Teacher Induction for Diverse, Urban Contexts
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Student populations in many urban school districts in the U.S. are characterized by high levels of
diversity with regard to race/ethnicity, family income, family composition, language, religion, and other
factors (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004).
In such settings, beginning teachers must learn about and address students’ individual and cultural
differences as they work to establish and maintain productive learning environments, plan units and
lessons, translate subject matter knowledge into appropriate curriculum, and assess students’ work
These challenges are often further compounded in urban districts by the range of student needs, learning
styles, and behaviors that new teachers confront as well as such factors as poverty, unemployment, and
residential mobility (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007).

The working conditions in urban settings lead many beginning teachers to develop coping
strategies in order to merely survive in the classroom -- strategies which can negatively impact the quality
of their instructional practices, their commitment to teaching in urban contexts, and the learning of their
students (Youngs et al., under review). In addition, these conditions lead to high rates of attrition and
migration among early career teachers. Several studies have documented high levels of teacher turnover,
especially in urban districts (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff,
2002). For example, data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a nationally representative
survey of U.S. teachers, indicate that close to 30% of first-year teachers in high-poverty schools in 1999-
2000 either left teaching at the end of the year (16%) or migrated to other schools or districts (13%)
(Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Further, in research on teachers from New York State, Lankford, Loeb, and
Wyckoff (2002) found that urban districts, especially New York City, had lesser-qualified teachers than
other districts, and that teachers generally indicated a preference to work in or near their hometowns.
Given that most teachers in the U.S. are white and from suburban or rural areas, this suggests that many new teachers who start their careers in urban schools can be expected to migrate to other settings early in their careers.

The past two decades have witnessed a number of responses to the challenges facing beginning teachers in urban settings as well as the inequitable distribution of qualified teachers across districts. For example, many urban districts and universities have established programs to recruit teaching candidates from among para-professionals, community college students, and other individuals with similar racial/ethnic or linguistic backgrounds as the students they will be teaching (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Teach For America is a national program that recruits graduates from selective universities and places them in high-poverty schools in urban and rural areas (Decker, Meyer, & Glazerman, 2004; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008). And many urban districts have set up programs, such as New York City’s Teaching Fellows program, to recruit mid-career professionals into teaching (Grossman et al., 2008).

Along with efforts to recruit teachers to work in urban settings, many districts and states have focused on new teacher mentoring and induction over the past two decades as a strategy to increase teacher effectiveness and retention, especially in urban districts. Many novice teachers are formally assigned to trained mentors, have access in their schools to grade-level or subject-area colleagues, and participate in other induction activities such as orientations, workshops, and seminars (Education Week, 2008; Glazerman et al., 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The assumption is that proper support will increase the likelihood that beginning teachers will learn to teach effectively, promote student achievement, and remain in their districts of origin. But recent research (e.g., Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Glazerman et al., 2008) has raised a number of questions about the efficacy of mentoring and induction programs, particularly for new teachers in urban settings.

In this chapter, we first review recent large-scale survey research on the contributions of induction programs in diverse, urban contexts and then present the theoretical framework that we employed in this review chapter. The framework suggests that in research on induction in urban settings, scholars need to attend to a) the characteristics and roles of mentors (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004;
Desimone & Smith, 2008; Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004); b) the characteristics and roles of colleagues and administrators; c) school organizational conditions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001); and d) the degree of alignment or fit between novices and those who make up the social system of their schools (Little, 1990; Wang & Odell, 2007). Then we draw on the framework to review a wide range of recent research studies on mentoring and induction in diverse, urban contexts, most of which are smaller-scale, qualitative studies. Finally, we conclude by explicating the implications of this review for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.

I. Recent Large-Scale Research on Induction

This section describes three recent large-scale studies that have investigated the effects of mentoring and other induction activities on several outcomes for beginning teachers. In a study using the 1999-2000 SASS, Smith and Ingersoll examined the effects of mentoring and several aspects of school organization on the retention of a nationally representative sample of teachers. The researchers found that having a mentor in one’s field reduced the likelihood of leaving teaching at the end of the first year by 30% and that being able to collaborate with colleagues on instructional issues reduced the risk of leaving by 43% and lowered the risk of migration by 25%. In addition, frequent supportive communication with school administrators also reduced attrition and migration, although the results were not statistically significant (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

While this study indicated that within-field mentoring and collaboration with colleagues had key consequences for a nationally representative sample of beginning teachers, it also suggested that turnover among teachers in this sample did not vary by school location; i.e., whether the teacher’s school of origin was urban, suburban, or rural (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Recent work by Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) and Glazerman and colleagues (2008) has built on Smith and Ingersoll’s study by using large-scale survey data to analyze the induction experiences of new teachers in diverse, urban contexts. Kapadia and her colleagues collected survey data in 2004-05 from novice (i.e., first- and second-year) elementary and
high school teachers in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The researchers found that novice elementary teachers receiving “strong” mentoring “were much more likely (than other novices) to report a good experience, intend to continue teaching, and plan to remain in the same school” (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007, p.28). For novice high school teachers, the findings were similar, but not statistically significant. At the same time, it is important to point out that only 26% of novice elementary teachers and 21% of novice high school teachers in the study received strong mentoring.

A noteworthy aspect of the design of Kapadia, Coca, and Easton’s study is that they investigated other supports experienced by beginning teachers. They reported that three supports had the strongest influence on new elementary teachers. In their words, “(e)ncouragement and assistance from the principal, regularly scheduled opportunities to collaborate with peers in the same field, and participation in a network of new teachers” made elementary novices more likely to have a good teaching experience and to plan to remain in the same school (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007). In addition, principal support and collaboration had the greatest influence on elementary novices’ intention to remain in teaching. At the high school level, principal support and assistance from peers also proved consequential. Finally, the researchers combined teachers’ responses to attain a measure of the composite influence of mentoring and other supports on novice teachers. They found that new teachers receiving “strong” levels of support (i.e., they received all mentoring and other induction supports and found them very helpful) were at least twice as likely as other novices to report a good teaching experience. Further, at both levels, novices’ plans to remain in their schools and the profession were greatly shaped by the level of supports provided to them (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007). Again, though, only 13% of elementary teachers and 8% of high school teachers in the study received strong mentoring and strong levels of other supports.

In some ways, a recent study by Glazerman and colleagues (2008) challenges some of the findings of other research on mentoring and induction. In their study, the researchers employed random assignment to compare a group of beginning elementary school teachers who experienced “comprehensive” induction with an equivalent group exposed to their districts’ conventional induction activities. The teachers in the treatment group participated in comprehensive induction programs from
either Educational Testing Service (ETS) or the New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California-Santa Cruz. Seventeen districts in 13 states participated in the study, each of which had more than 50% of its students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In each district, elementary schools were assigned to either the control group or one of two treatments (selected by the district). “(T)he final sample sizes included 418 schools: 100 treatment schools and 103 control schools in the 9 ETS districts and 110 treatment and 105 control schools in the 8 NTC districts” (Glazerman et al., 2008, p.ix). In their analyses, Glazerman and colleagues considered the teachers who received comprehensive induction through the ETS and NTC programs to be part of one treatment group.vi

Based on the first year of data collection (2005-06) and analysis, Glazerman and colleagues reported “no statistically significant differences between treatment and control group teachers’ performance on any of the three domains of classroom practices” on which they focused: lesson implementation, lesson content, and classroom culture” (2008, p.xv).” With regard to the effects of comprehensive induction on teacher effectiveness, “the average impacts across all grades were not significantly different from zero for math or reading” (Glazerman et al., 2008, p.xvi). Finally, they reported that “comprehensive teacher induction had no statistically significant impact on teacher retention” (Glazerman et al., 2008, p.xvi). The researchers do note, though, that analyses based on the second year of their data collection (when complete) may indicate some statistically significant long-term effects of comprehensive induction programs.

While the findings reported by Glazerman et al. (2008) based on their first-year data seem to diverge from those reported in Smith and Ingersoll (2004) and Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007), it is important to note that this study included two outcomes not addressed by the other two studies: a) effects on classroom instruction and b) effects on student learning gains. In addition, Glazerman and colleagues conducted additional analyses in which they grouped the treatment and control teachers together and examined correlations between induction support and outcomes, regardless of treatment status. In these analyses, “eight of the relationships between the induction variables and retention measures were positive and statistically significant” (Glazerman et al., 2008, p.xxi). At the same time, because these analyses did
not control for pre-existing differences between teachers, the researchers caution that these results should not be used to draw causal inferences.

In sum, recent large-scale survey research on induction provides some insights into the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in diverse, urban contexts. Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) found that strong mentoring was related to important outcomes for novice elementary teachers in Chicago, and that administrative support, collaboration with colleagues, and participation in an external network had significant effects on both elementary and high school teachers. At the same time, analyses by Glazerman and colleagues (2008) based on their first year of data raise questions about the impact of comprehensive induction programs on first-year teachers in urban, high-poverty districts. In particular, they found few effects of comprehensive induction on key teacher and student outcomes. While findings from the latter study may seem dismaying to advocates of high-quality induction, taken together with the results of Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) as well as Smith and Ingersoll (2004), they also indicate a need for induction scholars to expand the foci of their research designs. In the next section, we present a theoretical framework that draws on findings from these and other induction studies to suggest ways to more comprehensively study the complex contexts in which new teachers in diverse, urban settings work.

II. Theoretical Framework

A number of research studies on beginning teachers’ induction experiences in diverse, urban contexts have investigated the characteristics and roles of mentors (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Desimone & Smith, 2008; Guyton & Hidalgo, 1995; Youngs, 2007a) and colleagues and administrators (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Youngs, 2007b). But fewer studies have theorized or empirically examined how school organizational conditions, such as school culture, collective responsibility, or relational trust, influence novices in urban settings (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). The theoretical framework employed in this review emphasizes the need for induction research in urban contexts to address the characteristics and roles of mentors, colleagues, and administrators, as well as...
school organizational conditions. Further, the framework also stresses the importance of considering the
degree of alignment or fit between new teachers and those who make up the social system of their
schools.

The characteristics of teachers who serve as formally assigned mentors can influence the nature
of their interactions with their mentees as well as the effectiveness of their assistance. Relevant
characteristics include years of teaching experience; content areas or grade levels taught; areas of
certification or licensure; knowledge of pedagogy and assessment; expertise, including successful
teaching experience in diverse, urban contexts; and whether they have taught the same content area or
grade level as their mentee (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003; Guyton & Hidalgo, 1995; Pogodzinski, under
review). In particular, scholars have argued that effective urban teachers are able to deal effectively with
disruptive student behavior, limited resources, and challenging bureaucratic environments (Haberman,
1994; Weiner, 2006; Zeichner, 1993). Researchers have also considered the relative impact on mentoring
in diverse, urban contexts of a) mentors being released full-time from teaching (versus part-time or no
release) and b) various new teacher/mentor ratios (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2008).

Similarly, for colleagues who work with beginning teachers, important traits include years of
teaching experience; content areas or grade levels taught; areas of certification or licensure; knowledge of
pedagogy and assessment; expertise in urban settings; and whether they have taught the same content area
or grade level as their mentee. Finally, studies of principals’ characteristics have focused on school
leaders’ knowledge of content, pedagogy, and assessment; professional training; and prior experience
(McGraner & Henrick, 2008; Youngs, 2007b).

Research on mentors’ roles in urban settings indicates the importance of several mentoring
activities including help with teaching and assessment strategies, classroom management, district policies
and procedures, observation and discussion of teaching, and communication with parents (Kapadia, Coca,
& Easton, 2007). Studies of beginning teachers’ colleagues have primarily addressed opportunities for
novices to collaborate with colleagues on instructional issues (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Smith &
Ingersoll, 2004) while research on principals has focused on support that school leaders provide in their
direct interactions with novices (e.g., observations and meetings) as well as their efforts to indirectly shape new teachers’ experiences (Youngs, 2007b).

While new teacher outcomes are influenced by their interactions with mentors, colleagues, and administrators, they can also be shaped by the organizational conditions in their schools, including school culture, collective responsibility, and relational trust. Research by Johnson and colleagues (Johnson & PNGT, 2004) has identified three types of professional school cultures: veteran-oriented, novice-oriented, and integrated. In contrast to schools with veteran- or novice-oriented cultures, schools with integrated professional cultures are described as being marked by high levels of collaboration between novice and experienced teachers. In such schools, mentors transmit cultural norms to novices and there are frequent opportunities for new teachers to talk with veterans about curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Kardos et al., 2001).

Collective responsibility refers to the degree of shared agreement among the faculty in a school to improve instruction, school organization, and other practices in order to promote high levels of learning and achievement among all students (Newmann & Associates, 1996). According to the framework, high levels of collective responsibility in a school can strengthen new teacher commitment by increasing novices’ sense of efficacy and making their work more manageable. Further, collective responsibility can promote instructional quality by strengthening the impact of mentoring and colleagues on beginning teachers’ instructional practices. Research indicates that high levels of collective responsibility can augment the impact of teacher effort on student learning. In a study of 23,000 6th- and 8th-graders and almost 5,000 teachers, Lee and Loeb (2000) reported that collective responsibility was positively related to student learning in mathematics. Similarly, Lee and Smith (1996) found that the mean achievement gains of students in secondary schools with high levels of collective responsibility were significantly greater than the gains of students in low-responsibility schools.

Like collectively responsibility, relational trust operates at multiple levels within schools. At the intrapersonal level, it is based in a complex cognitive activity in which actors discern others’ intentions. These discernments occur within a set of role relations that are influenced by the institutional structure of...
schooling and by the characteristics of an individual school community. In particular, these role relations include, but are not limited to, teacher-principal relations, teacher-teacher relations, teacher-student relations, and school staff-parent/guardian relations. Finally, these trust relations can have important consequences at the organizational (i.e., school) level (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In research on elementary schools in Chicago, Bryk and Schneider (2002) provided evidence that high levels of relational trust were related to higher levels of student achievement, and that in many schools relational trust served as a key resource for improvement in student performance over time. In schools with high levels of relational trust, the framework posits that beginning teachers will be more likely than novices in other schools to discuss instructional and student issues with colleagues, and to maintain high levels of commitment and efficacy in the face of challenging work conditions.

In sum, the framework suggests that research on induction should address the characteristics and roles of mentors, colleagues, and administrators, as well as the organizational conditions in new teachers’ schools. At the same time, though, the framework contends that it is not sufficient for researchers to only study these individuals and the conditions in their schools; induction studies in diverse, urban contexts also need to collect data on a) the characteristics of beginning teachers themselves and b) the extent to which their beliefs about effective urban teaching are aligned with the expectations of their mentors, colleagues, and administrators (Roehrig & Luft, 2006; Wang & Odell, 2007; Youngs et al., under review). The first of these aspirations is associated with psychic rewards related to teaching (Bandura, 1977; Hargreaves, 1993; Lortie, 1975) while the latter two involve the degree of social fit between oneself and b) one’s colleagues (Bidwell, 2000; Zhao & Frank, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). The ways in which beginning teachers in urban settings address differences between their beliefs and the expectations placed on them can affect key outcomes, including their instructional practices, their commitment to teaching, their retention decisions, and student learning.

While research on induction has made tremendous strides over the past ten years, few studies have examined the degree of alignment or fit between new teachers in urban contexts and the individuals who make up the social systems of their schools. In this review, we draw on the framework presented in
this section to explicate what is known about the characteristics and roles of mentors, colleagues, and administrators in effective urban induction programs. In particular, we focus in the next two sections (III and IV) on research published in peer-reviewed journals that met the following criteria:

1. Research included measures of beginning teachers and mentors(-ing), colleagues, and/or principals
2. Research conducted in United States

We also utilize the framework to highlight limitations in existing research, particularly with regard to how a) school organizational conditions and b) the degree of alignment between novices and others affect key outcomes for beginning teachers in diverse, urban contexts and their students. Thus sections IV and V draw on theoretical and empirical work between 2000 and 2009 to consider how school conditions and alignment or fit potentially affect new teachers’ experiences.

III. Characteristics and Roles of Mentors in Diverse, Urban Settings

Some theoretical and empirical scholarship on mentoring has suggested general characteristics and broad activities that are associated with successful new teacher outcomes in diverse, urban contexts. With regard to theoretical contributions, based on a synthesis of literature on effective urban teaching, Guyton and Hidalgo (1995) identified possible characteristics of effective urban mentors: able to operate effectively in challenging bureaucratic environments, focused on the learning of students as opposed to larger social change, strong sense of their own identity, include diverse cultural perspectives in their curriculum, and strong interpersonal skills. As discussed earlier, Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) provided evidence from Chicago that the combined provision of several types of mentoring support – help with teaching and assessment strategies, classroom management, district policies and procedures, observation and discussion of teaching, and communication with parents – were associated with positive outcomes for novices.
But more precisely, what types of assistance with instruction, assessment, and student learning are consequential for beginning teachers in urban settings? In this section, we address this question by reviewing small-scale, qualitative studies that have considered in detail a) novices’ induction experiences in diverse, urban contexts and b) the characteristics of effective mentors in such contexts and the activities in which they engage. With regard to the latter, we focus on mentoring practices that addressed or promoted the following among novice teachers: a) reflective, student-centered instruction, b) subject matter knowledge, c) the use of formative assessment, d) analyses of student learning, and/or e) culturally relevant teaching.

In one study, Luft and Roehrig (2005) explored the experiences and instructional practices of three White, first-year secondary science teachers who worked primarily with urban and rural Hispanic students. The researchers documented the novices’ beliefs, practices, and experiences over the course of a year through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, classroom documentation, and electronic communications. Luft and Roehrig concluded that the beginning teachers’ intentions did not always translate into reality and that they used familiar, less effective practices to make their environments less uncertain (2005). Further, the novices’ enthusiasm for working in diverse communities did not result in the enactment of reform-based practices. In general, the new teachers did not have a cultural point of reference with regard to the students with whom they were working; instead, they often moved through their science units with little attention to the cultural relevance of the curriculum or their instruction. The study suggests that novices working in communities different than their own backgrounds require careful consideration of their initial teaching assignments and strong pre-service and induction programs that promote beliefs and effective practices for working with diverse students (Luft & Roehrig, 2005).

In another study, Feiman-Nemser (2001b) investigated how one experienced teacher in New Mexico defined and enacted his role as a mentor for beginning teachers. Based on 10 hours of interviews and 20 hours of observation, the study illustrated how the mentor held multiple understandings about what it meant to be a support teacher; this involved supporting the unique qualities of each individual novice’s style and promoting a shared understanding of good teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2001b) found
that this mentor used several strategies to promote beginning teacher development in culturally diverse contexts; the strategies included finding openings that could lead to productive conversation, pinpointing specific problems, probing new teachers’ thinking, noticing signs of novices’ growth, focusing on students, reinforcing the use of theory, demonstrating teaching techniques, and modeling reflective teaching. This study also provides some evidence that mentors may need specific supports, such as staff seminars or workshops, to develop and maintain effective mentoring practices.

In a third study, Athanases and Achinstein (2003) investigated the patterns of and differences in frames (managerial, human resource, and political) used by mentors and novices to view linguistically and culturally diverse elementary students and challenges of practice. The researchers conducted a cross-case analysis of 15 elementary teacher-mentor pairs in diverse California districts through classroom observations, observations of mentoring conversations, and interviews with the novice teachers and their mentors. The study featured three case study vignettes that clearly highlighted the distinct frames and reframing exhibited across the 15 cases. Athanases and Achinstein (2003) concluded that mentors introduced novices to new ways of seeing challenges of practice and students through the use of multiple frames. In particular, the mentors frequently promoted reframing as a way to interpret experiences, address problems, and to expose the underlying values held by teachers.

The researchers also found that the mentors helped new teachers understand that reframing their problems by considering relationships with students and the school political context could help them adjust their approaches. Along those lines, they used student observations, student work analyses, and teacher-student transcripts to help new teachers focus on the needs of culturally diverse students. Mentors were frequently encouraged by early career teachers to focus on the managerial framework; however, by reframing novices’ views, mentors were able to help make hidden or ignored dynamics affecting student learning more apparent (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003).

In a fourth study, Achinstein and Barrett (2004) examined two beginning elementary teacher-mentor pairs from a two-year study of 20 such pairs in diverse California districts. The investigation of these two pairs illuminated the complex challenges that mentors face in focusing new teachers on student
learning, including low-performing students. The researchers concluded that the mentors in the study used two main strategies to focus beginning teachers on the learning of individual and underperforming students. First, the mentors activated knowledge of student and teacher learning and numerous domains of assessment, including knowledge of student assessment, content standards, curricular alignment, and formative assessment of new teachers. Second, the mentors helped beginning teachers enact and refine pedagogical strategies based on their accumulated knowledge of students’ learning styles and needs (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). When mentors addressed such knowledge and strategies in their interactions with novices, the novices, in turn, were more able to use scaffolding and grouping strategies to meet their students’ learning needs (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

The studies by Feiman-Nemser and Achinstein and colleagues provide some insight into effective mentoring practices in diverse, urban contexts. In particular, they suggest mentors can promote student-centered instruction and attention to the needs of diverse learners by probing novices’ thinking, focusing on students, reframing new teachers’ views, drawing on knowledge of assessment, and analyzing student learning. At the same time, it is less clear from these studies how particular mentoring practices may be associated with district policies or broader cultural practices. Next, we discuss studies that considered associations between mentoring and such factors.

In one study, Youngs (2007a) addressed this question by examining mentoring for first- and second-year teachers in two urban, high-poverty school districts in Connecticut. For this study, the researchers interviewed beginning teachers and mentors throughout the 2000-01 school year. In one of the districts, three of the four novices in the study had frequent opportunities to address instructional issues with their mentors. Mentoring assistance included helping novices understand the purposes of teaching reading, writing, and math at different grade levels; focusing on students’ knowledge and abilities in planning instruction and analyzing student work in these content areas; and helping novices examine the relationship between their lesson plans and instructional decisions during class and student engagement and behavior. In the other district, beginning teachers had much fewer opportunities to address instructional issues with their mentors. Differences in the novices’ experiences in these two
districts seemed related to variations between the districts in a) the degree to which they focused on teaching expertise in selecting mentors, b) the degree to which they assigned each new teacher to a mentor who taught in the same grade level and/or content area, and c) the understandings of induction held by mentors (Youngs, 2007a).

In another study, Strong and Baron (2004) analyzed the pedagogical suggestions made by 16 mentors in conversations with their mentees and how the beginning teachers responded. Each of the pairs typically participated in a conversation before and after a lesson that the mentor teacher observed. Based on the analysis, the researchers concluded that mentors took extreme efforts to avoid giving direct advice. Instead, the mentors provided indirect suggestions including suggestions that elaborated responses from the new teachers, thereby resembling an open-ended interview. These indirect suggestions included expressions of possibility including such words as: “perhaps,” “could,” “might,” “wonder,” or “maybe” (Strong & Baron, 2004). Related to teacher responses, the researchers found that the teachers accepted their mentor’s suggestions 80% of the time. The most frequent suggestion topics related to teaching (70%) and students (18%) of the time. Strong and Baron (2004) suggest that the conversational patterns might be explained by the induction program (in which all 16 mentor-mentees participated), which was based on a cognitive coaching model.

Other research has considered how U.S. mentoring practices may differ from practices in other countries. In one study, Wang, Strong, and Odell (2004) examined the content and forms of mentor-novice conversations among two U.S. and two Chinese elementary mentor-novice pairs. Compared to the Chinese pairs, the conversations among the U.S. mentor-novice pairs focused less on subject-matter content and more on individual students. In terms of conversation forms, the U.S. mentors tended to ask questions about what happened, and to describe what they saw, in novices’ lessons while the Chinese mentors tended to provide new teachers with specific critiques and suggestions regarding their lessons. Wang and his colleagues argue that these differences were likely related to the structure of curriculum and the organization of teaching and mentoring in each country. In the U.S. mentor-novice pairs in this study, inconsistent curricular materials and guidance and individualized teaching may have made it difficult for
the mentors to focus on subject matter and provide concrete feedback to their mentees. This not only contrasts with the Chinese mentor-novice pairs in the Wang et al. study, it also differs from mentors in structured U.S. induction programs who generally focus in their work with novices on curriculum, formative assessment, and student learning (for an overview of structured induction programs in the U.S., see Youngs, Pogodzinski, & Low, in press).

In sum, recent qualitative studies of mentoring in diverse, urban contexts indicate that mentors can promote several important outcomes among beginning teachers. More specifically, mentors can help novices reframe the challenges they face, modify their instructional and assessment practices, and analyze and promote student learning. At the same time, research by Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) and Glazerman and colleagues (2008) suggests some limitations to the impact of formal mentors. In the next section, we build on their findings to consider the results of several qualitative studies that have investigated the roles of colleagues, principals, and school organizational conditions in novices’ experiences in urban schools.

IV. How Colleagues, Administrators, and School Organizational Conditions Shape Induction in Diverse, Urban Settings

In urban contexts, along with formally assigned mentors, beginning teachers’ colleagues and administrators can play an important role in their induction experiences (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In addition, school organizational conditions – including school culture, collective responsibility, and relational trust – can also impact novices first years in diverse settings. This section explicates the research designs of and results from several studies that have considered how colleagues, principals, and school conditions can affect outcomes for novices.

In one study, Kardos and colleagues (2001) identified three types of professional cultures within schools with regard to new teacher induction: veteran-oriented cultures, novice-oriented cultures, and integrated professional cultures. This study was based on interview data gathered from 50 first-year and
second-year teachers in a wide range of Massachusetts public school settings, 60% of which were urban schools. In different types of professional cultures, novices experienced varying levels of support from colleagues and principals. In schools with veteran-oriented cultures, the school culture was defined by experienced teachers, and new teachers were given no special status, which seemed to result in little orientation, induction, or support. In schools labeled as having novice-oriented cultures, the majority of the teachers in the school were new to the profession. There were often higher levels of enthusiasm in these schools, but few formal induction supports were offered and there was a general lack of expertise (Kardos et al., 2001).

Unlike novices in schools with veteran- or novice-oriented cultures, Kardos and colleagues found that beginning teachers in integrated professional cultures received sustained support and had frequent exchanges with colleagues across experience levels. This study also illustrated the important role that principals can play in developing integrated professional cultures where the particular needs of novice teachers are recognized and addressed. As described by new teachers, the principals in schools with integrated professional cultures were actively present and responsive, focused on improving teaching and learning, and promoted collaboration and teamwork (Kardos, et al., 2001).

In related research, Johnson and Kardos (2004) focused in-depth on one of the 50 beginning teachers who was teaching in a small, urban secondary school. His school served primarily low-income students and was characterized by an integrated professional culture. From the novice’s perspective, the school emphasized high expectations for students, teacher collaboration, and continuing professional development for teachers, all geared towards promoting high student performance. At this school, novices received ongoing assistance as they learned to teach and “teachers interact(ed) regularly about teaching across experience levels, both formally and informally” (Johnson & Kardos, 2004, p.158). The researchers also found that teachers at this school assumed collective responsibility for students, other teachers, and the school as a whole (Johnson & Kardos, 2004).

Other research is addressing the role of principals and school conditions in the induction of particular groups of beginning teachers. For example, Desimone and Smith (2008) are currently
investigating how school leadership and collective responsibility shape new middle school math teachers’ content knowledge and instructional practices in urban districts in the northeastern and southern U.S. In particular, this study is examining how the content knowledge of mentors, principals, and other teachers seems related to the content and quality of novices’ math instructional practices and the math learning of their students. The researchers are also considering how all professional development experiences, not just formal induction experiences, shape new teachers’ instructional practices and student performance (Desimone & Smith, 2008).

In related research, McGraner and Henrick (2008) interviewed 18 middle school principals from southern urban districts that were part of this larger study. The purpose of their analysis was to elicit principals’ conceptualizations of teacher induction and mathematics teaching and learning and examine the nature of the interactions between school leaders and new teachers. In their study, McGraner and Henrick (2008) found that these principals varied widely in their level of mathematics content knowledge, and many were relatively weak in this regard. Those with weak knowledge backgrounds seemed to conceptualize induction in ways that ignored critical attributes of teaching and learning in math. Further, such principals did not situate induction in teachers’ developmental trajectories or provide robust institutional supports to advance professional growth.

Other research by Youngs (2007b) considered how elementary principals’ professional backgrounds and beliefs shaped their approaches to supporting beginning teachers in diverse, urban contexts. The study featured interviews with and observations of a) six elementary principals from three Connecticut districts, and b) first- and second-year teachers, mentors, and other teachers from the principals’ schools. The study found that three of the principals strongly promoted new teachers’ instructional growth in their direct interactions with them and by facilitating their work with mentors and grade-team members; in contrast, the other three school leaders had much less of a positive impact on new teachers. The article provides evidence that these differences in beginning teachers’ experiences seemed related to variations in the principals’ professional backgrounds; their beliefs and actions regarding leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation; and their responses to district and state policy. In
particular, principals with strong backgrounds in context knowledge, teacher assessment, and professional
development were more likely to promote new teacher learning in urban contexts than school leaders with
less knowledge of these areas (Youngs, 2007b).

Another key aspect of the social context for beginning teachers in diverse, urban schools is the
degree of relational trust among teachers at their schools and between teachers and their administrators.
In their study in urban elementary schools in Chicago, Bryk and Schneider (2002) conceptualized trust as
an emergent property of the everyday interactions between and among adults in the school setting.
Relational trust, at its most basic level, is grounded in the day-to-day discernments of the intentions of
other school adults from within the set of role-relations characterizing the social organization of schooling
(e.g., teacher-teacher, teacher-principal, etc.). But while trust originates from among these interactions,
these discernments also have important consequences at the organizational level (Bryk & Schneider,
2002). That is, when relational trust is high among the various role-sets, the school as an organizational
entity is likely to exhibit properties of its operation that are more conducive to such things as a)
supporting the practices and growth of new teachers and b) school improvement, including more effective
decision making and stronger social support for innovation and/or change.

Individual novice teachers discern the intentions of their colleagues simultaneously according to
four distinct criteria: respect, personal regard for others, integrity, and competence (Bryk & Schneider,
2002). Respect in a school setting is most directly related to how individuals interact with one another; for
example, teachers who are genuinely listening to one another reflect a mutual regard for each other’s
worth and dignity. Closely related but distinct from respect is personal regard, which is characterized by
individuals who extend themselves beyond what their role requires in order to mitigate inherent
vulnerability. Reducing a beginning teacher’s sense of vulnerability can have a significant effect on their
self-efficacy and commitment to their school. Integrity characterizes a person whose beliefs closely
match their actions, and competence is the ability to perform the duties associated with one’s formal role. For a new teacher, their efforts to put their own beliefs about instruction into practice can be strengthened
and reinforced when they discern high levels of integrity and competence among their mentor, colleagues, and principal (Ford & Youngs, under review).

In sum, recent research suggests the need for induction researchers to include measures of the beliefs, practices, and support provided by new teachers’ colleagues and principals, and the relations among them. Further, advances in scholarship indicate the need for future induction studies that take account of the school cultures and professional communities in which novices work. But this recent work neglects to consider the extent to which beginning teachers are aligned or fit in with their colleagues, principals, and/or broader school and district contexts. In the next section, we discuss recent research on induction that addresses these questions.

V. Degree of Fit Between New Teachers in Diverse, Urban Contexts and Their Mentors, Colleagues, and Administrators

The theoretical framework employed in this review posits that induction researchers should not only investigate mentors, colleagues, principals, and school organizational conditions; in order to understand how these factors affect outcomes for beginning teachers in diverse, urban contexts, it is also important to examine the degree of fit or alignment between novices and the individuals who make up the social system of their schools. In this section, we review two empirical studies and two theoretical pieces that have considered the extent to which new teachers are aligned or fit in with key members of their social contexts.

In one study, Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman (2004) showed how differences in two new teachers’ characteristics, their alignment with mentors and colleagues, and their opportunities for collaboration seemed to influence their initial labor market decisions as well as the teaching skills they acquired. One novice, Liz, grew up in the urban district where she taught, attended a nearby large public university, and began teaching while she completed her certification. District A, in which Liz worked, recruited teachers from the local community to reflect the population of the students, even though they
may have initially lacked full teaching credentials. In contrast, the other novice, Sam, was from an affluent community and received a teaching certificate from a research university. District B, in which Sam worked, recruited teachers from such universities who shared a teaching philosophy consistent with that of the district. Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman reported that “(t)he types of teachers employed by the two districts were the result of an interaction between the new teachers’ backgrounds, which affected their educational and employment choices, and the districts’ hiring practices” (2004, p. 576).

Liz and Sam were each assigned a mentor during their first two years of teaching. Liz focused more with her mentor on issues related to classroom management and parents than on instruction. While Liz’s beliefs about teaching were aligned with those of her mentor, her mentor did not help her improve her teaching. The expectations placed on Liz by her colleagues and district policy were to follow routines, curricula, and assessments designed by the state and district. According to Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman, “(t)he literacy coordinator agreed that novices could simply enact the curriculum without having to understand it” (2004, p. 578). Further, the induction program in Liz’s district revolved heavily around implementing the literacy curriculum.

In contrast, Sam met weekly with his mentor to co-plan lessons, develop writers’ workshops, and discuss theories related to literacy instruction. In addition, the district allowed Sam to observe teachers in other schools. In Sam’s case, his relationships with his mentor and colleagues allowed him to expand his instructional practice and develop professionally as a teacher. Further, he enjoyed numerous professional development activities that emphasized inquiry (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004). Sam benefited from grade-team collaboration, working with a district instructional coach, and participating in an action research group. The expectations in his district were for teachers to grow as professionals with support from colleagues and the district. In sum, in the cases of both Liz and Sam, there was a strong degree of fit between novice and their school and district contexts, but the consequences of having high levels of fit differed considerably for these two novices.

In a second study, Roehrig and Luft (2006) investigated the effects of a science-focused induction program on beginning secondary science teachers who had completed different teacher education
programs. The 16 study participants were all first-year secondary science teachers who had graduated the previous year from one of four different preparation programs. The researchers collected data on all of the participants during their first year of teaching – as they participated in the induction program – to examine their teaching beliefs, instructional practices, and experiences in the classroom. Roehrig and Luft found that the novice science teachers’ pre-service training influenced the types of assistance they sought and took away from the induction program. In addition, during the year of data collection, those participants who had graduated from a preparation program with two science methods courses and an extended student teaching experience expressed beliefs in the efficacy of student-centered instruction and enacted more reform-based practices than the other teachers (Roehrig & Luft, 2006).

Along with these two empirical studies, recent theoretical work has addressed the question of fit between new teachers and key members of their social contexts. In one article, Wang and Odell (2007) conceptualized 16 types of mentor-novice relationships based on the degree of fit between new teachers and their mentors with regard to beliefs about a) teaching and b) learning to teach. For example, they consider the consequences for productive mentoring if the mentor and mentee a) shared beliefs about reform-oriented teaching and a constructivist approach to learning to teach, b) shared beliefs about reform-oriented teaching, but did not share a constructivist approach to learning to teach, c) did not share beliefs about reform-oriented teaching, but shared a constructivist approach to learning to teach, and d) did not share beliefs about reform-oriented teaching and did not share a constructivist approach to learning to teach (Wang & Odell, 2007). The researchers include descriptions of four mentor-novice pairs to illustrate four of the 16 types of relationships addressed in their article. Further, this theoretical contribution highlights the potential benefits when mentors and novices develop shared visions about both teaching and learning to teach.

Finally, as part of a study of beginning teachers in diverse, urban districts in Michigan and Indiana, Youngs, Frank, and colleagues (under review) have theorized how the degree of fit between novices and their mentors and colleagues can influence the novices’ instructional practices, commitment, and retention. Drawing on economic theory, they use the notion of utility maximization (i.e., the effort to
maximize one’s overall effectiveness or satisfaction) to describe the process that motivates beginning mathematics teachers to enact high cognitive demand tasks versus emphasizing procedures and memorization. For a given teacher, their utility function can be thought of as a lens through which a) their beliefs regarding effective math teaching and b) their desire to fit in and meet others’ expectations converge upon a set of math instructional practices (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002; Frank, Muller, et al., 2008). Thus, the utility function provides a convenient theoretical framework to explain patterns in teachers’ math practices.

VI. Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the findings from this review suggest a number of implications for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. With regard to practitioners, the small-scale studies reviewed in Section III demonstrate several ways that mentors can promote new teacher development in diverse, urban settings. In particular, mentors can foster growth among novices by probing their thinking, helping them to focus on students, utilizing knowledge of assessment, reframing novices’ perspectives, and analyzing student work (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Athanases & Achinstein, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). Such mentoring practices can help novices to engage in student-centered, culturally relevant teaching; strengthen their knowledge of subject matter; employ formative assessment; and use student performance data to modify their instruction. Further, effective mentoring practices seem to be possibly related to mentors’ background knowledge, district selection and assignment policies, and the use of cognitive coaching models in induction (Strong & Baron, 2004; Youngs, 2007a).

But recent research by Glazerman et al. (2008) and Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) from urban school districts indicates a) some limitations of the influence of mentors on beginning teachers, even in comprehensive induction programs; and b) a need for policy makers and researchers to conceptualize induction in broader ways than mentoring. As noted, in a large-scale, experimentally-designed study, Glazerman and colleagues (2008) found little impact in urban districts on first-year teacher instruction, retention, or effectiveness of induction that featured intensive, structured support from mentors; formative teacher assessment; and frequent professional
development. As the same time, in research from Chicago, Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) found that assistance from principals and regular opportunities to collaborate with colleagues were associated with more positive teaching experiences and higher commitment levels for first- and second-year teachers at both the elementary (grades K-8) and high school levels.

In this chapter, we built on the findings from Glazerman et al. (2008) and Kapadia, Coca, and Easton (2007) to present a theoretical framework for research on new teacher induction in diverse, urban settings. Along with studying formally assigned mentors, the framework suggests the need for researchers to consider the roles played in induction by novices’ colleagues, administrators, and school organizational conditions. Research studies by Johnson and colleagues (Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001) and Desimone and Smith (2008) represent important efforts to conceptualize and measure school organizational conditions and how they affect beginning teachers. Further, initial attempts by McGraner and Henrick (2008) and Youngs (2007b) to investigate principals’ roles in induction will also contribute to the growing research base.

But the framework presented here argues that policy makers, district and school administrators, and researchers must also attend to the degree of alignment or fit between new teachers and the social contexts in which they work. Two studies reviewed here (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004; Roehrig & Luft, 2006) were among the first in K-12 education to use empirical data to investigate this question, but much more work needs to be done. Such research can usefully proceed by drawing on theory from education (Wang & Odell, 2007; Youngs et al., under review); economics (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002; Frank et al., 2008); and organizational theory (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). In our view, unless administrators and policy makers focus more directly on the issue of fit between beginning teachers and the social contexts of their schools, efforts to provide structured, formal support through mentoring and other forms of assistance are unlikely to have consistent, significant effects on novices, as evidenced by the results from Glazerman et al. (2008).
References


Pogodzinski, B. (under review). Towards a sociological framework for investigating school and district influences on beginning teachers.


i In Chicago, elementary schools serve grades K-8.

ii In 2004-05, 71% of first- and second-year elementary teachers in CPS and 73% of first- and second-year high school teachers in CPS completed surveys for this study.

iii According to Kapadia, Coca, and Easton, “(t)eachers receiving strong levels of mentoring received all of the mentoring activities and found them very helpful” (2007, p.28). These activities included help with teaching and assessment strategies, classroom management, CPS policies and procedures, observation and discussion of teaching, and communication with parents. Teachers receiving average levels of mentoring experienced most types of assistance and found them somewhat or very helpful and teachers receiving weak mentoring either received no mentoring assistance or they received some mentoring activities, but found them at best somewhat helpful.
With regard to high school novices, those who experienced principal support, participated in a network, and received suggestions from peers were most likely to report a good teaching experience. High school novices’ plans to continue teaching were most influenced by principal support and collaboration, and their plans to remain in the same school were most strongly shaped by principal support, network participation, and release time to observe other classrooms (Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007).

Comprehensive induction is defined in this study as including the following: “carefully selected and trained full-time mentors; a curriculum of intensive and structured support for beginning teachers that includes an orientation, professional development opportunities, and weekly meetings with mentors; a focus on instruction, with opportunities for novice teachers to observe experienced teachers; formative assessment tools that permit evaluation of practice on an ongoing basis and require observations and constructive feedback; and outreach to district and school-based administrators to educate them about program goals and to garner their systemic support for the program” (Glazerman et al., 2008).

The researchers also conducted separate analyses by induction program type (ETS or NTC) to ensure that their findings were not specific to one of the two induction providers.

The term “mentee” refers to the beginning teacher with whom a mentor is formally matched.

In one study, Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) addressed this question by examining district induction policies in two large urban school districts: Albuquerque and Los Angeles. The researchers found that a) district policy in Albuquerque related to mentor selection, assignment, work conditions, and professional development was consistent with the program’s conception of mentoring as the provision of instructional support, and that b) several mentors addressed instructional issues with novices and helped them learn to reflect on their practice. The researchers also reported that mentoring was conceptualized differently in an induction program in Los Angeles – as orientation to school context and assistance with classroom management – and that the structural components of the program reflected this conception (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992).
Examples of structured induction programs in the U.S. include the Pathwise/Danielson Framework for Teaching; the New Teacher Center’s Formative Assessment System; peer assistance and review programs; and Connecticut’s BEST (Beginning Educator Support and Training) program.

With regard to competence, however, it is also important to note that Bryk and Schneider acknowledge that competence is often difficult—if not impossible—to assess due to multiple aims, variation in practice, and lack of good data on which methods result in achievement. Despite these obstacles, however, school adults often make these judgments on a regular basis—particularly as it relates to incompetence.

Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman (2004) did not indicate the size of these districts nor the percentage of students they served who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.