bring this approach into a larger group setting while still maintaining small group discussions.

From this learning, I will take new insight on grouping strategies into my practice. In the courses I teach and in my intern supervision, I am now more aware of the importance of ensuring varying perspectives are heard. For example, in one course I teach, I ask students to identify an issue in education that matters to them and then use the design thinking process to design a potential solution. I have always asked them to talk to someone who is experiencing the problem firsthand to learn more about why it is a problem worth solving, who it affects, and why it affects them. They must see the reality of the owner of the issue in order to play a role in solving it. I will now make this part of the process more prevalent and structured.

I will also talk to our internship office about the importance of interns seeing a variety of school contexts and building relationships with students, teachers, and fellow interns. We currently do not provide opportunities to build lasting relationships with in-practice teachers or students in school. This connects to Ullucci and Howard’s (2015) work on looking at school site placements as content that requires particular unpacking, rather than simply a place for field experience. I hope to think more on this for a
potential new wondering. For now, I have built in a teacher interview and a student interview for a portion of the field experience for one of my courses.

Lesson 3: When Facilitating Equity-Focused Practitioner Inquiry, I Need to Use Protocols Effectively

An equity conscious facilitator is mindful of the needs and opportunities of everyone in the room. While I entered into each seminar with an agenda and a few protocols to aid in facilitation and ensure all voices were heard, I often strayed from the agenda and protocols when other questions arose. My interns had many questions about hours documentation, Praxis test timelines, graduation, etc. As their supervisor, I wanted to ensure their questions were answered, but I also needed to maintain focus on the equity content and resources intended to deepen interns’ recognition of educational inequities, moving from a broad to a more localized perspective.

Another tension occurring often in our seminars had to do with some interns dominating conversations, taking over the time reserved for their peers. Some interns spoke more freely than others, whether it concerned their practitioner inquiry topics or issues presented on educational inequity. The use of protocols specifically focused on gathering thoughts and ideas from all interns would have helped to ensure all voices were heard. This method may have also exposed potential deficit-minded views that we could have dismantled together. However, with a discussion-heavy seminar format, and lackluster use of protocols, I fear some voices were left out of the conversation.

This connects to the work of Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2020) who write about the importance of using protocols “to ensure focused, deliberate conversation and dialogue by teachers about student work and student learning” (p. 17). Protocols are structured activities or facilitation strategies serving to concentrate conversations.
without straying too far from the purpose of meetings. They also ensure everyone is heard and has the opportunity to participate (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011). Work on courageous conversations about race also reflect the use of protocols to engage all members of professional communities in discussions centered on the various impacts of race on student achievement (Singleton, 2014). The use of protocols has shown promise in focusing conversations, ensuring all voices are heard, and in staying on target to meet the goals of a professional gathering.

I started using more protocols during the second and third seminars, but we often went off on tangents pertaining to someone’s topic. I have mixed feelings about this, because the topics were important. However, some interns ended up having more time to grapple with their own projects than others. In one journal entry, I wrote

I definitely need to use a timer and protocols. We were so into the conversations about the Teach Us All documentary that we didn’t get to cover several of the items I had prepared. Not all interns were able to share their wonderings. (Researcher’s Journal Entry II, February 20, 2019, p. 4)

Rose added to my own realizations when she shared during her final interview

Within our group, I loved that it was only a few of us. The only thing I would say was that it felt like we didn’t have enough time. We talked about the course work then we would talk about the things we were dealing with in our teaching practice. But we never got enough time. I felt like we were always either rushed on the course work or rushed on talking about teaching practice. (Interview III, May 4, 2019, p. 21)

In addition to incorporating more structured protocols in the future, I also wrote in my journal about beginning each seminar with a reminder of our purpose. I include this idea here because I feel this might be incorporated into an initial seminar protocol that serves to begin every meeting. This theme comes from my own journal entries as well as intern interview data admitting to have lost sight of the equity focus. It was helpful to
use follow up email messages after each seminar to remind interns of the focus on equity issues, no matter how large or small, but I still felt a need to make the purpose hold a stronger presence in each meeting. This connects to the work of Groenke (2010) who used equity audits as a tool to focus inquiry precisely on addressing issues of educational inequity. Though I used the equity audit, it may have been more effective if I had been more deliberate about partnering the instrument with discussion protocols to dig deeper into what they discovered by using it.

When facilitating equity-focused practitioner inquiry in the future, I will dedicate a set number of minutes to answer general questions. When the timer goes off, I will kindly ask interns to email me any additional questions as soon as the meeting is over. I will also give the option of staying around after the meeting to ask additional questions. I will use protocols with a timer when asking interns to share their work within different parts of the inquiry process.

In addition to restructuring my inquiry seminars in the future, I have already started making changes to other course I teach in UL Lafayette’s early childhood and elementary education programs. I plan to bring more protocols into coursework as a way to encourage participation by all students, engagement in rich discussion on course topics, and to become more intentional about meeting the specific goals for each course meeting. With this in mind, I transition into the next learning which reminds me to place a more explicit and strategic focus, perhaps through the use of protocols, on presenting large-scale issues of educational inequity with specific, localized examples that show how big issues connect to the work of future teachers.
Lesson 4: When Teaching about Large Issues of Educational Inequity, I will Explicitly Connect Broad Issues to Local Examples

Throughout seminars, I tried to provide rich resources to challenge interns to think deeply about real issues of educational inequity happening all around us. I wanted them to see that racial segregation in schools and communities is not a thing of the past and may still have a hold on society today. We watched the documentary *Teach Us All*, which highlights the unfair experiences of present day kids in schools, we read the work of Paul Gorski on the myths of poverty (Gorski, 2008), an article about behavioral misconceptions placed on students living in poverty or students of color (Templeton, 2013), a video comparing education in America to education in Finland, and a few other resources that came up naturally as a part of our discussions.

The resources encouraged rich discussion amongst the interns and allowed us to have a foundation of recognition for educational inequities before comparing content to our own experiences and current contexts. After discussing the resources, I would ask the interns to think about big, broad ideas compared to what they have seen or experienced in their own lives, communities, or schools. From this format, we were able to discuss the wildly disproportionate school buildings and resources in different parts of our community, funding formulas were questioned and researched, school policies were questioned, and even mentor teacher practices occasionally came under scrutiny. I really felt the interns were making connections between the big ideas from the resources and their own lives and professional contexts.

However, my interview data showed that interns felt varying levels of relevance between the global and national issues they were digesting and why that had anything to do with them becoming teachers. Jill, Maria, and Rose were able to look closely at
and discuss the big picture ideas and bring them down into their local contexts. Faith had limited participation in our deep discussions and admitted later that she lost sight of the equity focus of her project at the end. But, Sara saw no relevance between the big ideals of improving educational equity and why that mattered for her completion of a teaching degree.

In my researcher’s journal, I noted the richness of conversations where local examples were used to extend points made in the resources I provided. As the facilitator, I did not have enough of a structure to the seminars that provided a big idea and rich discussion, followed by real local examples associated with the big idea to induce further discussion before relating the issue to their current contexts. Sara offered insight into this realization during her final interview. After sharing a story with her concerning inequity present in her school setting, I asked her if showing local examples immediately following resources showing more distant examples would have helped her to connect more with addressing an issue of equity. Her response was, “Yeah, it would. I think it would, definitely, because then you have an understanding of, like there are these huge issues and how exactly is it locally happening” (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 8).

I will use Sara’s suggestion when designing future seminars or when sharing big, seemingly untouchable, issues with teacher candidates. I thought that sharing specific local examples might sway interns in certain directions when choosing their topics, so I chose to remain vague in my explanations of local inequities. However, this process revealed that interns may have made quicker and deeper connections to their own
contexts, had I expressed my own equity consciousness in the form of describing local examples of educational inequity that I have seen and experienced firsthand.

For my future practice, I have learned that explicit local examples with very clearly explained connections to larger issues of educational inequity can be very helpful in opening eyes to the presence of educational inequity in front of us. I will not hold back on local issues I have personally witnessed and will consider inviting guest teachers in to discuss their own experiences. I now understand that seeing the clear connections may support earlier recognition of educational inequity in one’s own context.

This learning nods to the research on the achievement gap and a call to go beyond talk of narrowing the gap in academic performance and look more closely at closely the wide variance in access to high quality educational opportunity (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Crisp (2018) wrote about education as one of the characteristics bringing Louisiana to receive the worst state ranking in the country based on a national analysis. Louisiana is filled with de facto segregation, leaving our schools becoming increasingly segregated in similar ways as shown by national trends (Chang, 2018).

Educational inequity is happening everywhere, and I have learned that I must find ways to sharpen my ability to reveal those inequities and provide processes for doing something about them. The next lesson I uncovered from my data, and from facilitating the equity-focused seminars, was that I had to find strategies for clearing the picture of what educational inequity is before we could look for ways to dismantle issues
that arose. In the following section, I will describe one realization that I will take into my practice.

Lesson 5: Describing Educational Inequity as Barriers in the Way of Student Success or Fulfillment Supports Teacher Candidate Understanding of the Idea of Inequity and What it Can Encompass

The idea of an invisible barrier blocking some students from achieving success or fulfillment helped significantly in guiding interns to recognize inequity in our discussions and in their schools and classrooms. The idea of barriers helped significantly when discussing possible equity-focused issues they might choose to investigate. It also helped when trying to bring huge issues down to have contextual significance on a scale that felt manageable in the time allocated for the project.

The interns talked about inequities they have noticed on community news stations. They talked about schools receiving grants but wondering who decides where the money is spent. We reflected on a graphic (Figure 4-1) showing the difference between equality, equity, and liberation to push our focus toward using our work to remove or reduce some of the barriers in place for our students. How can we take a huge issue and remove some form a barrier in our corners of the world? This again brought some pushback as one of the interns shared she just wanted to figure out how to get her students to listen to her while she was teaching. I asked her to try to rephrase that thought into a felt difficulty concerning her teaching practice. She said her students do not listen to her lessons because they are daydreaming or not paying attention.
I asked her to focus on that issue and begin looking into what has worked for other teachers experiencing that issue. I asked if, perhaps, whole group instruction was not working for all of the students in her class and small group may reach more students. If this were true, then whole group instruction could be a barrier that is holding some students back from academic success. Therefore, by removing that barrier, you could potentially improve the learning conditions for groups of students who do not benefit from whole group instruction. You are improving the educational experience for them. She seemed to connect with this explanation.

I noted in my journal that I had chills multiple times during our conversations and was so thankful for a diverse racial representation in the room. In one journal entry, I wrote about a realization I had during the second seminar meeting which stands out as perhaps my most significant learning from facilitation. My realization is that we cannot just learn to be a good teacher without learning how to recognize the humanity in our
classrooms. As a teacher educator, I must deliver this effectively to my teacher candidates and interns.

I learned that barriers are not only in place for K-12 students, but also for college students, specifically my teacher interns. Throughout this study, they were asked to navigate challenging terrain in the form of mentor teacher expectations, university expectations, personal challenges, and state requirements. To facilitate an equity-focused project such as practitioner inquiry, I recognize my own role to bring an equity consciousness into my interactions with my adult students. In the following sections, I will describe how I tried to guide and support my interns through the process of exposing inequity and working to change the conditions in which it could thrive.

This learning has influenced my teaching practice by providing a foundation for how I discuss and deliver educational equity content. Since this learning, I have found new graphics that better illustrate the idea of barriers, while also reflecting varying starting points, varying obstacles, and whose work it is to take those barriers down. Figure 4-2 depicts disadvantaged starting points and unjust barriers rather than a level playing field. The image is more aligned to the reality in society and schools. It also illustrates a concept that can be very broad and difficult to grasp. The simple illustration may help in facilitating discussion on the topic of equity, equality, and justice.

Figure 4-3 shows the responsibility of everyone working together to dismantle existing barriers. It is another simple illustration for a societal issue that is difficult for some to recognize. I will now use these images and the notion of barrier when facilitating discussion on unfair access to high quality educational opportunities with hope that the depictions will generate rich discussion.
Figure 4-2. Image depicting varying starting points and unjust barriers when describing equality and equity. Retrieved from http://culturalorganizing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/equalityequity.jpg

Figure 4-3. Image depicting justice as everyone working together to eliminate unjust barriers. Retrieved from http://culturalorganizing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/equalityequity.jpg
The final image of justice in Figure 4-3 depicts all levels of society working together to remove the barrier. This connects to literature on social justice. Milner (2015) described poverty as an indicator of lesser access to high quality healthcare, food, and education. While poverty affects all races, a disproportionate percentage of Black and Hispanic populations are living in poverty (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) said social justice will only be possible when society has reached a fair and equal set of principles for all humans, along with respect for basic human rights. When those principles are reached, we will have dismantled barriers holding some populations back more than others.

As a teacher educator, I can potentially reach hundreds or thousands of future teachers. With exposure to ideas of educational inequity and processes to find creative solutions, those teachers can potentially reach innumerable children from all backgrounds and life experiences. Darling-Hammond (2010) said we must teach our way out of the opportunity and achievement gaps. As a teacher educator, I am emboldened to equip all teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to do just that.

I began with the theme of Building Equity Consciousness with Equity Consciousness because it is essential to remember that I, as a teacher educator, must maintain consciousness of and a stance toward educational equity for the students I serve while also dedicating my work to unveiling issues of equity present in current schools and classrooms. The next category of learning I discuss looks at how practitioner inquiry provided a vehicle for making change once inequities were uncovered. Inspired by the work of Ken Robinson (2015) who calls on a grassroots
revolution by teachers as a means for education transformation, I now turn to the second of three themes.

**Promoting Pride and Agency in Teacher Interns through Practitioner Inquiry**

The next overarching theme I will address is the learning associated with the practitioner inquiry process as a way to promote a sense of pride and agency in teacher interns. Practitioner inquiry is a systematic way to intentionally study one’s practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The process itself has an organized structure that most interns valued. The structure gave them clear direction for the project and steps to follow as they sought to solve problems of practice. With this structure, many interns discovered a sense of pride in their accomplishments and/or a sense of agency to enact change for their students. Rose saw a practical application of the process for her future classroom as a way to shape the environment for learning. Maria described the process as a happy way of learning and enjoyed talking through each step with her peers.

Most interns exhibited a growing sense of agency to make change within their contexts. The sentiment of making change varied from a desire to continue to improve their own future practice, a desire to impact change for the sake of students, and a sense of pride for accomplishments they made during this process. While the equity focus bounced around a continuum throughout the process, most interns felt the structured practitioner inquiry process was helpful to them in becoming a more effective teacher. Next, I will describe the two lessons I learned under this broad theme revealed by data.
Lesson 6: Practitioner Inquiry Provided a Pathway for Teacher Interns to Question Norms in School and Classroom Contexts

During the first two seminars, my observation data and reflective journals reported consistent recognition of unfair practices emerging from our discussions. These discussions reflected the definition of equity consciousness in the questioning of the way things are working for some, but not all, students. Throughout our discussions, interns began to connect their realizations of educational inequities to their own experiences in school as well as to their current contexts in more depth. Some participants questioned school practices such as remaining silent during lunch time or while sitting in the hallway waiting for the bus.

Interns were digging into issues of inequity, finding barriers in their contexts, and they were mostly ready to go after reducing them. While some interns questioned norms more than others, all interns reported some sense of questioning the norms they experienced within their internship placements. For example, when examining the test items used to determine whether or not students could enter future dual immersion programs, Maria noticed discrepancies between the general themes of the test questions compared to the standards and themes on which they base their lessons. During her final presentation, she stated, “The test needs to match the standards we teach or else it is just relying on kids to have the information from their own backgrounds” (Journal Entry I, May 4, 2019, p. 1).

Another intern, Sara, noticed a lack of time to develop her own lessons as a barrier to students’ success. She questioned the lack of time for lesson development as well as the prescriptive nature of the lessons they are given to teach. During her interview, Sara said
These kids are just staring at me. They couldn’t care less. So I guess that’s why I’m inspired to do more activities with them because if the kids can do more activities with them in mind, and not just these prescribed things, then our process for building up our topics is kind of a natural thing. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, pp. 11-12)

Overall, the data showed a general nature of questioning policies or norms as they appeared in internship placements. Some participants connected the norms to their own schooling experiences or to other field experiences they had witnessed. And, the seminar content and discussions allowed interns to share concerns amongst one another in a space free to question what they were experiencing.

Jackson (1990) stated true scholars question tradition and challenge authority. This questioning can be seen as curiosity, which is intentionally placed at the beginning of the practitioner inquiry cycle. John Dewey (1903) recognized intellectual initiatives, discussions, and action built into teacher research among the entire professional body as a way to remedy schools. When teacher contribute to broad school goals and play a role in decision making, many of them are motivated to continue efforts toward improved classrooms and schools (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Teachers can become knowledge generators, informing professional settings after questioning and evaluating systems and policies (Dodman, Groth, Ra, Baker, & Ramezan, 2017). The grassroots transformation of schools and systems toward a more equitable set of policies and systems is possible, but teachers must first have the opportunity, voice, support, and processes to act and persevere.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is a major producer of teachers for the state of Louisiana. I want to be honest with my teacher candidates about the issues plaguing education in our state and limiting access to high quality educational opportunities. Discussions of issues come up often in my courses and in supervision of
interns. I will take into my future practice a renewed and enriched appreciation for equipping future teachers with tools and processes for questioning norms they experience in their contexts and boosting their sense of agency to do something to change them. I hope to continue to refine my facilitation of the process in my work with teacher interns while also exploring ways to bring practitioner inquiry into other courses I teach. Additionally, I would like to explore ways our teacher education programs might remain connected to and supportive of our new teachers once they are in the field.

Lesson six discussed the sense of pride and agency that occurred in teacher interns as a result of practitioner inquiry as a way to make change in their school contexts. One major factor contributing to the sense of pride and accomplishment was the use of data to drive decisions. The next learning discussed shares the role data played in heightening feelings of professionalism.

**Lesson 7: The Data-Driven Nature of Practitioner Inquiry Boosted Feelings of Professionalism**

Practitioner inquiry invites teachers to collect data throughout the implementation of an action plan and analyze that data to make evidence-based claims about what they discovered. Practitioner inquiry provides a bridge for professionals to cross borders between researcher and practitioner (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). My interns found data to be a powerful tool for informing their own practice as well as a possible tool for pitching ideas for broader change to administrators. Though notions of what counts a data varied in the beginning, interns learned that data could be very natural and a regular part of their daily teaching practice.

Jill expressed pride in knowing she could follow the practitioner inquiry process to collect data and make data-driven suggestions to colleagues or eventually
administrators. She said, “I would feel more comfortable going to a principal or someone in authority because I have the data to back it up” (Interview II, May 4, 2019, p. 16). Maria actually went to her principal to share ideas, and her principal asked her to see her final project when it was complete. Sara found the process challenging and ultimately beneficial, which she expressed in her final interview, saying

To start at a place where we had to think of ways to make this more equitable for students and we had to find a way to relate that to our practice, and that was really challenging, because that’s something I’ve never done before. Because to me everything’s been kind of passive in that regard. Like go into the school and learn the curriculum and teach the curriculum, but to actually do something extra, it seems like it made me more active and I’ve learned stuff from it. So, I think that the whole process has been beneficial. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 11)

This connects with Dana, Thomas, and Boynton’s (2011) report that practitioner inquiry has shown a rise in teacher perception of professionalism. Dodman, et al. (2017) found that bringing practitioner inquiry cycles into teacher preparation led teacher candidates to consider systemizing their teaching practices to focus on one issue or question at a time and to approach each issue with a process leading to potential solutions. Ravitch (2014) called for more practice-based research as a way to reveal what is useful and meaningful within unique contexts and populations. Teacher researchers can disrupt traditional roles of teachers, blurring the boundaries between knowers and doers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). I saw this first hand, especially in the experiences of Jill and Maria who both expressed great pride and sense of accomplishment in the changes they made for students and excitement for continuing efforts and bringing data to show other teachers and administrators what they had achieved.
For my own future practice, I hope to provide teacher candidates with multiple experiences collecting and analyzing data in many different forms. By having them look to literature as data, capture field notes during classroom observations, and write reflective journals following lessons taught, I can start conversations earlier in their matriculation about what counts as data, why we collect it, and what we can do with it. I hope to begin incorporating more use of data as a driver for change into my practice right away. In addition, I will continue to explore ways to provide more access to data collection and analysis for my teacher interns as well. With these efforts, our teacher education programs may conjure more feelings of professionalism before they enter the teaching field, blurring the lines between teacher and researcher.

Equity-focused practitioner inquiry was an outwardly positive experience for most, if not all, of the interns. The benefits were evident in their final presentations of work, their discussions with one another, and in their interviews and other forms of data. However, tensions and complexities permeated the process. For some interns, this was one of their first times grappling with the idea of inequity. They had all taken a course on diversity in education, but some took the course embedded in the four-year bachelor’s degree program while others took a course in the alternative certification program with a different instructor. Because of these differences, it was unclear what base level of equity content knowledge they brought into the beginning of the internships semester. As the facilitator of the process and discussions, there were several tensions to navigate. I will share some of those obstacles in the following sections.
Navigating Resistance to Full Immersion into Equity-Focused Inquiry

Caro-Bruce, et al. (2007) found that teachers who investigated issues of equity through practitioner inquiry made important contributions to improving unjust educational practices in their schools. McKenzie and Skrla (2009) noted teachers as having the most significant impact on student learning and that districts cannot claim equitable practices if those do not exist at the classroom level. Enhancing the focus on educational inequity and equipping teacher interns with practitioner inquiry as a process for improving learning conditions showed promise for showcasing the power of equity-focused practitioner inquiry could have on one’s future as a teacher. However, engaging undergraduates in this work was challenging.

While some interns expanded their understanding of educational inequity by engaging in rich discussion during seminars, digging into seminar content, and challenging the practices in place in their schools, others resisted fully immersing themselves into the equity-focused practitioner inquiry process. Tensions arose between engaging in larger discussions of educational inequity during seminars and the interns’ abilities to translate those ideas into their inquiry projects. The data showed this happening for a few reasons. I next describe several learnings that arose from those tensions, how we worked through some, and how others took an unbreakable hold.

Lesson 8: Finding Ways to Avoid or Offer Support for Personal and Logistical Barriers Might Aid in Maintaining the Focus on Goals of the Project

Personal and logistical obstacles were present from the first day to the last. These are assumedly inevitable in most cases, but in some cases I was able to see myself as a remover of barriers in similar ways as I as asking of my interns. In the
future, I would like to try to complete an equity-focused practitioner project alongside my interns as well as address their own barriers as they arise.

For example, in Maria’s story, I shared her efforts to pass an American History exam portion of the Praxis exam as someone who moved to American only two years prior. Faith was seven months pregnant when we first met. She would end up on bed rest at the end of the semester and could not make it to the final showcase. One intern had a cesarean section two weeks before the semester began and worked diligently to attend and participate in all seminars and showcase even with a brand new baby at home. One intern had a strained relationship with her mentor teacher and did not feel supported.

All of these personal strains presented challenges for interns to truly immerse themselves in their internships and into the practitioner inquiry investigations. This goes back to the idea of leading students to equity consciousness through equity consciousness. The interns needed me to stand up for them, and I did my best but often felt I could have done more.

In addition to personal challenges, our interns are tasked with completing several assignments before they can complete internships and graduate. Our seminars were often taken over by logistical concerns such as where things needed to be uploaded, what formats to follow, and when assignments were due. This took time away from rich discussion and time to discuss items such as data collection strategies and data analysis.

This learning connects with Cochran-Smith’s (2003) work on teaching teacher educators through an inquiry stance. In a study of best practices for educating teacher
educators, she provided examples of what she has learned about educating teacher candidates. Some of her examples of best practices include offering opportunities to unlearn racism, reinventing supervision of internships, seeking social justice, and facilitating inquiry. One of the lessons learned in her study was that teacher educators who inquired about ways to improve their practice became better at their work when they generated local knowledge of practice. They did this within inquiry communities.

As a teacher educator dedicated to nurturing an inquiry stance in my teacher candidates, I want to become a better model of that inquiry stance in my own work. I hope to start by conducting my own inquiry cycle alongside my interns and in other courses with a research component. I also hope to explore possibilities for building inquiry communities into our teacher education faculty meetings. My hope is to build inquiry as stance for all stakeholders in our programs. Working alongside my interns to conduct my own practitioner inquiries on ways I might reduce or remove barriers in place of my own students might serve as a model for equity-focused practitioner inquiry as well as a mechanism to dismantle barriers in their way of professional success.

The first complexity I discussed under the final overarching theme was the obstacle of personal and logistical barriers standing in the way of full immersion into the equity focus of the practitioner inquiry project. Another tension present was the idea that teacher interns would need to make some kind of change based on an issue they saw in their mentor teacher's classroom or school. This tension required care. In the next section, I provide detail on how we navigated this complexity and what I plan to change in future implementations.
Lesson 9: Interns Experienced Discomfort Enacting Change as Novices amongst Professionals

This lesson addresses the relationship between interns’ recognition of educational inequity in their contexts and the fear of potential ramifications that may result from acknowledging, or taking action to change, the exposed inequity. A few interns expressed discomfort in trying something new or identifying a problem in someone else’s classroom. Sara shared some ideas with her mentor teacher who vetoed her first idea and told her the second topic she chose was not actionable enough. Rose also felt uncomfortable implementing action research in someone else’s classroom, which she shared by saying:

I think I would use it in my own classroom where I shape the environment and the flow of things. Then it would be easier to work it into the routine that I’ve already set. It can be harder when you’re in somebody else’s routine and you’re trying to implement something in somebody else’s set routine. (Interview III, May 4, 2019, p. 21)

Faith also struggled with the equity focus of the project embedded in her mentor teacher’s existing classroom, saying her initial wondering “felt intrusive and invasive in someone else’s classroom” (Interview V, May 4, 2019, p. 25).

This learning connects to literature on varying views of teacher preparation expectations. Donnell and Harper (2005) found disparities between practicing teachers and university faculty when asked what and how teacher candidates should learn in preparation programs. It is often stated in teacher preparation that universities rely on delivering educational theory while practicing teachers call for more experience practicing the act of teaching in teacher preparation. Learning more about the tensions that exist between interns trying new things and expectations of mentor teachers, I
wonder if we might discover new directions for our program in the grey area that exists between theory and practice.

Practitioner inquiry blurs the lines between practice and research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Perhaps building stronger professional relationships between practicing mentor teachers, teacher education faculty, and teacher candidates may better support my efforts to build an inquiry stance in future teachers. Hooser (2017) found that teachers who had gone through cycles of practitioner inquiry during teacher preparation were able to provide new ideas for school policy once they were in schools. I believe mentor teachers would be on board with the idea of practitioner inquiry if I, as the teacher educator and intern supervisor, were clearer about project goals and the research that supports it.

In the future, I would like to explore ways university supervisors might build better working relationships with mentor teachers working with interns. Right now, I often walk into classrooms with teachers I have never met. It feels awkward being in there as an observer without having had a full conversation first. We have talked about possible ways to amend this, but nothing has really come of it. I plan on talking to my department head about possibilities for faculty partnerships with specific schools who are interested with connecting more closely with the university. If we had more of a trusted presence in schools, teachers may be more willing to work with us on projects such as practitioner inquiry.

Lesson 10: Recognizing and Working to Reduce Barriers Associated with Educational Inequities were not Perceived as Valued Skills Desired by Potential Administrators or Colleagues

Interns experienced tensions between recognizing inequities present in their placements, their ability to do anything about the issues, and how taking a stance for
change might affect their future teaching careers. Sara had tensions with her mentor teacher but also simply did not see the connection between learning about issues of educational inequity and her matriculation to become a teacher. She saw equity issues as political, untouchable, and completely separate from her expectations as a teacher.

In her interview, she shared

 My practice as a teacher is separate [from] my ideas about the politics that are around schools. My practice as a teacher is that, in the classroom, I'm the person who teaches them, and I have to show them the way to learn, the interest in learning, the responsibility we have as a group. I still see it as separate. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 4)

Sara resisted immersing herself into the equity-focused practitioner inquiry project because she recognized it did not mirror the traits perceived as valuable by the professionals surrounding her. She wanted to remain focused on getting a job in the system, and she saw the attention to educational inequity as a distraction from her efforts to get hired. According to Sara

 The whole idea of ‘there's this big giant picture in front of you’, it makes me say like what, I can't approach this because if I get into this I'm going to lose sight of 'I need to get a job', and I need to get to work and I need some way to do that in efficient ways. It doesn't relate to me; big picture versus me and my job. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 4)

She even thought having a stance on issues surrounding inequity could prevent an administrator from hiring her. In her interview, I asked her if she thought it might be possible to blur the lines separating ideas she categorized as political from the ideas she categorized as teaching. I gave an example of the overemphasis on standardized tests, and she responded with

 Yeah, but if I take that stance, who's going to hire me? If I openly express the way I feel about standardized tests, people will say, 'I'm not going to hire that person.' And I know that they won't because they use those scores to evaluate teachers. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 4-5)
Sara’s insight was extremely valuable to my own learning and implications for my future efforts to bring educational inequity discussion into my teacher preparation coursework and internships. If educational equity is not a common topic among educators and intertwined in the culture of schools, how can a project in a teacher education program convince developing teachers that it is a worthy topic in the pursuit of a teaching career? If it is viewed as political, untouchable, and a possible deal breaker in an interview, what needs to be done, both within and outside of teacher education programs, to illuminate these issues facing humanity? If teacher education works to build an equity consciousness in new teachers, schools and districts must also see the importance in order to maintain a workforce dedicated to removing unfair barriers.

This realization was among the most powerful for me as a teacher educator. Since conducting this project, I have already set up several meetings with people in my community running for school board, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and parish council member. My view of the role of teacher education programs has changed significantly in the past few years and as a result of this project. I hope to become more of an advocate for policy reform as I see how policy mandates can restrict teachers from performing to their highest potential.

Caro-Bruce et al. (2007) summarized the results of ten action research studies with themes of race, equity, or achievement gaps. They found teachers to be quite competent in adding to the research base in education, affecting change in their schools and classrooms, and in addressing complex problems woven into systems charged with educating our nation’s youth. Teachers are at the frontline of providing high quality
education for all students, but they often lack the time and support for making changes in their practice or for contributing to school or district policy decisions.

I would like to see practitioner inquiry become a regular expectation for teachers. With time and support built into the school day and into expectations upon hiring, teachers could revolutionize schools and classrooms. With equity-focused practitioner inquiry embedded in schools, and perhaps treated as professional development, countless students could see improvements in educational access in a very efficient amount of time. I am not removed from this idea, and plan to become more of an advocate for reviving the professionalism of teachers and providing them with time and support to bring processes such as practitioner inquiry into their expectations and purpose.

Lesson 11: Internship Placement Expectations Did Not Exhibit Support for or Value of an Inquiry Stance in Teachers

The perceived irrelevance of issues of educational inequity and securing a position as a teacher was further clouded by the perceived irrelevance of the practitioner inquiry process within an actual teaching career. While several interns saw value in what practitioner inquiry did and could do to further develop their own teaching practices, the process of inquiry was also seen as unrelated to the career of a real teacher. As mentioned in Sara’s story, she said

I wouldn’t use the wondering thing again. I just don’t see a need. I don’t have anywhere to go and talk about it and report it. I enjoy being here and talking about it because talking about it gave me more ideas. In school we don’t really have a chance to express what we’re trying because then other people would be like ‘Oh that person doesn’t know what they’re doing?’ So, it makes sense to protect yourself in a way of not talking about those things you’re doing because other people are going to see it as a weakness. That’s why I probably wouldn’t do it because I don’t have anyone who would be in the room to say ‘yeah that’s great or you can try this instead’. (Interview I, May 4, 2019, p. 13)
I share this quote again because it has really taught me that for my efforts as a teacher educator to truly matter, teacher candidates and interns must perceive their work as relevant and closely aligned with the conditions they will enter as a real teacher. They want to look and act like real teachers. Anything outside of the norm of expectations will take much more effort to convince them of its importance and relevance in their careers.

Practitioner inquiry positions practitioners and their knowledge as central to and essential for transforming teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). It is a grounded theory of action. Sagor (1992) named collaborative action research as a process that enables teachers to improve student learning through changes in their teaching. When inquiry is a part of the culture and turns into a more dispositional inquiry stance, inquiry investigations tend to trend toward issues related to equity, educational access, and agency in educational settings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). These trends do not occur because they are mandated. Rather they occur as a natural progression of developing and nurturing an inquiry stance.

When teachers work from an inquiry stance, they also develop a skilled confidence to continuously and systematically take action toward improving teaching and learning in their contexts and possibly beyond. They often challenge traditional practices and question what counts as meaningful education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In order to support this kind of teacher-powered transformation in schools, we must first examine opportunities to show explicit value of and support for teacher-driven change. For several of my interns, value and support for practitioner inquiry was
nowhere in the realm of teacher capacities they felt were sought after by future administrators or colleagues.

Teacher education does not exist in a vacuum. In the near future, I hope to increase my efforts to interact and build relationships with administrators, policymakers, and public officials in order to work toward finding common ground in our efforts to improve education for all students. A disconnect in expectations and values between teacher education programs and school systems is cultivating confusion and could potentially contribute to, rather than help, teacher attrition.

I would like to explore ways other districts have used practitioner inquiry embedded in professional learning communities as an option for teacher professional development credits. I have already spoken with a few influencers in Lafayette Parish School System about possible pilot programs to bring inquiry-oriented professional learning communities into schools. The realization that teacher candidates must see overlap into their professional endeavors will inform my practice immensely. However, this same realization also pushes me to look, outside of teacher education, at a system ripe for change.

Lesson 12: Reflecting on my in-the-moment facilitation – Anti-racist and anti-classist educational leadership is messy and coarse.

Upon completion of this study, I had time to reflect on my experience facilitating undergraduate teacher candidates on their journeys to address an issue of educational inequity in their classroom or school contexts. My reflection has led me to uncover that my efforts were more specifically focused on the inequities in education based on student race and/or class, rather than the broader idea of equity. Though I entered into the study under the notion that interns might address issues such as teachers calling on
more boys during math time than girls or ADHD students stigmatized for their need to move around, etc., the content that I presented to my interns focused more on inequities based on one’s race or socioeconomic status and educational variance based on where one lives and goes to school. In the future, I will be more specific about the issues we are working to name, identify, and improve upon as they relate to oppressions of racism and classism rather than using the broad idea of inequity. For example, in the exchange between Sarah and Rose about whose work it is to address racism in schooling, I should have used that as an opportunity to discuss the terms racism and classism and how we all hold some level of each in an internalized bias.

Upon reflection, this realization is important for my work as a teacher educator because many people hold onto the idea that the key to achieving success lies in students’ willingness to increase grit and enthusiasm levels. Love (2019) referred to education’s attempt to measure the grit levels of students of color while removing no institutional barriers as The Hunger Games of schooling. Instead of having students repeat phrases such as “knowledge is power” or “be polite”, teachers can find ways to mobilize their own power to fight systemic inequities acting as barriers for students of color and students living in poverty.

As a teacher educator, I hold a position of power to upend our programs and reexamine how we might better prepare teacher leaders to enter into a field ripe for change. Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested that if we are serious about solving problems of racism and social injustice in classrooms, we must be prepared to constantly swim upstream and sometimes take bold and unpopular positions. In a nice field like education, we must learn to lean into the bold work of exposing the injustice in
schooling if we hope to make real change in eliminating existing barriers. I commit myself to pulling up my chair to the table of educational reform and emboldening my voice for educational justice.

This final overarching theme of learnings discussed several tensions that arose while attempting to bring equity-focused practitioner inquiry into teacher candidate internships in local schools. While I tried to navigate each tension throughout the semester, the real benefits came in the learning that was gained as a result of my efforts to overcome each tension. These learnings, paired with learnings from other categories, will influence my practice significantly and have led to a number of new wonderings I hope to investigate.

**New Wonderings**

This study opened a new world of exploration for me, as a teacher educator invigorated to provide the highest quality education to every teacher candidate in my courses and under my supervision as interns. I hope to provide improved experiences guiding teacher candidates to recognize children as fellow humans worthy of understanding the world around them, finding talents within themselves, and becoming active citizens in the world we share. While I will take every lesson learned into my practice immediately, I will also begin exploring ways I can investigate some of the new wonderings this study has conjured. Those new wonderings include

- How might we, as teacher educators, radically reimagine the process of educating teachers to become revolutionaries for educational justice?
- In what ways can I, as a teacher educator, model and build equity consciousness into coursework outside of teacher internships?
• In what ways can I, as a teacher educator, build professional relationships and partnerships between college of education faculty and mentor teachers to more closely align our goals for teacher candidates?

• In what ways can I, as a teacher educator, become an advocate for schools and districts to openly display value and support for the skills and dispositions of student-centered practitioner researchers?

• In what ways can I, as a teacher educator, provide opportunities for teacher candidates to build meaningful relationships with current PK-12 students?

I developed these wonderings as a result of what I learned from this study. Upon reflecting on each element of the study, I have grown to realize what this work might mean for my own practice as well as for the broader field of teacher education. I have shared the background and context of how I arrived at the questions under investigation, the action plan I designed as a result of a review of literature, as well as my data collection and analysis process. In the second chapter, I shared my action plan in greater detail, partnered with the actual happenings of each of four consecutive seminars and a final project showcase focused on improving one context-specific issue related to educational inequity. In Chapter 3, each intern's unique interaction with the project was detailed and discussed along with discoveries I made about my facilitation efforts and my own interpretations of each of their experiences. Finally, I provided 12 lessons I learned from this study under three overarching categories in the fourth chapter. Each learning and category connected back to educational research, contributed to implications for my own practice, and led to new wonderings.
In the final section of this dissertation, I share broader implications for the field of teacher education that were illuminated throughout this experience. Practitioner research served as both my method for researching my topic as well as an essential part of the topic under investigation. Through this practitioner research study, or a systematic study of my own professional practice, I cannot make any generalizable claims to the broader field of teacher education. However, some of the lessons I learned may be transferrable to the practices of fellow teacher educators (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). It is from that notion that I share my final takeaways and possible implications for the field.

Recognizing Inhumanity in Schools and Humanity in Students: Re-imagining Teaching and Teacher Education

I entered into this study with the idea that providing an open, trusting space for communication, along with resources to develop an awareness for educational inequity and consistent probing questions from myself as the discussion facilitator, would naturally guide my interns to recognize unjust educational opportunities in their own contexts. Once they saw these inequities, and used the practitioner inquiry process to reduce barriers holding students back, I hoped they would organically develop or strengthen a sense of agency to combat student-centered educational inequity in their future careers. However, several interns lost sight of the equity focus or compartmentalized issues of inequity as completely separate from their sense of what makes a great teacher.

Teacher education programs may benefit from examining the vertical alignment of coursework for opportunities to scaffold equity-literacy content and discussions throughout matriculation. Having earlier coursework where teacher candidates unpack
their own life experiences and build awareness for hidden assumptions and biases may prove more effective than waiting to approach these topics when they are juniors or seniors in the program. For some of my interns, the semester of this study was the first time they had considered any of the topics I was presenting. One semester was not enough time to really sit with and dig into the gaping differences in educational opportunities in our state and nation. At my own university, we are in the process of reworking our course progression to better prepare teacher candidates for the field of teaching and for later coursework expectations. Based on my experience with this study, I plan to become a major voice in the decisions for reworking the program with an overarching goal of building teacher leaders, ready and equipped to combat educational injustice.

My interns lost sight of the equity focus of their inquiries, and they were also faced with contexts that outwardly showed no value for inquiring about ways to improve one’s practice and no concern for improving access to high quality educational experiences for every child. The ideas of educational equity and practitioner inquiry were living only in the teacher education program from which they would soon graduate. Though only some expressed a compartmentalization of the topics of our seminars, separate from real teaching expectations, the data show disconnects for most.

Teacher education programs may consider building strong professional relationships with local schools where teacher candidates will conduct field experience. Within these relationships, programs might focus on aligning goals to support a merge between theory and practice by situating practitioner inquiry as the core of the field experience. With practitioner inquiry as a foundation for acquiring new knowledge
about one’s practice, both teacher education programs and schools may build teacher candidates’ commitment to continuously improving their practice well into their careers.

The ideas of reducing barriers and inquiring to improve one’s practice were perceivably housed in teacher education, so my responsibilities as their facilitator were enhanced. Instead of rising to this responsibility, the data show I fell short in delivering organized, focused seminars to reveal the relevance and importance of investigating ways educators can make it their work and responsibility to reduce or remove barriers getting in the way of student success or fulfillment. Though my efforts left several interns in a haze about the realities of educational inequity, especially as it pertains to race and class, and their own roles in recognizing and combatting them, the continuum of alignment to my original goals offers insight into ways I can continue my efforts toward student advocacy as a top teacher criteria.

Teacher educators might look at possible ways to restructure internship supervision and even course material to sharpen the focus on course or internship goals. Protocols can help to stay on task and on time. Also, beginning each class or supervisor meeting with a reminder of shared goals may steady the aim toward feelings of meaning and success for any project. It may also prove beneficial to build solid, mutually-developed goals amongst faculty in order to unite efforts toward a common mission.

Milner (2015) named strong teacher preparation programs as having the greatest power to improve the life chances of PK-12 children living in poverty. Freedman and Appleman (2009) echoed a sentiment stated again and again by researchers: there is great power in building a reflective stance in teacher candidates. Ravitch (2014) said
that local, site-based research focused on systemic equity issues is the promise for meaningful, sustainable change. Equity-focused practitioner inquiry can empower teacher candidates to make student-centered change. First, they have to see, feel, and internalize the burning need for that change.

In my journal entry following the second seminar, I wrote, “My realization: We cannot just learn to be good teachers without recognizing the humanity in our classrooms” (Journal Entry II, February, 20, 2019, p. 2). I realized during the seminars that it is sometimes necessary to make firm statements, challenging assumptions associated with race and class, and asserting that educational injustice must matter if one seeks to be the head of a classroom full of students who lack the power to speak for themselves. Teacher education might look for opportunities to develop ways for teacher interns to understand their own humanity while learning to recognize the humanity in the students they will soon serve.

At the same time, teacher educators might look for opportunities for teacher candidates to closely examine systemic structures in place which contribute to barriers preventing students from fair chances to reach success and fulfillment. Instead of walking past unjust systemic practices because that is just the way things are, teacher candidates might be encouraged to name and investigate the problems getting in the way of their students’ success. Love (2019) said Abolitionist teaching is as much about tearing down old structures and ways of thinking as it is about forming new ideas, new forms of social interactions, new ways to be inclusive, new ways to discuss inequality and distribute wealth and resources, new ways to resist, new ways to agitate, new ways to maintain order and safety that abolishes prisons, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and mass incarceration, new ways to reach children trying to recover from the educational survival complex, new ways to show dark children they are loved in this world, and
new ways to establish an educational system that works for everyone, especially those who are put at the edges of the classroom and society. Abolitionist teaching is teachers taking back their schools, classroom by classroom, student by student, parent by parent, and school community by school community. (pp. 88-89)

Educational inequity, and its effects on so many students, has to matter to teacher candidates because it has to matter to teachers. For me, as a teacher educator, it has become non-negotiable. Freire (1993) said true human existence is to name the world in some way; to look at the world and its problems as opportunities for new naming. Love (2019) named freedom as the ultimate goal of abolitionist teaching: “Freedom to create your reality, where uplifting humanity is at the center of all decisions” (p. 89). Under the right conditions and supports, teachers could possess the power to identify and address problems as active and resolute change-makers in an unjust system ready for new naming. When practice meets research, teaching could become a generative practice of freedom for equity-focused, student-centered, teacher-powered change.

However, many schools do not have the conditions or supports in place to support teacher-driven reform. This study revealed two distinct disconnects between my expectations as a teacher educator, working to build an inquiry stance toward educational justice, and the realities of the expectations of the teaching profession. Under standardized expectations and scripted curricula, teachers are not asked to or supported in inquiring about ways to improve teaching and learning. They are not expected to name, investigate, and dismantle barriers in place of student learning, success, and happiness. They are expected to carry out an overly objectified role of teaching mostly math and language arts content as it is written in the curriculum script.
To truly see substantial change, we may need to address the oppressive view of teaching that is plaguing our profession. Teaching is a predominately White, female profession and is known to make less of a salary than other, seemingly more prestigious careers. With the demographics of this majority, one can see the stains of multiple forms of oppression, or intersectionality. When we consider a more diverse teaching force, one that more closely mirrors our human population, even more oppressions are mixed in. Because sexism, from a predominately female workforce, and classism, from a notion that teaching is a less affluent career, intertwine at the foundational idea of the teaching profession as a whole, I would argue that as those intersect with other social oppressions, careerism could be overpowering our entire profession. Decision-makers, in higher social hierarchies, may be using their positions of power to control a profession powered by a seemingly lower social ranking.

Until we remove the barriers preventing teachers from making decisions for their own teaching and for their own students, will they ever have enough traction to truly dismantle the barriers in place for their students? If we burn out the teachers who entered the profession to make change in the world and to empower their students to chase after their own hopes and goals, are we also chasing out our field’s greatest revolutionaries? Education is in need of a teacher-powered, student-centered revolution if we are to realize educational justice. It must start from the ground up. In my work as a teacher educator, I am now laser-focused on dismantling barriers in place for teachers to do their best work, equipping future teachers with data-driven processes for making change, and igniting a grassroots teacher revolution for educational justice.
APPENDIX A
EQUITY CONSCIOUSNESS PREASSESSMENT

Figure 2.2  Equity Consciousness Preassessment

For the 10 items below, circle the number that represents your level of agreement with each statement based on the scale provided, with 1 being "strongly disagree," and 5 being "strongly agree." In responding to these statements, we encourage you to be as thoughtful and honest as possible about what you really believe.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither disagree nor agree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

1. All the students in my classroom are capable of mastering the curriculum and achieving academic success.
   
2. All my students, regardless of their life circumstances, bring intellectual, cultural, and personal assets with them to my classroom that I can build on through my teaching.
   
3. I see the race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, language, learning differences, culture, and religion of my students as important parts of their identities (i.e., who these students are).
   
4. Open acknowledgment and discussion of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination present in my school can be a useful step toward advancing equity.
   
5. The responsibility for student learning in my classroom lies primarily with me and with the other adults in my school.
   
6. Most parents care deeply about their children’s learning and want them to do well in school.
   
7. The regular routines and procedures in my school do not serve some students and student groups as well as they serve other students and student groups.
   
8. If I do everything the same way this school year as I did it last year, it is highly likely that the results (in terms of student learning) will be the same.
   
9. As a classroom teacher, there is much I can do to change inequitable procedures and practices.
   
10. If I attempt to change the status quo in my classroom and implement more equity-conscious strategies, my fellow teachers and other colleagues may not celebrate and support my efforts.

Add your scores for each of the ten items and use the scale below to see where your current level of equity consciousness falls according to our definition of the concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45–50</td>
<td>Indicates highly developed equity consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>Indicates well-developed equity consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>Indicates somewhat developed equity consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 or below</td>
<td>Indicates minimally developed equity consciousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B
CLASSROOM EQUITY ASSESSMENT

Directions: Consider all population groups represented in your class. These might include groups designated by race, gender, economic class, learning difference, ethnicity, culture, home language, and so forth. Using the following scale, circle the number that indicates the frequency at which you perform the stated actions. Once you have assigned a number to each statement, add all the numbers to get your total score. This will give you an indication of the level of equity within your classroom.

5 = always
4 = frequently
3 = sometimes
2 = seldom
1 = never

In my class,

1. I discipline students as often and at the same level of severity, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. I ensure that students have equal access to my attention, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. I give enough instructional support for students to master the learning objectives being taught, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. I am aware of every student’s instructional level and differentiate instruction to meet student needs, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. I know each student’s achievement level in my class and on district, state, and national achievement tests, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. My instruction draws from and builds on students’ backgrounds, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. I look for learning differences in students and refer them for gifted or advanced education and/or special education, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. I develop partnerships with students’ families, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. I provide a rigorous curriculum and challenging instruction to students, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. I am respectful and develop relationships with students, regardless of their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.
    1 2 3 4 5

Add your scores for each of the ten items and use the scale below to see where your current level of equity consciousness falls according to our definition of the concept.

45–50 Indicates strong efforts to ensure equity
39–44 Indicates moderate efforts to ensure equity
Below 34 Indicates insignificant efforts to ensure equity

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Practitioner inquirers can use this wondering litmus test to help determine whether their wonderings might help to gain insight into improving their own teaching practice to reach the diverse needs of all students.

1) Is your wondering focused on addressing an issue concerning inequitable opportunities for high quality educational experiences accessible for all students?

2) Is your wondering something you are passionate about exploring?

3) Is your wondering focused on student learning?

4) Is your wondering a real question (a question whose answer is not known)?

5) Is the wondering focused on your practice?

6) Is your wondering phrased as a dichotomous (yes/no) question?

7) Is your wondering specific? Does it include the intended participants, intervention, and targeted outcome?

### Equity-Oriented Practitioner Inquiry Action Plan

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>The question, or wondering, I am investigating is:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Here is what I learned from the literature on how other educators or schools have solved similar issues:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Here is my plan of action:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Here is how I implemented my plan and tracked progress:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong></td>
<td><strong>This is what I learned from the data:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong></td>
<td><strong>How will your learning affect your future teaching practice, and what new wonderings do you have now?</strong></td>
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APPENDIX E
EQUITY-ORIENTED INQUIRY SHOWCASE DISPLAY EXAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Project</th>
<th>by: _______</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question/Wondering</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What question guided your inquiry?</td>
<td>This is where you describe the information you gathered when you searched for and synthesized resources on your topic.</td>
<td>What does this mean for your future teaching practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What made you choose this questions? (Include background about equity audit and your school or classroom context.)</td>
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<td>What are your takeaways?</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Statements of Learning</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you do?</td>
<td>What claims can you make from your data?</td>
<td>What are your new wonderings after completing this cycle of inquiry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you collect data?</td>
<td>Include 1-3 clear statements of learning and show supporting evidence directly from the actual data under each one.</td>
<td>How will you continue to inquire about improving your practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include samples/pictures of actual data and implementation</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Tips:
- Use visuals when possible such as photos of implementation or data, actual artifacts from implementation, etc.
- Use minimal text on board to clearly communicate main ideas to your audience.
- Use your display to help prompt you to tell the story behind each section. Try not to read directly from your board.
- Smile and speak confidently as a professional educator excited to learn about improving her practice!
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aimee Hardy Barber is an instructor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in a four-year teacher education program for early childhood and elementary education. She obtained a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in education of the gifted, both from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in Lafayette, Louisiana. Aimee received her Ed.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Florida in 2019. She is passionate about strengthening teacher education programs to produce dedicated teacher leaders who will work hard to bring innovative and equitable educational opportunities to all children in Louisiana and beyond.