Journal of Education Policy

ISSN: 0268-0939 (Print) 1464-5106 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tedp20

'Shit shows' or 'like-minded schools': charter schools and the neoliberal logic of Teach For America

Elisabeth E. Lefebvre & Matthew A. M. Thomas

To cite this article: Elisabeth E. Lefebvre & Matthew A. M. Thomas (2017) 'Shit shows' or 'like-minded schools': charter schools and the neoliberal logic of Teach For America, Journal of Education Policy, 32:3, 357-371, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2017.1280184

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1280184

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION POLICY, 2017
VOL. 32, NO. 3, 357–371
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1280184

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

'Shit shows' or 'like-minded schools': charter schools and the neoliberal logic of Teach For America

Elisabeth E. Lefebvre[a] and Matthew A. M. Thomas[b]

[a]Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA; [b]Sydney School of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

ABSTRACT

Over the past three decades, two neoliberal educational reform efforts have emerged in tandem – the charter school movement and Teach For America (TFA). This paper critically examines the relationship between these entities through the lens of TFA corps members placed in charter schools, and explores two types of schools described by interviewees, namely, 'shit shows,' and 'like-minded schools.' Grounded in corps members' teaching experiences, this paper argues that even at its best, the close partnership between TFA and charters can create a mutually reinforcing educational subculture that is isolated from broader educational discourses and practices. At its worst, this partnership can result in the ill-advised 'propping up' of under-funded, mismanaged, ill-equipped charters that might otherwise struggle to find adequate staffing and, consequently, close. This paper suggests that these two tendencies – toward corps members' insularity and poor placement – have the potential to conflict with the charter movement's and TFA's stated purposes of improving the quality of schooling for disadvantaged and marginalized students.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 1 September 2016
Accepted 5 January 2017

KEYWORDS
Teach For America; charter schools; neoliberalism

Introduction

As separate but similar movements, both Teach For America (TFA) and charter schools have risen in prominence over the past 30 years to become two of the most controversial educational reform initiatives aimed at changing the architecture of modern schooling in the United States and increasingly beyond (Baltodano 2012; Kretchmar 2014; Kretchmar, Sondel, and Ferrare 2014; Kumashiro 2010). TFA was conceptualized in 1989 as a senior thesis written by its founder and then CEO Wendy Kopp, who was responding to growing national concern that the United States was falling behind its peers (fears perhaps best represented by the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*). On its website TFA crafts its initial mission in this way:

> At the time, academic outcomes for low-income kids had not changed in a century, school districts were facing a national teacher shortage, and the U.S. was navigating the first wave of a competitive global economy that required a workforce with evolving skills and knowledge. Public schools, decades after desegregation, remained a realm of inequity … Many people were unaware of this inequity or held little hope that it could ever be fixed. (TFA 2016d)

Casting the need to address educational inequity in terms of market reform and global competitiveness, in 1990 TFA launched with 500 corps members [CMs] in 6 regions and has since grown to include 8800 current corps members in 52 regions (TFA 2016b).

CONTACT Elisabeth E. Lefebvre lefeb063@umn.edu

While the organization has remained focused on 'education and social justice' (TFA 2016a) since its inception, TFA's approach also reflects a neoliberal paradigm that emphasizes the privatization of teacher training, funding structures, and school systems (Baltodano 2012; Kretchmar 2014; Kretchmar, Sondel, and Ferrare 2014) – something it puts into practice through its CM training, teacher placement, and professional development. Corps members are recruited largely from universities around the country and commit to teaching for two years. Before starting to teach in the schools in which they have been (or will be) hired, they generally undergo a five-week summer training program, operated by TFA. During this training, CMs typically work as co-teachers in summer school programs while attending workshops and other sessions in the afternoons and evenings. CMs are also coached by Corps Member Advisors, who themselves are typically recent TFA alumni (Steudman 2015). The insularity of this training model has been critiqued for its tendency to offer a 'single perspective on teaching' (Steudman 2015, 48), driven by efficiency as well as 'directives and data monitoring' (Jobs 2015, 40) rather than deep pedagogical reflection and practice.

Also responding to concerns related to student achievement, in the 1980s, progressive educators and union leaders initially advocated for charter schools as a mechanism for education reform in which new innovations might be piloted to address social justice issues, and where marginalized students might be offered opportunities more akin to those available in private schools. However, by the 1990s, these schools had been swept up into a broader movement (of which TFA was a part) that sought to provide an alternative to traditional public schools. Because of charter schools' autonomy they became an ideal vehicle for free-market reformers who were critical of the perceived failures of teachers and unions (Fabricant and Fine 2012). Over the past several decades, the number of charter schools in the United States has grown steadily to over 6000 in the 2012–2013 school year, representing 6.2% of publically funded schools (Institute of Education Sciences 2016). Today, charter schools operate under the auspices that neoliberal values, such as autonomy, flexibility, and choice, will 'create a more innovative, effective, and efficient provision of education' (Toma and Zimmer 2012, 209), although whether or not their approach has improved educational outcomes has been called into question (Dobbie and Fryer 2016; Orfield and Frankenberg 2013). The generally neoliberal mission of charter schools – as a form of deregulation – reflects language similar to that used by TFA, which asserts 'that school leaders need autonomy to exercise leadership' and 'applaud[s] efforts to support that leadership' (TFA 2016c).

While significant literature examines the neoliberal missions of TFA (Baltodano 2012; Brewer and Wallis 2015; Kumashiro 2010; Lahann and Reagan 2011) and of charter schools (Fabricant and Fine 2012; Swalwell and Apple 2011), only recently has research started exploring the ways in which TFA maintains its ties to the charter movement (see Mungal 2016). This study adds to this nascent area of research by examining the relationship between charter schools and TFA in one Midwestern region where a large number of corps members were placed in charter schools, through the medium of TFA teachers' experiences. Based on their experiences, we found that TFA charter placements tended to fall into one of two emic categories: 'like-minded schools' or 'shit shows.' Using this typology as a general framework, but not a solidified binary, we problematize corps members' placement in charter schools, which at their best create mutually reinforcing educational sub-cultures of like-mindedness and at their worst relegate minimally trained corps members to severely under-equipped schools, including some without books, curriculum, or mentor teacher support. Further, we critique the broader, co-constructive role TFA and charter schools play in the move toward privatized education and suggest that as neoliberally oriented reform movements, both may fail in their mission of improving educational (e)quality.

Literature review

Neoliberalism takes the dual emphases of liberalism – freedom and individual choice – and casts them in market terms. As Kumashiro suggests, 'in language, it sounds like "public is bad, private is good" rhetoric' (2010, 59). In essence, neoliberal discourses promote the assumption that individuals are the ones best positioned to make wise economic decisions, and that the economy as a whole would

be best served by industry deregulation and the privatization of government (Lipman 2011). This logic suggests that less government intervention will boost the private economy, which will in turn provide better options for the individual consumer. Neoliberal discourses have also been applied to the school system itself, via a decreasing emphasis on education as a public good and an increasing shift toward viewing education as a private commodity. During the 1980s – the decade preceding the creation of both TFA and the modern charter movement – this neoliberal discourse was used to '[blame] schools for the inequalities created by the unregulated market,' portraying 'schools, teachers, and their unions…as institutions that were compromising the success of the American economy' (Baltodano 2012, 494), in part because of their purported inability or unwillingness to innovate, the perceived over-involvement of unions, and a general reluctance to reorient toward a consumer-based, private economy. Accordingly, neoliberal reform movements sought to upend public education as an institution (Harvey 2005), critiquing its failures and proposing an alternative to what some saw as an ideological state apparatus bent on maintaining an unequal status quo (Althusser 1971).

Both charter schools and TFA, respectively, are well-traversed terrain for educationalists writing about (and critiquing) neoliberalism. Regarding charter schools, scholars have examined their mixed track record of success (Dobbie and Fryer 2016; Fabricant and Fine 2012; Ravitch 2014; Zimmer et al. 2010); the growth of the KIPP model (Ellison 2012; Ravitch 2014), started by two TFA alumni (see Mathews 2009) and for years led by Kopp's husband; the potential for dispossession and exclusion of communities of color (Buras 2011); the growth of related charter-oriented teacher-training programs (Stitzlein and West 2014); and the negative impact Charter Management Organizations can have on teacher autonomy, quite ironically, as a common goal of charter education (Torres 2014). Further, Fabricant and Fine (2012) point out that while charter schools were originally conceived of as a way to provide options to low-income communities of a similar caliber to private schools, they were quickly swept up into movements critical of perceived declines in academic achievement, which sought to provide an alternative to 'dysfunctional' public schools and have in many cases led to more segregation (see Orfield and Frankenberg 2013).

Regarding TFA, the literature has expanded from initial considerations focused primarily on teacher education and teaching effectiveness (Darling-Hammond 1994; Zeichner and Conklin 2005) to more recent examinations of its influence and mechanisms. Scholars have noted the ways in which it has altered educational policy-making and borrowing (Ellis et al. 2015; Kumashiro 2010; Price and McConney 2013, 2013), its use of business-oriented language and adoption of corporate culture (Lahann and Reagan 2011), and the preferential treatment it receives from some school districts (Brewer et al. 2016). Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this article, TFA has also contributed (alongside charter schools) to the neoliberal reframing of public discourse on teaching, learning, and schooling, and has pushed against traditional teacher education structures: 'TFA's approach to the problem of poor schooling [has situated] the problem within educational institutions – schools, school districts, and those institutions preparing teachers' (deMarrais, Wenner, and Lewis 2013, 21). TFA offers itself as an exemplary solution for the problems of public schooling and traditional teacher education mechanisms and strategically aims to distance itself from the status quo (Schneider 2014).[1]

The TFA-charter school neoliberal critique of the potentially 'negative momentum' of traditional education institutions is put into practice vis-à-vis their sharing of resources and personnel. For instance, TFA regularly places corps members in and encourages alumni to teach and lead charter schools (Kretchmar 2014). On its website, TFA (2016c) proudly claims that twice as many corps members work in district schools than charters (indicating that approximately one third of its corps members are placed outside traditional public schools). Given the relatively small percentage of charter schools in the US cited above, as well as recent NCES data that suggests that only 3.4% of public school teachers work in charter schools (In Perspective, n.d.), corps members seem to be considerably overrepresented in charters as compared to district schools. Other literature has questioned the accuracy of TFA's accounting of CM placements across various school categories (Chovnick 2015), suggesting that TFA's charter presence may be even higher than it reports.

This preferential placement and close TFA-charter relationship has been documented as having an adverse effect on traditionally trained teachers – something that is particularly troubling given TFA's earlier mission of staffing hard-to-fill positions in public schools. For instance, in 2013, following Rahm Emanuel's closure of 49 public schools in predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods in Chicago (Strauss 2016a), internal TFA documents were leaked, which projected that 52 privately managed schools would be opened and that TFA planned to provide corps members for those schools (Strauss 2013). Similar phenomena have been noted elsewhere; Henry and Dixson (2016) point out that in post-Katrina New Orleans the expansion of the charter movement was paralleled by a simultaneous displacement of experienced African American teachers often by White TFA and TeachNOLA-trained novices. Some scholars even suggest TFA's Wendy Kopp viewed Katrina as a 'fortuitous occurrence,' as it opened an educational policy reform window that might have otherwise remained closed (Barnes, Germain, and Valenzeula 2016, 25). In many ways, TFA corps members are ideal hires for charter schools in places like Chicago and New Orleans, both because they are less experienced and therefore less costly, as well as because as nontraditionally trained teachers, they embody a preferred free-market worker free from 'the "monopolistic political control" of the state and teachers unions, respectively' (Donnor and Affolter 2016, viii).

In sum, TFA and charter schools mutually reinforce (both implicitly or explicitly) a message that is inclined toward disrupting traditional education models and teacher practice, in favor of a more privatized and 'autonomous' approach to modern schooling. As Brooks and Greene suggest, 'There is an ideological consistency among the researchers who support TFA's philosophy, the actions of charter school leaders who recruit primarily from TFA's ranks, and the goals of the private and public groups who fund TFA' (2013, 9). Regardless of the philosophical or political side of the argument wherein one is located, it is important to acknowledge that there are striking parallels to be made between the mission of charter schools in which TFA corps members are placed, and between the mission of TFA itself. This paper adds a unique element to the growing body of literature on TFA's communion with charter schools by utilizing the voices of CMs to analyze the ways in which corps members themselves are positioned within the educational milieu, as well as to explore how their entrée into teaching amidst a push to privatize education presents formidable challenges to their success and tenure in the classroom.

Research methods and context

The findings presented in this study draw on in-depth interviews conducted with 36 corps members from four TFA cohorts in a large, Midwestern city. Interviews were conducted in two phases. The first phase of 27 interviews, conducted by Matthew, utilized a semi-structured interview protocol and primarily focused on CM identity and experiences in the corps. Of the CMs from the first phase of interviews, 16 CMs worked in charter schools, while 9 worked in traditional public schools. The second phase of 9 interviews (eight in charter schools and one in a traditional public school), conducted by Elisabeth, relied upon a similar interview protocol, with adapted questions based on themes that had emerged from the initial round of interviews. The revised protocol asked TFA corps members more specific questions about TFA corps and school culture, as well as about their charter or public placements (see Figure 1 for a summary of interviewees).

Both authors were introduced to study participants through their roles as instructors of graduate-level education courses at Greenwood University (a pseudonym), where then TFA corps members completed Masters-level coursework in compliance with the state's provisional licensure requirements. The authors taught core educational foundations courses to several cohorts of TFA CMs. These courses occurred concurrently during the teaching conducted by CMs at their school placements. CMs would typically work a full day at school, then arrive for a three-hour graduate course in the evening. Upon completion of the courses, the authors invited CMs to participate in the research study. As noted above, 36 CMs participated in the interviews, which typically lasted two hours or more in length, and several interviewees followed up with additional detail and commentary via email in the weeks following the

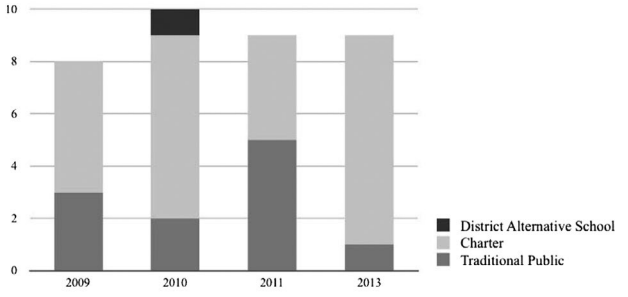

Figure 1. Interviewees by cohort and placement.

interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and the respondents were provided pseudonyms.

The transcripts were later analyzed using both deductive and inductive codes to explore a priori themes and those that emerged from the data. Both phases of interviews were coded individually and the entire corpus of data was discussed collectively to provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and insights of the CMs, and how they might be similar or different across cohorts. Likewise, the conceptual framework for this paper was constructed through this iterative data analysis process (Maxwell 2013). This was especially important because the author who taught their respective group of research participants also conducted that particular phase of interviews; through this prolonged engagement s/he had an established relationship with those CMs (Lincoln and Guba 1985). However, it was necessary to code across all cohorts to explore the internal consistency of the themes that emerged from the study. Other themes that emerged from the study included the challenges of preparing for work in special education classrooms, maintaining work/life balance and mental health (Thomas and Lefebvre, under review), and the construction of alternative licensure identity. The findings explored and discussed in this paper originate from many of the interviews with CMs placed in charter schools, but also from a few interviews with CMs placed in traditional public schools, who sometimes longed to be in a charter school, or vice versa. These nuances as well as the typology framing the research are explored in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Research findings

In accordance with the TFA mandate, all of the CMs in the region were posted in public schools. However, many were placed in charter schools, which are officially public (they do not charge tuition like private schools) but operate independently from the larger, traditional public school system.[2] Although TFA (2016c) asserts that the majority of its corps members work in district schools, in the region in which we conducted interviews, most corps members were placed in charter schools, and interviewees were eager to describe their working circumstances and teaching experiences.[3] Generally, the charter schools described by our interviewees fell into two categories: schools described as 'like-minded' and others described as 'shit shows,' or as Keith put it: 'there are a lot of good ones and a lot of bad ones.' Using these emic categories as a conceptual frame for our discussion, the following section considers research findings from participants who taught in these charter schools. While we do not desire to create binary categories of charter education – certainly charter schools, like any other type of school, are diverse – in using these phrases we are able to discuss similarities and differences between charter schools, and to raise questions (in the section that follows) about the continued relationship between TFA and the charter school movement. Charles, a CM teaching middle school social studies, addressed this nuance when asked if any generalizations could be made about corps member placements:

Charles: It's a mixed bag, it depends on the charter school. Yeah, so the charter schools [that] have good funding, good support, good incentives for success, good goal setting, um … good follow ups, just good structures and good leadership and good vision and good behavioral reinforcement.

Elisabeth: You don't think there's, like, things that can be universally true of public school placements versus charter school placements?

Charles: I don't think, no. No, but you could almost, you could come close to making some sweeping statements that would be accurate – about the challenges of poorly structured, and poorly funded, and poorly led charters you could – but you can't completely because there are so many really good charter schools out there, so many … like a handful. I know of a couple.

Mindful of this tension, the following section explores what characteristics might ring true in describing the charter schools in which TFA operates and corps members work.

'Like-minded' schools

Corps members working at 'like-minded' schools, a term used by Keith, noted what we term a 'philosophical/pedagogical synergy' between their teaching placement and TFA training and ideology. Many of the CMs' charter school placements seemed to follow a model similar to KIPP schools (started by two TFA alum), which generally utilize extended school day and school year schedules, enforce strict school uniform and behavior policies for students, and cultivate a competitive, data-driven school culture similar to TFA itself. CMs described attributes of their schools that they saw as consistent with the general TFA educational approach. For instance, Nancy, a second grade teacher, found that fellow teachers at her charter school (who were also commonly corps members or TFA alumni) focused on teaching to the test. This practice was reinforced by 'weekly data meetings to talk about our scores,' which created a competitive environment where 'we are sometimes pitted against each other – like, "Look at all the great things that this person is doing and look at that school and see how well they are doing."' Other corps members described their like-minded schools as having a 'drill and kill philosophy' of instruction, or recounted conversations with principals who said that teachers had to show years of growth or they would not be re-hired. In adopting these types of practices, as well as hiring a significant number of current and former corps members, Nadine commented that some of these schools were 'the picture of TFA.' Brooke, another CM, noted that another corps member's charter school was 'probably as TFA as you can get.'

This is not to suggest that these school practices were seen as negative. Betty defined 'relentless pursuit' – an integral part of the TFA belief-system – as meaning that teachers 'will do just about anything for their students. These are teachers who do not view school as just an 8-to-3 job. These are the teachers that work an extended day, an extended year.' Calla, who taught at a KIPP school for a couple of years before joining the administration, described in positive terms her relationship to her charter school. A glowing sense of affiliation and alignment was offered in response to an interview question about any differences she noted among teachers at her school who were non-TFA teachers:

> I am pretty lucky here. We are pretty well aligned … KIPP is also *married* to TFA, so a lot of people who work in these two different systems are very aligned in what they think education is for. This school is just full of TFA teachers so it is kind of hard [to answer the interview question about non-TFA teachers]. I am trying to think of who is not a TFA teacher. I don't really see a difference here. You know, we only have a few, maybe three or four non-TFA teachers. [emphasis added]

Calla later surmised that her school was nearly '85% TFA, even all the way through [including the] administration.' Or, as another interviewee, Nancy, put it, 'we are a very TFA school.' Indeed, reports from the region written contemporary to these interviews suggest one charter school had at least 70% TFA teachers and the entire administration was TFA or alumni. Calla did note that they had 'a few teachers who aren't TFA. But they are kind of, everything about them, they could have easily been TFA.' In the interview with Calla, Matthew posited that they 'smell TFA' and she responded, 'Yeah exactly. They might have dranken the Kool-Aid or whatever it is.'[4]

In the interview, it was clear that Calla appreciated the degree of alignment between the philosophy of TFA and her specific school, and this sentiment was generally shared across many CMs placed at like-minded charter schools in the study. They believed their chance of achieving success as a teacher was higher when a strong degree of philosophical and pedagogical alignment was present. Success for most CMs in the study was operationalized primarily through TFA's emphasis on students' 'years of growth' as a primary measure of teacher effectiveness (see Zukiewicz, Clark, and Makowsky 2015, 24). Arguably, teaching as part of a school faculty that placed similar emphasis on test scores would serve as a source of encouragement to novice CMs steeped in this aspect of TFA culture, and without previous experience with or grounding in other ways of approaching teaching and learning. Moreover, for many CMs placement in a 'like-minded' school itself was an additional source of pride because their efforts were mutually reinforced by and connected with a broader, though nationally controversial, belief in charter school success. Kirk connected the pride he felt as a teacher to his pride in his teaching placement: 'So you know when I say I'm incredibly proud to be a teacher, it's because I'm part of this network of charter schools that is getting great results, like, all across the country.'

Despite a generally positive perception of their work at these charter schools, as indicated by some of the earlier school descriptions, some corps members felt that the extended day, extended year model was unsustainable, and perhaps was dependent upon teachers who had a commitment similar to that of TFA corps members. Namely, these intensive programs required teachers who might teach and do little else for only a few years. Nancy felt that perhaps because of her school placement's alignment with TFA, 'everyone, including my roommate, now constantly stresses about what they are going to teach and when they are going to teach it. And how they are going to get everything in.' Laila commented,

> I'm noticing a lot of schools are becoming, uh, charter schools are becoming extended day and extended year. Um … and I know that, like, KIPP schools around the country are doing that, and YES Prep schools, and Uncommon Schools, and schools that are experiencing huge success … are those kinds of schools. And they have really high burnout and so they need teachers who will commit to a specific amount of time but don't necessarily want to stay … But there's always going to be that cycle and I feel like that's what alternative licensure is going to do until we find a sustainable um … lifestyle for those kinds of schools.

Her reflections suggest that because of the demands of these schools, teachers might only stay for a few years and then leave. Certainly the first years of teaching can be hard for any novice, but the connection corps members made between stress and their placement in 'like-minded' charter schools is insightful. The organizational cultures of these charter schools, with which TFA frequently partners and are the 'picture' of the organization, may fuel the high turnover for which both TFA and charters have been criticized.

There is one final point worth noting that emerged from the data on like-minded charter placements. Both TFA, and many of the charter schools in this particular region also used language that reflected this neoliberal, corporate approach to schooling. For example, TFA premises its larger model of change on the notion of teaching as leadership, a theoretical and applied approach that assumes leadership and teaching are inherently intertwined. This is evident in the TFA manifesto, *Teaching as Leadership* (Farr 2010) as well as the documented recruitment of campus leaders from colleges and universities (Brewer 2014). Likewise, some of the charter schools where CMs were placed included the word 'leadership' in the name of the school and several used the term 'academy.' Beyond this institutional synergy, the symbolism was also reflected on the individual level. Some charter schools called school leaders CEOs, or Managers, etc., just as TFA called its mentoring staff Managing Teacher Leadership Development (MTLDs) and its core 'product' Corps Members (CMs), rather than 'teaching fellows' as in some other programs. In sum, there existed a remarkable consistency between the discourses utilized by TFA and many charter schools where CMs worked – a linguistic parallel which deserves a paper of its own.

'Shit shows'

However, not all corps members felt that their charter schools were successful or sources of pride. While corps members often lack a wider set of school experiences with which they might compare their

placement, their descriptions of school facilities, materials, and management highlight the severely under-resourced and ill-equipped nature of some charter placements. Nadine described both the lack of resources at her school, as well as her own limited philosophical/pedagogical 'tool box' as a novice corps member and teacher:

> I literally could've done anything I wanted [at her placement] […] it's a shit show. [Laughs.] Like, so many of the charter schools are just a mess, like, it's a joke and it ends up being a contest [among CMs] of like, whose is worse … and people kind of laugh at it because I think that they or we [as CMs] don't know what else to do … So many of the schools are not actually schools where you can say, like, kids are going there for academic progress or academic things, which ties back into – I think my biggest issue – where, if it's being joked about, that these aren't real schools – there are still real kids going there. It's not like it's a fake school with fake kids, it just is kind of like there's just so much freedom within a charter for the school to be run in so many different ways, I think that it ends up being taken advantage of or the school ends up in the hands of people who don't really know how to follow through on making it work.

Kari, a high school ESL teacher, felt she had gotten a misimpression of her charter school during the interview, and hadn't realized how dysfunctional it was. Initially, she said she thought,

> That they were really put together. That they had distinct goals and direction for their school and that I was supposed to come and supplement those goals … but I mean what are you going to say, 'Come to our school,' even though it is a shit show!? Like, you know we are not going to say that. No one would.

With no advanced warning and even less support, corps members reported being able to do little more than commiserate with each other and move forward as best they could. Quinn, a Kindergarten teacher commented that her 'MTLD, she said that we are the worst of the charter schools … we are not the worst but we are the poorest one in academics and all of that.' Elisabeth similarly remembered being told by a different corps member that her school was one of the worst in her region – something some interviewees seemed to note with a mixture of seemingly self-reliant pride and enduring frustration. Placed in failing schools, corps members like Nadine had to 'make it work,' a task they cast in fairly straightforward terms.

What CMs needed for their real classrooms with real kids were adequate (or any) books and materials, manageable class sizes, a dedicated space for instruction (or even a desk), and access to curriculum. Instead, these schools described as shit shows often lacked the most basic support structures, creating intractable work environments that negatively impacted corps members, who were new to the profession. One middle school teacher, Kari, commented on this difference:

> I think that a lot of different schools that my friends teach at have the support and they are shadowing other teachers who are more experienced they are following … but the resources [at my school] just aren't there, and so I don't really know if that is [my school] or if that is charter? I just know that it is a problem.

She also remembered in the interview when she was told that she would have 35 students in her largest class – 10 more than the 25 student class size the charter's website promised – and no home classroom. She was required to 'float' throughout the day and was eventually given a desk by a fellow corps member in the corner of her classroom. Keith, who like most of the CMs in the study had no background in teaching prior to TFA, was part of a technology-oriented startup chartered to be an 'innovative model' of a 'non-traditional blended learning approach.' Although many of his co-workers had some teaching experience, collectively the school had no curriculum in August. Keith lacked a classroom until January and relied on resources from TFA's internal resource network, TFANet, to build his curriculum and lesson plans. Everything had to be created from scratch at the start of the year 'to make a product for the students that is good for them and something that is also [re]producible and that we can create more schools out of.' While Keith felt this was an opportunity, because it was nice to see that everyone struggled, arguably many of these things should have been in place before the charter opened (and certainly before the school was 'franchised'). These schools and many of its CMs and teachers were quite literally, as Veltri (2010) described, 'learning on other people's kids.' As Keith put it, 'I think the hardest part was, like, learning how to do my job well.' Facing similar challenges to those described by Kari or Keith, this could be why Georgia referred to her school as 'the wild, wild west.' In this environment, many CMs struggled to find a good model of 'effective teaching' or to perform to TFA-sanctioned standards of 'success.'

Like the CMs in like-minded schools, those in shit shows saw some similitude between their school and TFA, but only in relation to the overwhelming amount of work required of them. Kevin explained,

> I think the majority of organizations that strongly affiliate themselves with TFA are very much [the same] in that over commitment is the norm and your life is on hold and this is your core component of your identity and you do not have room for anything else.

Biashara, a H.S. Math teacher at a charter school, attributed the toxic and exploitative nature of her charter school to the fact that teachers were viewed, at least by her principal, as expendable:

> Like [it] doesn't matter if they [the teachers] come back, doesn't matter if I fire them – because I can just get this constant supply of new teachers now to fill the school so I have no incentive to develop these teachers or treat them well or care about them feeling positive about their work environment.

Bishara went on to suggest that the salary schedule had even been changed such that new corps members were paid $3000 less after a restructuring move in which more experienced teachers were let go and new corps members hired in their place. However, these new hires, who were also young and new to the profession, '… had no work experience, no experience in a school setting, not really a strong sense of what a professional work environment looks like and I felt like [the principal had] really taken advantage of that.'

Beyond perceived exploitation within their school environment, some corps members working in shit shows felt they had little recourse when they saw abuses of power that affected either themselves, or their students (notably, something that unions are meant to provide for schoolteachers in traditional public schools). Quinn felt she was not supposed to attend board meetings:

> People who went [to board meetings] – like teachers who went, even though they are supposed to be open … [it was] recommended for … their contracts to be terminated. Just for showing up. Like, there was a big ordeal about it and then the board came in here [to our school] and pretty much told us that, 'If you show up and you speak your mind, you can be terminated.' And they [the teachers] didn't even say anything bad [at previous meetings], but they [the board] viewed it as a threat, coming in, because three teachers came [to a board meeting] at one time.

In lieu of support from administration or the charter school board, corps members sought support from TFA itself. However, in one CM's experience TFA also failed to support corps members, or at least to speak out on their behalf:

> We don't have books. For a long time, I didn't have desks – enough desks – and then I just think that there is a communication barrier between the admin and the rest of the staff. And I think that TFA promotes some sort of silencing as far as speaking out against what your school is doing.

Although there may have been other instances where TFA did intervene, it was disconcerting to corps members that the organization frequently maintained their partnerships with shit shows, perhaps as a means to try to reform and rejuvenate specific charter schools for strategic reasons. Kevin believed TFA viewed his school as 'kind of their test tube, turn-around school' that would provide evidence of TFA's success. He envisioned TFA saying, 'Look what we can do! But not even looking at the reality, [the] experience of our kids.' This point was reiterated several times by CMs who criticized the role of TFA partnerships and wondered 'at what point are you selling Teach For America versus working towards what you say you work toward, which is student achievement,' as Nadine suggested. She described her school as 'chaotic' and 'a mess,' causing her to question why TFA maintained the relationship. She eventually came to the conclusion that the continued partnerships were in place 'to promote the TFA name at whatever cost, including the cost of student achievement, which is really contradictory to what we say we do.' She believed that TFA maintained an emphasis on partnerships even in the face of shit show conditions: 'Ultimately, it's like, "We're in this many schools. We're serving this many students." And to me it felt like, "No we're not actually serving those students. But because it looks good for your numbers you're gonna say we are …"' She believed the image of TFA was of paramount importance and concluded this section of the interview by suggesting that 'at some point … you need to draw a line between what is good for the Teach For America name and, like, how we're not actually serving students.'

Partnerships with charter schools, regardless of quality, and the limited number of opportunities for teaching support or for airing grievances came at a high personal cost to a few corps members.

Nadine, Kari, and Charles all left before completing their two-year TFA commitments. Nadine left citing examples of mismanagement, misdirection of funds, and lack of support, as well as her own struggles as a teacher. She said of her decision: 'I wasn't serving my students in the way that they needed to be served … I wasn't willing to support our school anymore.' Kari left part way through her first year of teaching, citing her introversion and the toxic work environment at her charter school as the predominant reasons for her move to another job outside the teaching profession. Charles was not asked to return by his charter school, nor was another placement arranged by TFA. His experience was somewhat similar to one cited by Betty who explained that at her school:

> Corps members are not involved in those [hiring] decisions [which are] mostly made through [TFA] program directors and the school administration … let's say the corps member does not want to continue at the school [where they were placed] the next year and the school does want the corps member to continue … most likely the choice is given to the corps member, either you can continue at the school or you can leave TFA.

She suggested that this was because TFA did not want to lose its partnership with a particular school, which might be wary of accepting new corps members in the future if the school had a bad experience. While this was sometimes seen a good decision, Betty also knew of a 'fantastic' corps member who simply did not get along with her administrator. Whatever the reason for a corps member to exit his or her commitment early, given the experiences of many interviewees, it seems likely that some of 'our nation's most promising future leaders' (TFA 2016e) might have stayed longer had they had more support – a finding consistent with Donaldson's and Johnson's contention that although TFA corps members were most likely to leave teaching to pursue other employment and/or improve career opportunities within or outside the education field, the fourth most commonly reported reason given by CMs for leaving their teaching assignment was poor administrative leadership. Additionally, more than a third of teachers who transferred cited problems with their original school, including challenges with the administration, 'lack of philosophical alignment,' problems with discipline, or general dissatisfaction with their job (2011, 51).

Discussion and conclusion

These findings shed a more nuanced light on the often seemingly monolithic entity of charter schools and TFA corps member placement. For the CMs under study, their experiences as teachers through TFA varied considerably, based on the organization and leadership of the particular charter school in which they were placed. While corps members placed in 'like-minded' schools felt equipped to be successful and were generally happy with their placements (albeit perhaps only in the short term), corps members placed in 'shit shows' felt frustrated and in some cases left the teaching profession altogether. This typology, as offered by the CMs themselves, adds complexity to current understandings of charter schools, a *cause célèbre* of TFA and neoliberal education reforms more broadly, and their storied advancement of educational equity through free-market choice. In the sections that follow, we therefore discuss additional implications of these findings, beginning first with the section on like-minded schools and moving, second, to the section on shit shows.

In analyzing the data and reflecting on related literature, we came to realize that many like-minded charters essentially have the ability to function as de facto TFA schools. Though TFA has been running its own version of teacher training in the form of Summer Institute since the early 1990s, it has not been running its own schools. Yet, the coexistence of some like-minded schools – where the overwhelming proportion of teachers are CMs, and administrators are TFA alumni – seems to suggest a higher degree of 'like-minded-ness' and ideological alignment than previously understood in the literature (Kretchmar 2014; Kretchmar, Sondel, and Ferrare 2014). Moreover, due to the separation between most charter schools and traditional public schools, administrators seem to have considerably more autonomy than those in the traditional system to experiment with pedagogical, logistical, and structural approaches to schooling. As such, like-minded schools – as observed by our interviewees – often form a nearly symbiotic relationship with TFA wherein TFA recruits, trains, and places teachers in the school that then draws them up through the very leadership positions that enable them to utilize and reinforce the application of TFA's core/corps ideals.

Many unique phenomena are created as a result. For the CMs placed in like-minded schools, there exists a certain synergy between the motifs and rhythms of TFA and those that exist in their charter placements. As novice educators, this has the ability to create a more seamless integration and socialization into the school than might occur for CMs placed in traditional public schools, which arguably do not embody the same TFA ideology. CMs may therefore be more comfortable, and perhaps 'successful,' in these schools than in traditional public schools. Further, as Veltri observed in her study, this deeply entrenched relationship 'virtually guarantee[s]' that students have one, 'if not several' CMs as teachers throughout their school careers (2010, 38).

But the deeper issue is the way in which the TFA-charter partnership can function as an ideological state apparatus that reinforces and reinscribes particular ideologies of schooling. Because of their intensely connected relationship, TFA can assert control, or not, over many school mechanisms, including, for example, the hiring and firing of teachers/CMs, as highlighted by insightful research on the 'preferential treatment' of CMs in contracting, hiring, and other employment practices (Brewer et al. 2016, 1). In this sense, TFA essentially becomes what it has criticized – a non-autonomous institution with (potentially) negative momentum. If public schools can have an institutional momentum that sometimes pushes them toward under-serving their students (something both TFA and charter schools have widely claimed), what is to prevent charters and/or TFA from failing students in the same way, particularly when creating mutually reinforcing, self-contained school bubbles? Further, since TFA and the charter school movement have sought to privatize education through many forms – including through their emphases on privatizing education (Kretchmar 2014; Lipman 2011; Mungal 2016; Orfield and Frankenberg 2013; Scott 2015) and supporting linkages between schools and major corporations and foundations (Sondel 2015), etc. – how will they be held accountable when/if this happens, especially since they are not part of a larger democratic government structure and existing accountability mechanisms, as public schools are?

As charter schools (and TFA) grow in prominence and institutional clout, they run the risk of becoming stagnant, or at a minimum less innovative, in similar ways to purported failing public schools. Although TFA and charter schools approach education from a neoliberal paradigm, they are at the same risk of failing their students. In particular, since neoliberal theories of education are predicated on the assumption that privatized, autonomous schools are ultimately better positioned to adapt to the needs of its consumers (i.e. students), there seems to be a related tendency to accept that 'startup' problems (seen in the 'shit show' schools in which interviewees worked) represent only growing pains, and not intractable challenges. Despite the claims of some charter school literature that failing charters will be held accountable because they can presumably be closed if they are unsuccessful (NAPCS 2014), data from this study highlights how ineffective 'shit show' charters can be buoyed by external organizations such as TFA who may have ulterior motivations for the maintenance of a particular school. This is not to suggest that all charter education is bad, or that it cannot serve a purpose. However, we contend that charter schools and TFA are as likely as public schools (if not more so) to perpetuate unequal education *because* they exist outside traditional accountability measures.

This critique relates to the fact that on an educational policy level, the success of like-minded schools, and perhaps to a lesser extent, shit shows, both staffed with TFA CMs, serves to substantiate the continued involvement of TFA in the current educational space. Some interviewees believed that TFA placed corps members in charter schools because they were better able to 'prove' that TFA was having a positive impact. Kevin's comments about TFA utilizing charter schools as 'test tube turnaround schools' as a means to claim success through education reform raise serious questions about the experimental mentality of some charter schools, as well as TFA's willingness to gamble on inept schools in the hopes of double-digit returns on their investment. Likewise, Nadine's reflections on the perpetual emphasis of TFA on image, reputation, and partnerships, which has been documented elsewhere in the literature (deMarrais, Wenner, and Lewis 2013), highlights reason for concern regarding the growing overlap between the TFA and charter school movements. As some of the CMs suggested above, what is forfeited along the way to support TFA as a program and the educational discourses that substantiate its existence? Is corps member health sacrificed? Is student success, broadly conceived,

at stake in some cases? And what checks exist on charter schools that, in essence, hire from within by advancing TFA alumni through their ranks?

This line of questioning necessarily leads to further discussion of the shit shows. In an amazingly ironic twist, the shit shows supported by TFA and its CMs perpetuate the very schooling that TFA publicly derides and claims to want to change. For these shit shows, TFA can provide a revolving door of CMs – who in some instances are (ab)used and exploited by their administrators – to work in teaching positions that might go unfilled not because of a teacher shortage but due to the limited quality of the charter school itself. We posit that in these instances it would be more worthwhile for an ineffective charter school to close than for it to be bolstered by TFA in the hopes that this 'test tube' school would become a 'turn-around school.' At least for the TFA region under study, it is interesting that charter schools appear to be a primary vehicle for the spread of TFA. TFA's logic seems to be that expansion into a region is worthwhile, even if few teachers are placed in traditional public schools.

Many of the CMs we interviewed joined TFA because they were inspired to reduce the achievement gap, and some even explicitly mentioned in their extended interviews with us their desires to teach in schools that are struggling to fill teaching positions. In these instances, their goals seem to coincide with Wendy Kopp's initial plan, which revolved around placing CMs in hard-to-staff schools. A discussion of the value of these initial intentions and the motivations of CMs is beyond the scope of this paper, but in the region where this study was conducted, it is difficult to understand how TFA's original vision is consistent with its modern iteration. We have not conducted a systematic analysis of hiring practices in this Midwestern city, but comments from CMs as well as other traditionally trained teachers seem to suggest that there is not a significant teacher shortage in this region. One CM eloquently described the interview process for her position at a traditional public school as a circus full of large numbers of qualified applicants with many years of experience. Therefore, one might question the extent to which TFA has experienced mission drift from its original mandate to staff hard-to-fill teaching positions.

Finally, the overwhelming emphasis on charter schools brings to bear questions about how TFA envisions its future contributions to education equity in the modern educational environment, particularly as it relates to the charter school movement. As recent research continues to tease out the nuances of program design and implementation, particularly with regard to educational reform (Zeichner 2014), diversity initiatives (Barnes, Germain, and Valenzeula 2016; White 2016), and directions for future research (Scott, Trujilloand, and Rivera 2016), we are left questioning the intentions of TFA to expand at all costs, even to shit shows that lack adequate support for its corps members. Does TFA intend to advance a parallel educational system through its successes in like-minded schools? Likewise, we are concerned about the reliance of charter school start-ups on novice teachers if their aim is to improve education through free market choice. Might these schools be better served by recruiting the most experienced (often traditionally trained) teachers? And if they cannot attract them, what does that signal about their value and what changes may be warranted? With the recent nomination of school choice and charter school advocate Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education, who has contributed millions of dollars to help reform educational policy toward an increase in charter schools (Strauss 2016b), research on the symbiosis between charter schools, TFA, and educational policy-making, more generally, is particularly significant and timely. How will TFA advocate for its teachers and students in this new policy arena? As Nadine so eloquently and succinctly phrased it, 'At what point are you selling Teach For America versus working towards what you say you work toward, which is student achievement?' And what role should TFA, and charter schools, play moving forward?

Notes

1. It is worth noting that the application numbers for TFA have declined in recent years (Brown 2016a), though it is impossible to know whether this is attributable to increasing public criticism of TFA, to an improved economy for university graduates, or other factors. Yet TFA continues to place a significant number of CMs each year, as well as to advance its domestic policy agenda through support for alumni to run for public office, and to expand its international agenda through the Teach For All constellation of TFA-like organizations.

2. Perhaps indicative of charter schools' sharp movement away from their original conceptualization and toward privatization, the National Labor Relations Board recently ruled that charter schools function more like private corporations than public schools in terms of unionization (Brown 2016b).
3. While it is possible that this over-representation is somewhat accounted for by the fact that charter schools enroll a greater percentage of minority and low-income students than traditional public schools (U.S. Department of Education 2015), charter schools still only account for a small minority of all public elementary or secondary schools.
4. 'Drinking the Kool-Aid' was a common phrase among certain TFA cohorts in the study. They used this phrase to describe CMs who wholeheartedly supported the TFA philosophy and approach and were therefore relatively uncritical in their perspectives.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Elisabeth E. Lefebvre is a postdoctoral associate at the University of Minnesota. She holds a PhD in Comparative and International Development Education with a minor in Sociocultural Studies in Education from the University of Minnesota, and an MA in International Studies from the University of Oregon. Before attending graduate school, she worked as an elementary school teacher in Louisiana, USA, and in Morocco. Lefebvre's interdisciplinary research examines the mutually constitutive and historical relationship between schooling and childhood, as well as the ways in which our ideas about schooling impact student and teacher experiences in the classroom.

Matthew A. M. Thomas is a lecturer in Comparative Education and Sociology of Education at the University of Sydney. He holds a PhD from the University of Minnesota and an MA from Columbia University, Teachers College. Matthew has worked as a teacher in the United States, where he was certified in music (grades K-12) and social studies (grades 7–12), and as an educational researcher and consultant in Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia. His research examines educational policies, pedagogical practices, teachers' lives, and the changing roles of teacher and higher education in international and domestic contexts.

References

Althusser, L. 1971. "Ideology and State Apparatus." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, by L. Althusser and translated by B. Brewster, 85–126. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Baltodano, M. 2012. "Neoliberalism and the Demise of Public Education: The Corporatization of Schools of Education." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25 (4): 487–507.

Barnes, M. C., E. K. Germain, and A. Valenzeula. 2016. "Teach For America's Long Arc: A Critical Race Theory Textual Analysis of Wendy Kopp's Works." *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 24 (14): 1–40.

Brewer, T. J. 2014. "Accelerated Burnout: How Teach For America's Academic Impact Model and Theoretical Culture of Accountability Can Foster Disillusionment among Its Corps Members." *Educational Studies* 50 (3): 246–263.

Brewer, T. J., K. Kretchmar, B. Sondel, S. Ishmael, and M. McGlinn Manfra. 2016. "Teach For America's Preferential Treatment: School District Contracts, Hiring Decisions, and Employment Practices." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 24 (15): 1–32.

Brewer, T. J., and M. Wallis. 2015. "#TFA: The Intersection of Social Media and Education Reform." *Critical Education* 6 (13): 1–13.

Brooks, E., and K. Greene. 2013. "Problems, Politics, and Possibilities: Imagining a Teach For America That Really is for America." *Critical Education* 4 (13): 68–92.

Brown, E. 2016a. "Teach For America Applications Fall Again, Diving 35 Percent in Three Years." *The Washington Post*. Accessed December 8, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/04/12/teach-for-america-applications-fall-again-diving-35-percent-in-three-years/?utm_term=.cba6b0c0096f

Brown, E. 2016b. "National Labor Relationships Board Decides Charter Schools Are Private Corporations, Not Public Schools." *The Washington Post*. Accessed November 16, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/08/30/national-labor-relations-board-decides-charter-schools-are-private-corporations-not-public-schools/

Buras, K. 2011. "Race, Charter Schools, and Conscious Capitalism: On the Spatial Politics of Whiteness as Property and the Unconscionable Assault on Black New Orleans." *Harvard Educational Review* 81 (2): 296–331.

Chovnick, W. 2015. "Good Intentions Gone Bad: Teach For America's Transformation from a Small, Humble Non-Profit into an Elitist Corporate Behemoth." In *Teach For America Counter-Narratives: Alumni Speak Up and Speak Out*, edited by T. J. Brewer and K. deMarrais, 141–154. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1994. "Who Will Speak for the Children? How 'Teach For America' Hurts Urban Schools and Students." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 76 (1): 21–34.
Dobbie, W., and R. G. Fryer. 2016. *Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes*. Working Paper No. 22502. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
Donaldson, M. L., and S. M. Johnson. 2011. "Teach For America Teachers: How Long Do They Teach? Why Do They Leave?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 93 (2): 47–51.
Donnor, J. K., and T. L. Affolter. 2016. "Introduction: The Charter School Solution: Distinguishing Fact from Rhetoric." In *The Charter School Solution: Distinguishing Fact from Rhetoric*, edited by T. L. Affolter and J. K. Donnor. New York, NY: Routledge.
Ellis, V., M. Maguire, T. A. Trippestad, Y. Liu, X. Yang, and K. Zeichner. 2015. "Teaching Other People's Children, Elsewhere, for a While: The Rhetoric of a Travelling Educational Reform." *Journal of Education Policy* 31 (1): 60–80.
Ellison, S. 2012. "It's in the Name: A Synthetic Inquiry of the Knowledge is Power Program [KIPP]." *Educational Studies* 48 (6): 550–575.
Fabricant, M., and M. Fine. 2012. *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education: What's at Stake?*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
Farr, S. 2010. *Teaching as Leadership: The Highly Effective Teacher's Guide to Closing the Achievement Gap*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Harvey, D. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Henry, K. L. Jr., and A. D. Dixson. 2016. "'Locking the Door before We Got the Keys': Racial Realities of the Charter School Authorization Process in Post-Katrina New Orleans." *Educational Policy* 30 (1): 218–240.
In Perspective. n.d. "Section 4: Teachers and Teaching." Accessed November 16, 2016. http://www.in-perspective.org/pages/teachers-and-teaching-at-charter-schools#sub1
Institute of Education Sciences. 2016. "Charter School Enrollment." Accessed March 4, 2016. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgb.asp
Jobs, B. 2015. "Productive Mistakes: Teacher Mentorship and Teach For America." In *Teach For America Counter-Narratives: Alumni Speak Up and Speak Out*, edited by T. J. Brewer and K. deMarrais, 33–46. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
Kretchmar, K. 2014. "The Revolution Will Be Privatized: Teach For America and Charter Schools." *The Urban Review* 46 (4): 632–653.
Kretchmar, K., B. Sondel, and J. J. Ferrare. 2014. "Mapping the Terrain: Teach For America, Charter School Reform, and Corporate Sponsorship." *Journal of Education Policy* 29 (6): 742–759.
Kumashiro, K. 2010. "Seeing the Bigger Picture: Troubling Movements to End Teacher Education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 61 (1–2): 56–65.
Lahann, R., and E. Reagan. 2011. "Teach For America and the Politics of Progressive Neoliberalism." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 38 (1): 7–27.
Lincoln, Y., and E. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Lipman, P. 2011. *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*. New York, NY: Routledge.
deMarrais, K., J. Wenner, and J. B. Lewis. 2013. "Bringing Teach For America into the Forefront of Teacher Education: Philanthropy Meets Spin." *Critical Education* 4 (11): 1–26.
Mathews, J. 2009. *Work Hard. Be Nice*. New York, NY: Workman Publishing.
Maxwell, J. A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
Mungal, A. S. 2016. "Teach For America, Relay Graduate School, and the Charter School Networks: The Making of a Parallel Education Structure." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 24 (17): 1–26.
NAPCS (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools) 2014. *Separating Fact & Fiction: What You Need to Know about Charter Schools*. Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.
Orfield, G., and E. Frankenberg. 2013. *Educational Delusions?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Price, A., and A. McConney. 2013. "Is 'Teach For All' Knocking on Your Door?" *Journal of Pedagogy* 4 (1): 98–110.
Ravitch, D. 2014. *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
Schneider, J. 2014. "Rhetoric and Practice in Pre-Service Teacher Education: The Case of Teach For America." *Journal of Education Policy* 29 (4): 425–442.
Scott, I. 2015. "Teach for America, Neoliberalism, and the Effect on Special Education." In *Teach For America Counter-Narratives: Alumni Speak Up and Speak Out*, edited by T. J. Brewer and K. deMarrais, 47–54. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
Scott, J., T. Trujilloand, and M. D. Rivera. 2016. "Reframing Teach For America: A Conceptual Framework for the Next Generation of Scholarship." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 24 (12): 1–29.
Sondel, B. 2015. "Raising Citizens or Raising Test Scores? Teach For America, 'No Excuses' Charters, and the Development of the Neoliberal Citizen." *Theory & Research in Social Education* 43 (3): 289–313.
Steudman, M. J. 2015. "Ignoring the Ghost of Horace Mann: A Reflective Critique of Teach For America's Solipsistic Pedagogy." In *Teach For America Counter-Narratives: Alumni Speak Up and Speak Out*, edited by T. J. Brewer and K. deMarrais, 47–54. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Stitzlein, S. M., and C. K. West. 2014. "New Forms of Teacher Education: Connections to Charter Schools and Their Approaches." *Democracy & Education* 22 (2): 1–10.
Strauss, V. 2013. "How Big Can Teach For America Get?" *The Washington Post*. Accessed November 16, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/09/10/how-big-can-teach-for-america-get/
Strauss, V. 2016a. "Chicago's Rahm Emanuel is on the Ropes – And Now He Does This?" *The Washington Post*. Accessed November 16, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/01/07/chicagos-rahm-emanuel-is-on-the-ropes-and-now-he-does-this/
Strauss, V. 2016b. "A Sobering Look at What Betsy DeVos Did to Education in Michigan – And What She Might Do as Secretary of Education." *The Washington Post*. Accessed December 12, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/08/a-sobering-look-at-what-betsy-devos-did-to-education-in-michigan-and-what-she-might-do-as-secretary-of-education/
Swalwell, K., and M. Apple. 2011. "Reviewing Policy: Starting the Wrong Conversations: The Public School Crisis and 'Waiting for Superman'." *Educational Policy* 25 (2): 368–382.
TFA (Teach For America) 2016a. "About Us." Accessed February 29, 2016. https://www.teachforamerica.org/about-us
TFA (Teach For America) 2016b. "Annual Report." Accessed February 29, 2016. https://www.teachforamerica.org/about-us/annual-report
TFA (Teach For America) 2016c. "On the Record." Accessed February 29, 2016. https://www.teachforamerica.org/tfa-on-the-record
TFA (Teach For America) 2016d. "Our History." Accessed February 29, 2016. https://www.teachforamerica.org/about-us/our-story/our-history
TFA (Teach For America) 2016e. "Our Mission." Accessed February 29, 2016. https://www.teachforamerica.org/about-us/our-mission
Thomas, M. A. M., and E. E. Lefebvre. Under review. "The Dangers of Relentless Pursuit: Teaching, Personal Health, and the Symbolic/Real Violence of Teach For America."
Toma, E., and R. Zimmer. 2012. "Two Decades of Charter Schools: Expectations, Reality, and the Future." *Economics of Education Review* 31: 209–212.
Torres, A. C. 2014. "'Are We Architects or Construction Workers?' Re-Examining Teacher Autonomy and Turnover in Charter Schools." *Education Policy Analysis* 22 (124): 1–22.
U.S. Department of Education. 2015. "'Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,' 1999–2000 through 2013–2014." National Center for Education Statistics. Accessed December 8, 2016. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_216.30.asp?current=yes
Veltri, B. T. 2010. *Learning on Other People's Kids: Becoming a Teach For America Teacher*. Charlotte, NC: IAP.
White, T. 2016. "Teach For America's Diversity Initiative: Race, Policy, and Black Teacher Displacement in Urban Public Schools." *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 24 (16): 1–42.
Zeichner, K. M. 2014. "The Struggle for the Soul of Teaching and Teacher Education in the USA." *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy* 40 (5): 551–568.
Zeichner, K. M., and H. Conklin. 2005. "Research on Teacher Education Programs." In *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education*, edited by M. Cochran-Smith and K. Zeichner, 645–736. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Zimmer, R., B. Gill, K. Booker, S. Lavertu, and J. Witte. 2010. "Examining Charter Student Achievement Effects across Seven States." *Economics of Education Review* 31: 213–224.
Zukiewicz, M., M. A. Clark, and L. Makowsky. 2015. *Implementation of the Teach For America Investing in Innovation Scale-Up*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.