GUEST EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

How Social Foundations of Education Matters to Teacher Preparation: A Policy Brief

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Does social foundations of education matter? What do prospective teachers gain, if anything, from taking a social foundations course? Does coursework in the social foundations of education (SFE hereafter), for example, contribute to the “outcomes” of teacher preparation? Does it impact prospective teachers’ future ability to increase student learning, to enhance their achievement on teacher tests of pedagogical knowledge, or to contribute to their demonstration of professional performance? Or are the results less quantifiable, in that SFE coursework may support prospective teachers’ sense of diversity or citizenship? Or do such questions themselves elide the notion of “teaching against the grain” (Cochran-Smith 1991)—that SFE is about helping students to understand, to analyze, and to critique traditional models and practices of our educational system.1

This special theme issue examines the role of SFE within teacher preparation through a policy lens. While SFE scholars have long sustained productive dialogues within their own disciplinary boundaries, discussions across such boundaries have been few and far between. Yet in today’s educational policy climate, where the very existence of traditional teacher education programs is up for debate, such silence is highly problematic. As such, if the SFE field is to be a participant in the ongoing policy discussions surrounding teacher preparation (Tozer and Miretzky 2005), it is imperative that clarity be brought to the questions of if, how, and why SFE matters to teacher preparation.

This special theme issue was crafted with three goals in mind. First, it is to provide a concise and workable articulation of how and why social foundations of education matters for teacher preparation within a policy framework. Second, it is to frame what matters (and what doesn’t) in policy discussions of teacher education and social foundations. As Cochran-Smith (2001, 2004) has cogently shown, different educational policy questions yield substantially different policy answers and thus different outcomes for teacher preparation. Finally, the third goal is to provide
This introductory essay situates these issues of SFE’s role within the larger context of the ongoing national policy debates surrounding teacher quality; it then puts forward three distinct rationales for how SFE matters within these debates; and it concludes by outlining the essays within this special issue to show how they inform, problematize, and extend our knowledge of how and why SFE matters to teacher preparation. Fundamentally, what I want to suggest is that irrespective of certification pathway—fast-track alternative licensure or traditional university-based teacher education—prospective teachers continue to be expected to have the “opportunity to learn” and the “opportunity to practice”—what they are not expected to have is the “opportunity to change.” The opportunity to learn is the ability to gain competence and “best practices” in both subject matter content and pedagogical knowledge. The opportunity to practice is the engagement in a real-world clinical practicum. These opportunities will of course differ dramatically depending on one’s political and educational orientation; some argue for gaining pedagogical knowledge through semester-long coursework while others deem passage of a standardized test sufficient.

But what is starkly missing in discussions about the preparation of future teachers is the “opportunity to change”: the opportunity for future teachers to be exposed to and to grapple with counterintuitive and counternormative ways of thinking about and engaging with our educational system. There are many ways to phrase such modes of teaching and learning. In SFE they are commonly articulated through a Freirian (1992) “critical consciousness,” Maxine Greene’s (1976) “learning to think otherwise,” or through the Council of Social Foundations in Education’s (CLSE 1996) framework of interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives on education.

The question for this theme issue is how do these skills, knowledge, and dispositions matter? How do they support prospective teachers? How do they clarify contemporary educational policy debates surrounding teacher quality? And how is the SFE field to translate this into workable policy agendas and protocols?

Social Foundations Within the Teacher Quality Debate

To engage such questions it is first necessary to explicate the larger national context. This ground has already been amply covered (Cochran-Smith 2004; Tozer and Miretzky 2005); I offer here only an overview. The meta-text is the “highly qualified teacher” stipulation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. NCLB requires that all public school teachers of core academic subjects meet their respective state’s highly qualified provisions by the end of the 2005–2006 school year. By federal standards “highly qualified” is defined as a teacher who holds a
bachelor’s degree, has full state certification, and has demonstrated subject matter mastery of each subject she is teaching (USDOE 2004a).

The subtext is the debate surrounding the relevance and viability of traditional teacher preparation programs as sole gatekeepers for state certification. While subject matter competence and a bachelor’s degree are non-negotiables from the perspective of the federal government, the mode of receiving state certification is. It is from this perspective that recent federal initiatives to support alternative certification pathways to bypass educational coursework can be understood (Hess 2001, 2004; USDOE 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). These initiatives have already borne fruit: it is estimated that nearly 10% of today’s teaching force has gained entry through alternative certification pathways. In some states (e.g., New Jersey, Texas) that percentage is as high as one in four (NCEI 2005).

On one side of this debate is the teacher professionalization movement, led by teacher preparation programs themselves and organizations such as the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); all argue that strengthening teacher preparation is key to enhancing teacher quality. On the other side is the “deregulation” movement, spearheaded by organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Thomas Fordham Foundation; the argument from this perspective is that teacher preparation programs are both ineffective and cumbersome, thereby providing ineffectual education to individuals within them and creating steep hurdles to otherwise qualified individuals attempting to enter the teaching field.

This debate is furthermore permeated with and oftentimes confounded by a host of contradictory research findings. Teacher quality has been shown to be the primary educational variable affecting student outcomes (Darling-Hammond 2002; Goldhaber and Brewer 1999; Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 1999). Yet not only do educational variables pale in comparison to individual and family background characteristics in ability to account for variance in student outcomes but also observable (and thus from a policy perspective, controllable) teacher characteristics (e.g., years of experience, certification, or having an advanced degree) account for less than 3% of this variance. Moreover, the only variables that seem to matter (statistically speaking) are a teacher’s subject matter competence and verbal ability (Goldhaber and Brewer 1999, 2000). Even taking into account the burgeoning “value-added” research that clearly demonstrates the potential impact of effective teachers, the policy implications for social foundations seem uncertain at best.

This ambiguity is mirrored in most educators’, policymakers’, and even teacher educators’ perspectives of SFE. For example, survey data reveals that only 32% of teachers feel very well prepared to address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2000, 35), and an overwhelming majority of teachers (almost 80%) believe it is “absolutely essential” that effective teachers have an ability to work well with students whose
backgrounds are very different from their own (Public Agenda 2000, 39). Yet the historical and philosophical foundations of education are viewed by both teachers and principals as one of the least significant coursework requirements vis-à-vis their present job tasks (Levine 2005; Public Agenda 2000). Most educational policy ignores or glosses over SFE within teacher preparation (Butin this issue), educational researchers commonly cite SFE as irrelevant and/or ideological (Shulman 1990; Sirotnik 1990; Steiner 2004), and the literature on teacher change suggests that teacher preparation more often than not reinforces rather than modifies teachers’ preexisting beliefs and dispositions toward teaching and learning (Hollingsworth 1989; Kagan 1992; Tato 1998). While this last bit of data is not about SFE per se, it makes clear that SFE scholars have the very difficult task of helping prospective teachers grapple with “contested knowledge,” such as individual and institutional racism, historical and contemporary structural inequities in our schools and society, and the hidden curriculum of schooling.

If Labaree (2004) is right that education schools are the Rodney Dangerfield of higher education—“I get no respect”—then I would suggest that the SFE field is the “Men Are From Mars” syndrome of education schools—“you just don’t understand.” SFE seems misunderstood, misinterpreted, and just plain ignored by educators, policymakers, and teacher educators themselves. The national context for SFE’s relevance to teacher preparation thus appears marginal at best. Yet it does not have to be, as the next section makes clear.

Three Reasons for How Social Foundations Matters to Teacher Preparation

As noted previously, no “scientifically-based research” definitively supports the argument that SFE matters to producing “highly qualified teachers.” Yet this is the wrong answer to the wrong question. Or, put more accurately, the educational policy questions being asked foreclose other legitimate answers of teacher quality. I would thus like to outline three reasons for how SFE matters. These are loosely developed from a synthesis of the essays in this special issue with a selective reading of how SFE scholars have traditionally articulated themselves to those within and outside of the SFE field (e.g., Beadie 1996; Bredo 1993, 2002; Brosio 1998; Butts 1973, 1993; Cohen 1976; Conrad, Nash, and Shiman 1973; Derr 1965; Johanningmeier 1991; Kneller 1983; Labaree 2004; Lather 2005; McAninch 1993; Nash and Agne 1982; Noblit, Hatt-Echeverria, and Hughes 2003; Pietig 1997, 1998; Raywid 1972; Schlechty and Morrison 1977; Sirotnik 1990; Soltis 1991; Talburt 2001; Tozer 1993; Tozer and Miretzky 2005; Urban 1969; Warren 1998).

I suggest that these three arguments for the relevance of SFE abide by the rhetorical terms of contemporary educational policy debates while they at the same time undercut them. They abide by the rhetorical terms insofar as they appropriate
the language already at play in the policy arena; they are thus easily deployed. Yet at the same time they undercut such debates in that they expose the assumptions and implications of the narrow and political nature of the present “teacher quality” debate; they make visible the constructed and thus contestable nature of our definitions, deliberations, and enactments.

I acknowledge that this is not easily achieved. Teacher education is a “downstream” endeavor, attempting to progressively improve prospective teachers’ specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the classroom. Alternatively, SFE is an “upstream” endeavor, attempting to iteratively ask whether we are even asking the correct questions, and then, if so, whether we are using the correct tools to answer them. Few educational policymakers want to hear the argument that they started with the wrong opening question and then used the wrong methods to get to the subsequently wrong answer.

It is for this reason that I have framed the following reasons as both inclusive to the present debates as well as wedges to foster more critical and nuanced discussions of how and why SFE matters to teacher preparation. My strategic guidance here is Foucault’s (1997) argument that resisting specific ideological games of truth does not entail creating fundamentally new games; rather, “one escaped from a domination of truth…by playing the same game differently, or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards…by showing its consequences, by pointing out that there are other reasonable options, by teaching people what they don’t know about their own situation…” (295–296). The following three answers can be read as trump cards necessary for SFE’s involvement in the contemporary educational policy game.

The Liberal Arts Answer

SFE scholars have long championed their expertise in examining contemporary educational issues within a larger frame of reference. This can be done, for example, by examining past educational practices or thinkers, providing cross-cultural counter-examples, or employing alternative lenses (e.g., feminist, environmentalist) to frame educational issues differently. These are not parlor tricks: “hey kids, watch me link contemporary debates about tracking with Plato’s notion of the good society and South Korean college entrance exams.” The goal, here using Dewey’s terminology on freedom, is to enlarge our range of actions and thoughts. It is to help our students think carefully and critically about socially consequential, culturally saturated, politically volatile, and existentially defining issues within the sphere of education.

David Horowitz’s (n.d.) “academic bill of rights” has made substantial inroads in higher education on the back of a catchy phrase: “How can students get a good education, if they are only being told one side of the story? The answer is they can’t” (Horowitz 2003, 1). I would suggest (only half jokingly) that SFE adopt
something similar: “How can students become good teachers, if they do not see how schools are linked to society? The answer is they can’t.” Horowitz’s movement is of course highly ideological and dovetails with a much larger conservative agenda concerning higher education. But SFE is highly ideological as well. We want prospective teachers to “think otherwise,” to “teach against the grain,” to “develop a critical consciousness,” to be “public intellectuals”; we want them to make linkages to historical conditions and to philosophical and moral questions; we want them to engage in self-examination and self-critique about who they are and want to be as teachers and learners and the role of schools in society; we want them to question and decide: are teachers leaders collaborators, technicians, or guides? Or some or all at different times?

The “Liberal Arts” answer is that teaching is a complex practice, part science and part art, that requires critical thinking, astute judgments, and deep caring. Preprofessional programs must be able to educate future teachers into these skills and knowledges. This is not, by the way, an abrogation of such duties to faculty in colleges of arts and sciences. This has been tried before and failed (Kneller 1983; Labaree 2004). Nor is this a devolution into a content-less focus on a romantic “process.” The “Liberal Arts” answer, much like the liberal arts themselves in higher education, is about fostering productive habits of mind—rigorous attention to detail, critical questioning of assumptions, respect for good data, and logical arguments—through engaging specific educational issues.

This argument clarifies exactly how lacking such discussions have been within contemporary educational policy debates. To suggest that teachers don’t need critical thinking skills about educational issues, such as vouchers or whole language reading instruction, or don’t need to grapple with the ethics of teaching, or don’t need to see how other cultures engage in educational practices is politically unpalatable. No one wants to go on record saying that teachers are just automatons carrying out federal government mandates. But once it is acknowledged that these skills do matter, it becomes much easier to ask where, how, and from whom will future teachers actually gain such knowledge and skills. While the answer does not necessarily have to include SFE coursework or SFE faculty, it certainly positions SFE as a potentially necessary part of the discussion.

The Cultural Competence Answer

Another answer for why SFE matters to teacher preparation, and the one most referred to by educational policy documents, is that future teachers must gain cultural competence. This answer references the “demographic imperative”: the ever growing diversity of the U.S. population; the racial and ethnic gap between youth and an overwhelmingly white teaching force; and the stark and persistent economic, social, and educational gaps between dominant and nondominant youth.
The causes and consequences of this demographic imperative for teacher education in specific and for teaching in general have been thoroughly traced (Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries 2004; Villegas & Lucas 2002). What I want to focus on here is the maxim of “you can’t teach what you don’t know” as it plays out across multiple racial and cultural differences. The operating policy assumption is that racial or ethnic congruence between a teacher and a student is a positive component in raising student achievement. (Thus, the promotion of alternative certification pathways, given their ability to recruit a more diverse applicant pool.) And if such an “intuitive” connection as skin color or ethnic heritage is not possible, educational policymakers suggest that teachers’ understanding of students’ cultural and racial backgrounds are helpful both for teachers’ perseverance in the classroom and students’ academic engagement (Butin this issue).

If we take this at face value (and bracket for a moment the highly problematic essentializing and racializing going on in such policy talk), then SFE surely matters to teacher preparation. The racial and ethnic mismatch between students and teachers is but just one of several stark differences. Others include educational aspirations and attainment, first language use, (im)migrant status, socioeconomic status, and (dis)ability. I will focus here only on educational aspirations and attainment, though a very similar argument could be applied to any of the categories just listed.

NCLB legislation requires all teachers to hold a baccalaureate degree. Data also shows that nearly half of the teaching force has a master’s degree or higher (NCES 2003, table 85). Yet less than 30% of the American population has a bachelor’s degree and the vast majority of today’s youth will never complete their undergraduate experience (NCES 2000). Even in the subset of youth most likely to finish college—those going directly from high school to postsecondary education—less than six in ten ultimately gain a diploma within six years (Education Trust 2004). The statistics for low income and nonwhite youth are substantially lower: just 18% of African-American youth gain a college degree by age twenty-six; for low-income youth, this falls to just 7% (NCES 2002).

This suggests there is a massive educational attainment gap between teachers and students. Future teachers cannot immediately or intuitively “connect” to 70% and perhaps as much as 90% of their students. This is troubling because a wide range of social science research has shown educational attainment to be one of the best predictors of, among other things, future earnings, overall health, civic engagement patterns (e.g., voting), and future children’s own educational attainment. Put otherwise, teachers’ lack of cultural congruence with students’ educational aspirations has immense and detrimental future policy implications.

SFE thus matters because it provides prospective teachers with the opportunity to understand such cultural mismatches and their attendant implications for students’ academic engagement, acceptance of the achievement ideology, social and cultural capital, and home–school relations. Moreover, individuals’ educational at-
tainment and aspirations are tightly intertwined with our society’s deeply embedded and oftentimes deficit presumptions of race, ethnicity, and class. The answer to who gets ahead in our society and who doesn’t is neither simple nor neutral. As such, gaining cultural competence in these interrelated issues requires deliberate and deliberative work. Prospective teachers will not just “get it.”

But more than just pragmatic relevance for helping prospective teachers gain cultural competence is at stake here. SFE’s ability to promote prospective teachers’ cultural competence also reveals the problematics of such discourse. Namely, by delving carefully into diverse “cultural mismatches” it becomes possible to question the static and stereotypical manner in which such categories are deployed. The notion of cultural competence itself becomes open to analysis as it becomes clear, for example, race is a sociohistoric construct, educational and economic success may be based as much on one’s social position as on one’s “merit,” and “disability” is about what characteristics each specific culture decides to make visible in its population.

This in no way suggests that SFE promotes a multicultural splintering—“for every child a unique culture.” Rather, SFE fosters recursive recognition that all of our terminology, and especially the cultural terminology we use for those different from ourselves, is always under revision. This does not mean we cannot say anything, which is the standard straw man of “political correctness” thrown around. It simply means that the terms we use are multifaceted with oftentimes highly divergent meanings and ramifications for different cultural groups. I cannot, for example, simply presume that black children learn one way and white children another; nor can I just claim that there is such a thing as an “at-risk” child before I also consider whether there is such a thing as a child “placed at risk.”

To mirror the previous answer, the cultural competence answer also allows SFE the opportunity to reveal the narrowness and rigidity of the present definitions being used. To suggest that teachers should stereotype children based on skin color or that teachers should have lower expectations of some children than others is again politically unpalatable. No one in the policy arena wants to argue that American society or schools are racist or classist. But once it is acknowledged that issues of race and class matter, then SFE again has a place at the policy table.

The Teacher Retention Answer

Much of the “crisis” rhetoric in educational policy draws from the argument that teacher shortages (be they immediate or immanent) necessitate drastic action steps in finding new and better methods for the recruitment of “highly qualified” teachers. Yet recent research by Richard Ingersoll and others (Ingersoll 2001, 2003; Ingersoll and Smith 2003; NCES 2001) has shown that teacher attrition, rather than teacher recruitment, is at the heart of contemporary teacher shortages. Over 200,000 teachers a year permanently leave the classroom. The attrition rate is
much higher in poor schools than in wealthier ones and among new teachers compared to veteran teachers. In fact, almost 50% of new teachers leave within their first five years; recent data has shown that in some urban schools the one-year attrition rate can be as high as 80% (ACORN 2005). It has been estimated that this translates into more than three billion dollars a year in added costs for K–12 schools (Alliance for Excellent Education 2005).

A host of reasons account for such turnover: retirement, job dissatisfaction, other career options, etc. Yet Ingersoll (2003) argued that fundamentally, “school staffing problems are rooted in the way schools are organized and the way the teaching occupation is treated” (18). Teachers leave because they must deal with substantial paperwork, large teaching workloads, and sole responsibility for student misbehavior and discipline for average remuneration and with minimal decision-making influence. Such a structural setup of immense responsibility with little authority is prime fodder for teacher burnout. What makes this situation that much more disheartening is that the vast majority of teachers enter the profession to make a difference (Public Agenda 1998). New teachers want to help youth succeed. This makes it doubly frustrating when they depart since the system has failed both these idealistic teachers and the children they leave behind.

High-quality induction and professional development have been proposed to stem this “leaky bucket” syndrome. The key attributes of such programs include, among other things, relevant mentorships, collaboration, strong principal leadership, and adequate time, resources, and incentives to participate (Alliance for Excellent Education 2005). Undergirding these programmatic features, though, is a basic point: new teachers are not prepared for the classroom dilemmas, administrative duties, and lack of professional support and feedback. This is especially true in challenging work environments associated with poorer-resourced schools and populated by nondominant youth.

Put otherwise, new teachers are not prepared for the bureaucratic and organizational features of an institution charged with the socialization and stratification of 90% of America’s youth. Such features include, among others, the isolation of teachers, the pervasiveness of a hidden curriculum of conformity, the loose coupling of decision making, the contradictory practices of conflicting goals, and the dominance of a calcified grammar of schooling (Giroux 1983; Huberman 1993; Labaree 1997; Parsons 1964; Tyack and Cuban 1995). Because new teachers do not “get it” they invariably blame themselves or their students when things go awry.

SFE thus matters because it deliberately and explicitly examines school as an institution. SFE is concerned about the historical development of this institution, its sociological structures, and its cross-cultural variations. It questions the gap between the rhetoric of its mission and the pragmatics of its practices; it analyzes how the operationalization of specific social and cultural presumptions (e.g., what constitutes intelligence, success, or good behavior) privileges certain
groups of youth over others; and it makes vivid how the school, to take Jules Henry’s (1963) slightly cynical characterization, “metamorphoses the child, giving it the kind of Self the school can manage, and then proceeds to minister to the Self it has made” (292).

This is not to suggest that understanding these features of schooling will allow new teachers to change them. The goal here has more to do with lessening “culture shock” rather than enabling culture change. Moreover, it is illegitimate to suggest that SFE cannot accomplish such a goal, because most prospective teachers are already are exposed to SFE with seemingly little to show for it. This neglects the aforementioned point that SFE is fundamentally marginalized and thus deemed almost a priori irrelevant. For when one examines teacher preparation programs that boast impressive teacher retention rates—Connecticut’s BEST program, Teach For America, UC Santa Cruz’s New Teacher Center—you will find explicit and detailed attention to the organizational and bureaucratic features of schooling. This is neither a wholesale defense of SFE nor an argument that these programs even cite SFE when providing such content information to prospective and new teachers. It is, however, a clear signal that SFE can and should be a part of this educational policy discussion.

To suggest otherwise is to end up defending politically undefendable propositions, such as working conditions don’t affect teacher work, or teachers don’t need decision-making authority in the classroom or in the school, or teachers shouldn’t be adequately compensated for the outcomes they produce. By explicating the institutional parameters and implications of schooling, SFE is able to again expand present policy discourses. It is able to show that teaching is not about isolated individuals attempting to help one child at a time. Schooling is a massive institutional undertaking that has distinctive structural and psychological similarities to other social institutions, such as hospitals and prisons. As such, it is able to both help prepare future teachers to assimilate into such institutions and clarify the limits of what is possible therein.

I do not claim that these three answers are unique or definitive. They have been articulated in a multitude of ways with myriad permutations. My goal here has simply been to develop a typology of these permutations that speak to and in the policy language games currently in play to foster SFE’s engagement with today’s pressing educational policy debates.

Special Issue Contributors

The essays in this special theme issue explicate, expand on, and question the three answers I have just articulated. In the first essay Eric Bredo provides an analysis of and response to the contemporary marginalization of SFE. Bredo argues that SFE’s marginalization is all too often framed as an either/or response to performance-based accountability: either we accept it or resist it. Bredo shows how
this setup is a lose–lose choice “between hopeful conformity versus hopeless rebellion” (xx). He goes on to reframe SFE as helping prospective teachers conceptualize reconceptualizations. SFE matters, Bredo argues, because it helps teachers, policymakers, and scholars realize that it is the framing of the wrong questions that leads to ineffectual solutions (what he refers to as “Type III errors” or “errors of conceptualization”). As such, performance-based accountability becomes viable when the outcomes more accurately mirror SFE’s capacity to foster interpretive, critical, and constructive patterns of thought and practice vis-à-vis reconceptualizing poorly working educational theories, policies, and practices.

Erskin Dottin, Alan Jones, Douglas Simpson, and Joseph Watras next provide a history of and argument for SFE’s engagement with NCATE. SFE’s quarter-century involvement with NCATE was discontinued in 2004 due to the lack of membership payment. Dottin et al. argue that the “lack of funds” argument (five dollars per member) was but a superficial reason to deeper philosophical concerns about the role, structure, and practices of NCATE within teacher accreditation. While acknowledging such concerns, Dottin et al. ask, “whether it is more effective to raise [such concerns] within or from outside of the national accreditation dialogue” (xx). They choose working with NCATE and offer policy suggestions for reengagement.

A different policy solution for strengthening SFE is offered by Ian Harris. Harris argues that SFE’s role as a “service” to other teacher preparation departments has diluted its power and scope and he thus offers as an alternative the structure and practices at his institution of University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (UWM). Harris argues that SFE can be and should be articulating and enacting an agenda of local community engagement, which in UWM’s case can be seen as a thriving community education program. Harris argues that this type of intellectual and practical engagement deeply aligns with Dewey’s and Freire’s visions of educational practice and also offers pragmatic benefits to both SFE and teacher preparation. The success of SFE at UWM, Harris suggests, offers a viable alternative configuration for SFE within teacher preparation.

In a related vein, Beverly Cross elucidates traditional teacher education’s “new racism.” Cross suggests that today’s “soft, safe code words”—multiculturalism, diversity, and urban education—may alleviate white guilt and meet program requirements, but do little to truly help prospective teachers grapple with the very real issues of white privilege, power, and racism. Cross argues that this “new racism” is embedded in the types of field placements and experiences prospective teachers have and the types of knowledge taught about the “racial other.” She concludes her essay by putting forth policy recommendations for teacher education committed to exposing and overturning such practices. Her essay suggests just how much SFE may have failed to matter in internal policy discussions within teacher preparation.

Art Garmon next provides a literature review and synthesis concerning which factors affect prospective teachers’ engagement with issues of diversity. Garmon
points out that six distinct factors matter: three are dispositional—openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and a commitment to social justice; and three are experiential—intercultural, educational, and support group experiences. One of his primary conclusions is that we must attend to our students’ dispositional factors instead of believing that the educational content and context is all that matters in helping students engage with SFE.

My own essay analyzes ten recent and major educational policy documents to ascertain to what extent, if any, these documents cite or support the inclusion of SFE within teacher preparation when discussing how to enhance “teacher quality.” I find an almost complete lack of attention to SFE—when attention is given at all, it is perfunctory and almost always attendant to multicultural code words of “diversity” and “culture.” Yet I also find that several arguments and conclusions within these reports could very easily and productively be appropriated by the SFE field. I thus conclude by drawing out the implications of marginalization as well as the potential opening for SFE within contemporary educational policy discourses and debates.

Jorgelina Abbate-Vaughn reviews Marilyn Cochran-Smith’s recent book, *Walking the Road*. I have found Cochran-Smith to be one of the sharpest and most incisive voices within the teacher education debates of the last ten to fifteen years. Cochran-Smith not only aptly clarifies, contextualizes, and critiques educational policy emanating from both the political left and right but also steadfastly demands (in her writing and in her practice) that teacher education be viewed as a learning and political process that in turn necessitates more than a technocratic and narrow focus on the “bottom line” of performance-based standards. Abbate-Vaughn’s review offers a cogent reading of this book by linking it to this special issue’s theme.

Finally, Eugene Provenzo provides a Time Exposure of the work of Teachers College teachers in the 1940s. Provenzo’s description and choice of photo highlights how SFE did matter, to the extent that it was a highly prominent aspect of what future teachers learned in their programs and enacted in their classrooms.

I should also note that two additional essays will appear in the next journal issue that help to contextualize and deepen the themes raised throughout this special theme issue. In the first, Mary Rose McCarthy traces the rise and fall of ED200F, the Teachers College course considered the “first” in the foundations of education. McCarthy clearly shows how ED200F went through substantial curricular changes (and ultimately disbanded) due to distinct and powerful sociohistorical pressures. Neither the faculty teaching ED200F, nor the institution housing it, were above the social, cultural, and political issues of the day. McCarthy shows how ED200F ultimately succumbed in the 1950s to internal and external questions about its rigor, its lack of seeming value to the technical training of teachers, and to the seeming “un-American” attitude of critique. This arc of marginalization provides a very important historical point of comparison, as SFE today faces many similar questions.

In the second, Jennifer Mueller offers a longitudinal case study of eight students within a teacher education program. She shows how and to what extent students’
perspectives shift over time concerning their notions of multicultural education and inequity in our society. She also very elegantly shows what role SFE played in such changes. In conclusions that echo those of Garmon and Cross, Mueller argues that while SFE fostered students’ grappling with difficult issues, it did not support some students enough to allow them to see beyond their entrenched notions of colorblindness and meritocracy.

I thus hope that the essays spread out over these two issues (and hopefully beyond) help readers to grapple with some of the fundamental issues concerning the role and viability of SFE within teacher preparation. My goal as the guest editor has been to foster dialogue, scholarship, and practice within the SFE field. I look forward to continuing to participate in this occurrence.

Notes

1. Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Eric Bredo, Mary Bushnell Greiner, Rebecca Martusewicz, Michele Moses, and Steve Tozer have all helped me at one stage or another in bringing this special issue to fruition. I truly appreciate and thank them for their support.

2. I am looking here only at the retention rate between TFA’s first- and second-year retention rates.

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