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## Minding the Opportunity Gaps in Clinical Practice: A Configurative Systematic Review of the Journal of Education Supervision

Mark M. Diacopoulos

*Pittsburg State University*, [mdiacopoulos@pittstate.edu](mailto:mdiacopoulos@pittstate.edu)

Tamara M. Shattuck

*Western New England University*, [tamara.shattuck@wne.edu](mailto:tamara.shattuck@wne.edu)

Megan E. Lynch

*University of North Florida*, [m.lynch@unf.edu](mailto:m.lynch@unf.edu)

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# Minding the Opportunity Gaps in Clinical Practice: A Configurative Systematic Review of the *Journal of Educational Supervision*

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Mark M. Diacopoulos<sup>1</sup>, Tamara M. Shattuck<sup>2</sup>, and Megan E. Lynch<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

This configurative systematic review delves into the literature on teacher candidate supervision specifically addressing opportunity gaps within P–12 schooling processes, structures, systems, and practices. Eleven out of 75 articles from the *Journal of Educational Supervision* spanning from 2018–2023 centered on issues related to opportunity gaps and teacher candidate supervision. The review highlights these gaps often stem from dispositions and attitudes found within members of the supervision triad and influenced by implicit cultural biases that can hinder the learning experiences of marginalized students and impact teacher candidate development. How teacher candidates are prepared and encouraged to navigate systemic and curricular issues by mentors and supervisors is vitally important. The authors advocate for further research into how the perspectives of supervisors, supervisees, and mentors mitigate opportunity gaps. Additional research is necessary to provide practical strategies for teacher candidate supervision to narrow opportunity gaps.

## Keywords

opportunity gaps; clinical practice; systematic literature review; teacher candidates; mentor teachers; supervisors; supervision

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<sup>1</sup> Pittsburg State University

<sup>2</sup> Western New England University

<sup>3</sup> University of North Florida

## Corresponding Author:

Mark M. Diacopoulos (College of Education, Pittsburg State University, 112G Hughes Hall, 1701 South Broadway Street, Pittsburg, KS 66762, USA)  
email: [mdiacopoulos@pittstate.edu](mailto:mdiacopoulos@pittstate.edu)

## Introduction

The scholarship and practice of instructional supervision has, for much of its history, focused on the improvement of teachers' and teacher candidates' pedagogy with the belief that better practice will improve the academic success of P–12 students (see Cogan, 1972; Goldhammer, 1969; McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020; Pajak, 1998). A pervading emphasis in supervision has been on identifying observable, “objective” data from live observations of classroom teaching in order to drive pedagogical changes in teachers and teacher candidates related to classroom interactions, and to connect teaching practices to students' observable behaviors and quantifiable, “objective” performance measures like student achievement data (see Glanz & Zepeda, 2015).

From the 1980s and into today, the field of instructional supervision has undergone structural changes, becoming more inclusive of differentiated, developmentally appropriate models of supervision that seek teacher choice and voice in supervision (Glatthorn, 1984; Glickman et al., 2014; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). What constitutes instructional supervision has also evolved over time by scholars intersecting supervision with coaching and mentoring (e.g., Burke, 2017), developing expertise in either inservice teacher supervision (e.g., Enright & Wieczorek, 2022) or teacher candidate supervision (e.g., Burns & Badiali, 2016; Burns et al., 2020; Cuenca, 2010), and advocating for supervision as having a knowledge base and being a worthy field of study (Butler et al., 2023; Capello, 2022). Importantly, within the field of instructional supervision, there are strong calls for the field to take critical and equity-centered approaches to supervision (Jacobs & Casciola, 2016; Mette, 2019; Smyth, 1985). Mette (2019) argues that supervision scholars must “support more critical analysis of supervision, particularly the ongoing questioning of the impact race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and identities more broadly have on existing supervision frameworks” (p. 5).

As evident in Jacobs and Burns (2021, p. 229/314) definition of teacher candidate supervision, “the function, or act, of supporting teacher candidates' growth and development in becoming equity-minded and equity-driven while they are learning to teach in their clinical experiences,” equity sits at the forefront of teacher candidate supervision and highlights the responsibility for those involved in teacher candidate supervision to close systemic opportunity gaps experienced by P–12 students. Jacobs & Casciola (2016) argue that “while many issues connected to remedying social injustice may be present at the macro or societal levels, supervision provides an opportunity to work for social justice at the local, school level,” (p. 222). Similarly, Lynch (2021) argues for supervisors of teacher candidates to enact and model critical pedagogies (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 2014) explicitly in their supervision and support teacher candidates in developing critical pedagogies as well. In this way, teacher candidate supervision can engage teachers, teacher candidates, and students in *praxis* (Freire, 2005), the co-construction of knowledge and a critical consciousness through problem-posing education. Teacher candidate supervision as *praxis* allows for supervisors to work within school-university partnerships (Burns & Lynch, forthcoming) to abolish the “inadequate systems for providing high-quality teachers and teaching to all children in all communities” (Jacobs & Casciola, 2016, p. 30) and instead provide space for partners the opportunity to learn and enact high-quality teaching, be in community with one another, and imagine/dream futures of possibility.

To complement the scholarship that calls for addressing the inequitable schooling conditions of marginalized and minoritized P–12 students through the clinical preparation of teacher candidates, this paper investigates, through a systematic configurative literature review, the extent to which the empirical scholarship about teacher candidate supervision focuses on such work. The questions guiding our inquiry are: *To what extent does scholarship about teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings focus on practices aimed at closing opportunity gaps?* and, *How are opportunity gaps addressed in JES scholarship on teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings?*

## Conceptual Framework

The longstanding “gaps” in opportunities and outcomes for historically minoritized and marginalized P–12 students has shifted in discourse from a focus on achievement gaps and attainment gaps to educational debts and opportunity gaps (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2012). Ladson-Billings (2006) points out the generationally compounded “education debt,” that the educational system owes its poorly served students for not providing equal access and opportunity in schools. Irvine (2010) reminds us of the sociocultural, political lives of students and their families and communities inside/outside of the classroom and extends the metaphor of “gaps” to name obfuscated systemic gaps such as the teacher quality gap, school funding gap, wealth and income gap, quality childcare gap, all of which contribute to a purposely manufactured “achievement gap” between white and raciolinguistically minoritized and marginalized students.

As defined by Darling-Hammond (2010) opportunity gaps are the “accumulated differences in access to key educational resources – expert teachers, personalized attention, high quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources – that support learning at home and at school” (p. 28). This discourse marks a significant shift from viewing individuals’ outcomes as the problem (i.e., the perspective that minoritized students underperformed or did not achieve or attain enough) to holding the educational systems and those who uphold those systems responsible for creating inequitable conditions.

Milner (2012) builds upon the arguments made by Darling-Hammond (2010), Irvine (2010), and Ladson-Billings (2006) that opportunity gaps exist at all levels in education and are present in the lives of both educators and students in order to present an *opportunity gap explanatory framework* to “assist researchers and theorists in naming, capturing, and transforming their explanations of educational practices related to issues of opportunity” (p. 698). This framework allows those who inquire into educational disparities to shift the focus from outcomes to the *processes* that lead to inequity. As Milner (2012, p. 698) describes his framework as “a heuristic to explain and shed light on situations in educational practices,” available to educational researchers, we argue that all educators (and teacher candidate supervisors, for the purposes of this study) can be positioned as “researchers” who can inquire into their practice and the local practices within their school communities to interrogate the structural and individual processes that harm minoritized and marginalized P–12 students. Milner’s framework includes five interrelated tenets, each of which is briefly defined below and linked to teacher candidate supervision.

**Colorblindness**

When educators adopt a stance of colorblindness, curricular and instructional practices are shaped in ways that lead to an intentionally ignored and incomplete view of who students are as complex beings with intersectional identities linked to race/ethnicity. Those who can take this stance are in a privileged position reifying norms and behaviors of whiteness that are often rewarded in P–12 school systems (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Valli, 1995). Teacher candidate supervisors should have the ability to recognize when themselves and fellow educators are viewing schools and their students through a colorblind lens so they can support teacher candidates in seeing the ways in which students of color and all minoritized and marginalized students experience school inequitably as a systemic level – e.g., disproportionate school-based disciplinary action and lack of access to curriculum that is advanced, high-quality, and identity-affirming.

**Cultural Conflicts**

Culture in this sense refers to which norms, ways of being and knowing, and values hold power in the classroom. Cultural conflicts – or struggles for power and legitimacy – within and among educators and students can regularly occur in classrooms where expectations for ways of being in the classroom are not made explicit. Milner (2012) describes situations where “culturally consistent points of reference and convergence” (p. 701) are not regularly attended, and differences between home and school cultures are not honored. As a result, resistant and oppositional environments can emerge where educators who hold power impose their cultural norms and/or the surveillance, authoritarian school norms onto students (Ayers, 2016). When teacher candidate supervisors are in clinical settings, they must be able to recognize power differentials and respond by creating space for teacher candidates and students to resist practices that dismiss or marginalize their ways of being so that schools no longer (re)produce inequitable outcomes for P–12 students.

**Myth of Meritocracy**

The myth of meritocracy is entwined with beliefs about the capitalistic, bootstrapped “American Dream” – a belief that hard work will pay off and individuals can make it on their own; conversely, those who are not successful simply did not work hard enough. Success, already narrowly defined, is then tied to an individual’s perceived work ethic and an arbitrarily defined “growth mindset”. Educators shift the blame of failure to the student/individual (Gorski, 2019, López, 2017). Because meritocracy is tied to capitalistic beliefs and values, educators often have problematic views of class-based inequalities, assuming class distinctions and hierarchies are “natural” phenomena (Gorski, 2019). For teacher candidate supervisors, therefore, there is a responsibility to identify when educators are reinforcing the myth of meritocracy and ask critical questions to teacher candidates to disrupt this way of thinking. Picower (2013) highlights how clinical field experiences can be effectively designed with these goals in mind.

### **Low Expectations and Deficit Mindsets**

Low expectations refer to the practice of unintentionally or intentionally underestimating what students can achieve academically or socially based on factors such as race, socioeconomic status, disability, or language repertoire. A deficit mindset – in opposition to an asset-based perspective – focuses on students’ perceived deficiencies rather than their strengths and potentials. Deficit mindsets can lead to a lack of recognition and appreciation for the diverse talents, experiences, and knowledge that students bring to the classroom (López, 2017). Because low expectations and deficit mindsets contribute to educational inequities, perpetuating opportunity gaps, teacher candidate supervisors have the responsibility to address such mindsets in the teacher candidates they supervise and the school-based educators with whom they work.

### **Context-Neutral Mindsets and Practices**

Context-neutral mindsets and practices typically refer to approaches or strategies in education that are designed without considering the specific sociocultural, political, and historical factors of a given educational setting. In other words, they are one-size-fits-all approaches that do not consider the diversity of students, teachers, and local communities. These practices often assume that what works in one context will work equally well in all contexts. To address context-neutral mindsets and practices, through co-planning and reflective practices, teacher candidate supervisors can ask teacher candidates how lessons were developed, how students’ perspectives, identities, and lived experiences were considered in the planning and implementation of lessons. Classroom observation data captured by teacher candidate supervisors can be used to facilitate discussion on how students connected to the lesson.

## **Methods**

One way of providing a comprehensive understanding of a topic is to conduct a systematic review (Oakley, 2012). A systematic review is “a review of research literature using systematic and explicit, accountable methods” (Gough et al., 2012, p. 2). Reviews inform us about what is known, how it is known, what is unknown, and what varies across research. When data are aggregated and further analyzed to uncover a larger understanding and trends, this is referred to as a configurative systematic review (Sandelowski et al., 2011).

A systematic review involves undertaking a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature in a given topic over a predetermined amount of time. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are used to determine which articles cover the topic under review. Often, findings are reported in terms of numbers of articles which met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as specific findings. This gives the readers an overview of the frequency or importance of a topic under review. Once articles are included in the review, further qualitative analysis may be carried out to investigate trends, issues, or themes common to the articles included in the review. For this study, we report inclusion and exclusion criteria quantitatively. We also conducted a qualitative analysis of the included articles to reveal a deeper understanding of the topic.

Although systematic reviews are becoming more commonplace in education scholarship, configurative systematic reviews remain less so. Configurative reviews can be found in

scholarship on educational technology. For example, Crompton and Burke (2020) conducted a configurative review of mobile learning pedagogy, while Diacopoulos and Crompton (2020) performed a configurative review of mobile learning in social studies teaching. More recently, Estelles and Fischman (2021) examined global citizenship education in teacher education, identifying a naivete in the discourse about the topic. In these examples, the configurative nature of the review meant that authors were able to deeply investigate the trends in scholarship and offer a critique and recommendations for future research and practice.

### **Research Question**

The aim of our configurative systematic review is to gain insight into the teacher candidate supervision literature that directly discusses P–12 opportunity gaps in the processes, structures, systems, and practices of P–12 schooling. In doing so, we inquire into a central purpose of teacher candidate supervision – developing teacher candidates in clinical settings to make a positive impact on P–12 learners. Thus, our guiding question for this configurative systematic review is: *To what extent does scholarship about teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings in the Journal of Educational Supervision (JES) focus on practices aimed at closing opportunity gaps?* A supplemental question guided further review of the scholarship that focuses on opportunity gaps, *How are opportunity gaps addressed in JES scholarship on teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings?*

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

This nascent systematic review focused on articles published in the *Journal of Educational Supervision (JES)*, an open access, peer reviewed journal with articles about supervisory practices in education. The journal's first issue was published in 2018, which means that articles are current to theory and practice. A manual review of articles in the journal was conducted.

The entirety of published articles in the *Journal of Education Supervision* from Volume 1, Issue 1 (2018) to Volume 6, Issue 2 (2023) were included in the review. Each author was assigned a subset of articles to complete the first round of reviews, the number of articles that each author reviewed was equally distributed to ensure fair distribution of workload. Authors individually reviewed assigned articles, identifying relevant information. A structured spreadsheet was used to document the findings for each article, including the article title, author(s), type of opportunity gap, article type, supervision form (preservice, inservice, or not specified) and relevant keywords or concepts. Descriptive information such as the main focus of the article and key findings were noted to help the configurative process in the analysis phase. After completing the initial reviews, all three authors met to discuss their findings and ensure consistency in their assessments. Before proceeding to the analysis phase, the authors reconciled any discrepancies in their assessments. This involved revisiting articles where there was disagreement and discussing the reasons for differing interpretations until consensus was reached. Any discrepancies or uncertainties regarding inclusion or exclusion were addressed and resolved through member checking during these team meetings. The collective review of all 75 articles during the member checking phase ensured consistency and reliability of initial findings.

Each of the 75 articles was assessed for inclusion or exclusion. See Table 1 for these criteria. As the journal addresses supervision as a whole, the first stage was to ascertain if the supervision occurred in a clinical setting, involving the development of teacher candidates, as opposed to a setting involving the supervision of already qualified educators. 26 of the 75 articles met these criteria. Next, articles were included in the review if they mentioned opportunity gaps specifically, or they addressed P–12 equity broadly. The topic of equity was identified in each article by searching for keywords related to opportunity gaps, such as: “equity,” “asset,” “whiteness,” “diversity,” “neoliberal,” “equality,” “justice,” “inclusion,” and “access,” ensuring that the selected articles either explicitly mentioned opportunity gaps or addressed equity within P–12 education.

**Table 1.** *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Exclusion</i>
Time	Volume 1, Issue 1 (2018) to Volume 6, Issue 2 (2023)	Articles published after Volume 6, Issue 2
Type of Article	All manuscript types (theoretical, editorial, empirical, literature reviews, etc.)	None excluded
Topic Focus: Supervision	Involves the preparation of teacher candidates through clinical practice	Involves in-service teacher supervision; school administrator-supported supervision; supervision broadly
Topic Focus: Opportunity Gaps	Explicit reference to P–12 student population Key words: opportunity gaps, equity, asset, whiteness, diversity, neoliberal, equality, justice, inclusion, access	Does not mention P–12 students

### **Configurative Data Analysis**

Articles which met the focus of the systematic review were then subjected to a round of inductive analysis and open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to ensure they addressed *both* teacher candidate supervision and P–12 opportunity gaps thoroughly. In this cycle of coding, several articles that had relevant content to either teacher candidate supervision *or* P–12 opportunity gaps were excluded. Excluded were a number of articles had critical interrogations into the labor and power structures that govern the roles and responsibilities of school and university based supervisors of teacher candidates (see Buchanan, 2020; Butler, et al. 2023, 2020; Capello, 2020; McCormack et al., 2019). Additionally, three articles between 2021 and 2023 analyzed one of the most widely used supervision textbooks (see Cormier & Pandey, 2021; Cotman et al., 2023; Guerra et al., 2022) and found a lack of attention to developing culturally responsive teaching practices in teachers and teacher candidates through the role of instructional supervision. Further, Cotman et al. (2023) emphasize that even when the leading textbook addresses culturally responsive instructional supervision it does so by reifying race and class-



based hegemonic structures and whiteness as normative, othering intersectional identities and experiences, and not providing sufficient practical applications. While these articles are certainly advancing the field of supervision in critical and race conscious ways, they did not *exclusively* focus on teacher candidate supervision in the clinical setting and thus were not included in the configurative review. In summary, from the beginning 75 articles, 26 were found to connect to supervision occurring in a clinical setting, involving the development of teacher candidates. Of those 26 articles, 11 articles mentioned concepts related to opportunity gaps (opportunity gaps, equity, asset, whiteness, diversity, neoliberal, equality, justice, inclusion, access). See Figure 1.

Following this, a third stage of analysis was conducted. In this stage, the remaining 11 articles were read in their entirety through Milner's (2012) opportunity gap explanatory framework (color blindness, cultural conflicts, myth of meritocracy, low expectations and deficit mindsets, and context-neutral mindsets and practices) to group the articles thematically. Further, by analyzing the articles in this way, we could begin to draw explicit connections between the processes that lead to opportunity gaps and the ways in which teacher candidate supervision can disrupt and change such processes to close the opportunity gaps that marginalized P-12 students experience, including the teacher "training" gap and teacher quality gap (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Irvine, 2010).

## **Findings**

We report our findings in two ways. Firstly, we provide a quantitative overview of the systematic review. 42% of articles reviewed discuss issues related to P-12 opportunity gaps. We then report the findings of our configurative analysis in relation to Milner's tenets. For this review, we note that articles discussed color blindness, cultural conflicts, the myth of meritocracy, low expectations and deficit mindsets, as well as context-neutral mindsets and practices.

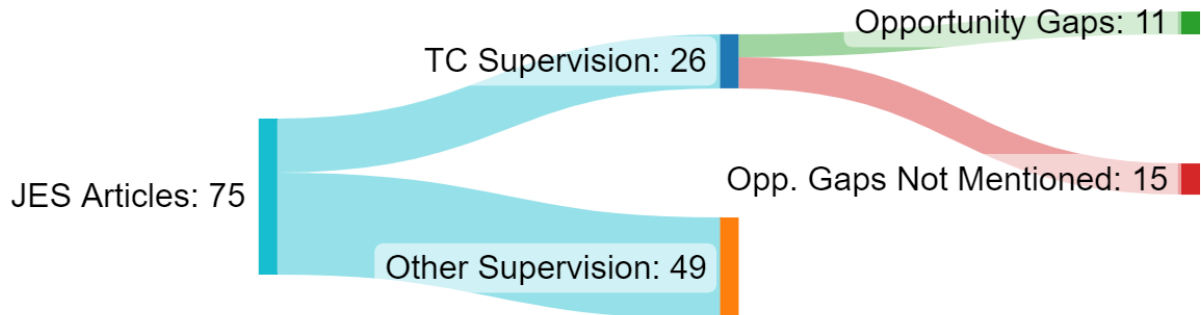
### **The *Journal of Educational Supervision's* Focus on Teacher Candidate Supervision Closing P-12 Opportunity Gaps**

In response to our guiding inquiry, *To what extent does scholarship about teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings focus on practices aimed at closing opportunity gaps?*, we found that of the 75 total articles across the 16 issues of *JES* that were reviewed, 26 of those involved clinical practice in a teacher preparation setting. Only 35% of the articles from 2018-2023 (volumes 1-6) focus on teacher candidate supervision specifically. The majority of articles either addressed the supervision and/or evaluation of in-service teachers or were conceptual articles that did not specify a target population or supervision subfield. Of the 26 articles that involved teacher candidate supervision, 11 articles (approx. 42%) discussed issues directly related to P-12 opportunity gaps (see Figure 1).

While research on teacher candidate supervision only represented 35% of the journal's publications, it is promising that nearly half (42%) of the articles published in this subset of teacher candidate supervision are aimed at closing the sociocultural, political, historical inequities which systematically created and sustained institutional barriers and widened opportunity gaps for P-12 students from historically minoritized groups. Moreover, several

articles excluded from the study that address supervision broadly (e.g., Buchanan, 2020; Lance, 2021) complement the teacher candidate supervision research included in this literature review.

**Figure 1.** Systematic review of articles in the *Journal of Educational Supervision*, 2018–2023.



### Configurative Analysis: Opportunity Gap Explanatory Framework

To answer our content-based supplemental question, *How are opportunity gaps addressed in scholarship on teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings*, we wanted to know whether the article was conceptual or empirical in nature, which of Milner’s tenets were addressed, and whether the TC supervisor or teacher candidate was the focus of professional learning related to opportunity gaps in the article. See Table 2 for a summary.

Of the 11 articles, eight are empirical studies and three are conceptual cases that serve as tools for supervisor learning. The conceptual cases include activities, discussion questions, and real-world scenarios for readers to engage with to advance their own or other TC supervisors’ professional learning. Of the eight empirical studies, five studies focused on teacher candidates’ professional learning, and three studies highlighted outcomes of TC supervisors’ professional learning.

In addition to article type and subject of focus, we examined the 11 articles to identify connections to one or more of Milner’s five tenets: color blindness, cultural conflicts, myth of meritocracy, low expectations and deficit mindsets, and context-neutral mindsets and practices. As such we chose to organize them under those categories (see Table 2). Deficit mindsets were addressed/countered in five of the articles. Cultural conflicts and context neutral mindsets were addressed in three articles each. Colorblindness and the myth of meritocracy were addressed in two articles each. We also noted that two of the articles addressed the inequities of P–12 student outcomes, but did not have explicit connections to one of the ways in which Milner (2012) argues can contribute to the opportunity gaps that marginalized and minoritized P–12 students experience routinely. One article, Oamek (2023) explicitly addressed all five tenets. In the sections that follow we detail how the 11 reviewed articles demonstrate how teacher candidate supervision is attempting to close the opportunity gaps P–12 students face through changing the processes, practices, and structures embedded within initial teacher preparation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We recognize the lack of a common nomenclature in scholarship on clinical practice and supervision (e.g., pre-service teacher vs teacher candidate vs intern), despite calls for one (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018). In providing details from specific articles, we use the authors’ original language.

**Table 2.** *Articles Included in Configurative Review.*

<i>Author(s) and Year</i>	<i>Milner's Tenets Addressed</i>	<i>Article Type: Empirical or Conceptual</i>	<i>Professional Learning: Supervisor or Teacher Candidate</i>
Alexander (2019)	implicitly represented	empirical	supervisor professional learning
Baker, Mowrey, & Cunningham (2022)	cultural conflicts	conceptual case	tool for supervisor professional learning
Gerardo & Saclarides (2022)	cultural conflicts	conceptual case	tool for supervisor professional learning
Graham, Bloom, Quebec Fuentes, & Jimerson (2022)	context neutral	conceptual case	tool for supervisor professional learning
Guise, Hegg, Ronan, Flushman, & Grant (2020)	deficit mindsets	empirical	supervisor professional learning
Lynch (2021)	meritocracy, context neutral	empirical	teacher candidate learning
Oamek (2023)	all 5	empirical	teacher candidate learning
Price-Dennis & Colmenares (2021)	implicitly represented	empirical	teacher candidate learning
Shaver & Elfreich (2021)	deficit mindsets	empirical	teacher candidate learning
Willey & Magee (2019)	colorblindness, deficit mindsets	empirical	teacher candidate learning
Yeigh (2020)	deficit mindsets	empirical	supervisor professional learning

### ***Colorblindness***

Oamek (2023) focuses on the critical examination of race-related issues in field supervision contexts, particularly concerning white preservice teachers. Oamek employs the concept of “defunding race” to scrutinize and challenge dominant narratives and perspectives held by white preservice teachers. A qualitative study was completed and Oamek analyzed preservice teacher responses to questions regarding their perceptions of underachieving students. Study analysis revealed that white preservice teachers perpetuated majoritarian storytelling, relying on all of

Milner's five tenets, including but not limited to, the myth of meritocracy and colorblindness, to explain why students were underachieving in school. The study aims to deconstruct these majoritarian narratives and proposes responses that can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. The article explores strategies for dismantling racial biases and fostering greater awareness and responsiveness within teacher education field experiences. Oamek (2023) calls on field supervisors to assist preservice teachers in recognizing the role of race in educational settings while responding to preservice teachers' majoritarian narratives, thus, working to defund race in educational settings.

Willey and Magee (2019) examine the concept of whiteness as a barrier to becoming a culturally relevant teacher, with a focus on clinical experiences and the role of supervision in teacher education. The central premise of their article is that the dominant cultural norms associated with whiteness can hinder teacher candidates from effectively engaging with diverse student populations and adopting culturally relevant teaching practices. Whiteness here refers to the cultural norms, values, and perspectives that are often associated with white, Eurocentric culture and can be a source of bias in educational contexts. The article suggests that clinical experiences are critical opportunities for teacher candidates to develop cultural competence and relevance in their teaching. However, these experiences can also highlight how "whiteness" can serve as a barrier when candidates are not adequately prepared to navigate diverse classrooms. The role of supervision in this context is pivotal. Supervisors play a significant role in helping teacher candidates critically examine their own biases, reflect on their teaching practices, and develop strategies to become more culturally relevant educators.

### ***Cultural Conflicts***

Two articles that highlighted cultural conflicts between P-12 students and educators (teacher candidates, mentor teachers, supervisors, and administrators) were conceptual cases prepared for a special issue of case studies. Baker et al. (2022) and Gerardo and Saclarides (2022) both present cases on tensions arising in the supervisor triad (teacher candidate, mentor teacher, and supervisor) on equitable and socially just practices being modeled and/or implemented in P-12 classrooms. In their cases, they ask fundamental questions for supervisors learning to navigate complex situations in clinical practice with real implications for P-12 students and closing opportunity gaps rather than sustaining or widening such gaps.

Baker et al.'s (2022) case highlights how a single kindergarten boy, the only boy of color in the classroom, was targeted by the mentor teacher repeatedly for speaking out of turn and exhibiting what the mentor considered disruptive behaviors. The supervisor recognized the harmful practices taking place and while she was able to talk to the teacher candidate, she was unable to have a conversation with the mentor teacher. The supervisor emailed the principal out of concern, prompting questions from the case about the role of supervisor in recognizing and redressing practices that reinforce dominant cultures' ways of being and knowing.

Similarly, Gerardo & Saclarides (2022) provide a case for readers to more deeply consider the "tensions that arise in the pre-service teacher (PST)-mentor teacher-supervisor triad when there are competing views about responsive instruction for Latinx students" (p. 11). In the case narrative, the supervisor recognized moments of cultural conflict – how power was held by the

teacher candidate in determining who was called on, whose Spanish was valued, what content was learned, and where students were positioned in the classroom. This positioning led to an uncomfortable debrief with the teacher candidate and mentor teacher in which the supervisor was unable to ask the important questions of equity in the classroom. The case ends with discussion questions and activities that get at supervisor professional learning in navigating these conversations.

### ***Myth of Meritocracy***

In Lynch's (2021) article, she highlights a post-observation dialogue between a teacher candidate supervisor and a teacher candidate as they unpack a school-wide practice (the monthly attendance awards and celebration) that materializes what has often been ideologically obfuscated. Engaging in the supervisory post-observation dialogue required the TC supervisor to pay specific attention to the hegemonic belief of meritocracy, and thusly, "elicited an evolving stance of socially just teaching that recognizes acts of injustice embedded in the underlying policies of schooling, links current school practices to the neoliberal political economy, examines who has power and privilege in what spaces, and imagines alternatives" (p. 96). This study demonstrated an early step in a teacher candidate's ability to recognize meritocracy as a myth and harmful to marginalized and underrepresented students through an intentionally scaffolded conversation with a TC supervisor.

### ***Low Expectations and Deficit Mindsets***

Seven of the 11 include reference to how teacher candidates' and/or mentor teachers' low expectations and deficit mindsets contribute to educational inequities and perpetuate opportunity gaps with significant implications for student success and equity in education. We detail four of those articles in this section.

Guise et al. (2020) focus on supporting professional learning for teachers of emergent bilinguals (EB) through written supervisor feedback. The article centers on how feedback from supervisors is instrumental in promoting the growth and success of teacher candidates who work with EB students. Guise et al. further delve into the importance of supervisors providing constructive written feedback. They address the issue of low expectations indirectly—as students from linguistically diverse backgrounds may be more likely to be subjected to low expectations due to perceived language "barriers" or cultural differences. While the article's primary focus is on supporting EB professional learning, it challenges deficit mindsets by encouraging a strengths-based approach. Through targeted supervisor feedback, teacher candidates may recognize and nurture the talents and potential of EB students, which counters deficit-oriented perspectives. Guise et al. emphasize the importance of providing tailored support to supervisors and constructive feedback to educators working with diverse student populations, ultimately contributing to more equitable and inclusive educational practices.

Shaver and Elfreich (2021) present a "negative" composite case that unpacks the professional dispositions graduate-level teacher candidates in an alternative, transition to teaching program bring to their clinical field experiences. Shaver and Elfreich (2021) recognized deficit perspectives; implicit biases; victimization; and resistance to cultural competency, critical

conversation, and critical self-reflection in the predominantly white, female “adult learners” in their program. They share examples of how the teacher candidate regularly exhibited these dispositions, to the harm of the students in her class. To address these professional dispositions, Shaver and Elfreich suggest that TC supervisors weave critical dialogue and self-reflection into their teaching, confront whiteness no matter how uncomfortable, model and co-teach culturally responsive pedagogies with resistant teacher candidates, and model their own professional dispositions of asset-oriented pedagogies and anti-racist teaching.

By highlighting how whiteness can hinder teacher candidates’ ability to engage effectively with diverse student populations, Willey and Magee (2019) address the issue of low expectations. Their article suggests that teacher candidates may struggle to connect with students when they are not adequately prepared to navigate cultural diversity. The authors discuss how “whiteness” can lead to a deficit-oriented perspective in teacher candidates. Willey and Magee address low expectations and deficit perspectives by discussing how cultural biases and a lack of cultural competence can lead to negative perspectives and practices in education. The role of TC supervision is highlighted as crucial in addressing these issues and promoting more inclusive and equitable teaching practices.

Yeigh (2020) focuses on the concept of “disrupting the deficit gaze” in the context of equity work with teacher candidates, university supervisors, and mentor teachers. The central idea of the article is to help teacher candidates challenge and change the deficit-oriented perspectives that may exist among their mentor teachers with the help and support of university supervisors. The article defines and addresses the “deficit gaze” as a perspective in which educators tend to focus on the perceived deficiencies or limitations of students, particularly those related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other marginalized characteristics. The “deficit gaze” aligns closely with the concept of deficit mindsets. When mentor teachers focus on deficits and limitations, they may implicitly or explicitly expect less from students, underestimating their potential for success. This conceptual article addresses disrupting the “deficit gaze” through professional development and equity work with university supervisors. Yeigh posits that with additional support from university supervisors, teacher candidates can better navigate professional spaces in clinical field experiences. With additional support from supervisors, teacher candidates may feel more empowered to challenge low expectations and deficit-oriented perspectives perpetuated by mentor teachers, creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for students.

### ***Context-Neutral Mindsets and Practices***

Graham et al. (2022), for example, explore the complexities and challenges associated with implementing socioscientific issues (SSI)-based instruction in science education. This approach involves using real-world, sometimes contentious scientific problems to engage students in critical thinking and decision-making. Graham et al. highlight the messiness and complexity of integrating socioscientific issues into science education, emphasizing the importance of context, diverse perspectives, and ethical considerations. These aspects are at odds with a context-neutral mindset, which disregards specific cultural, social, and contextual factors. Therefore, the article indirectly underscores the need for context-aware and culturally sensitive approaches in science education, rather than context-neutral ones, to effectively address the challenges posed by

socioscientific issues. The article also argues the importance of culturally responsive school leaders and supervisors to support the use of socioscientific content in classroom settings.

### ***Tenets Represented Indirectly***

Alexander (2019) focuses on the theory-to-practice divide, highlighting essential components when connecting theoretical knowledge to practical application in teacher educator preparation programs. The article highlights three core elements: pedagogy, practice, and mentorship, as critical for effective teacher preparation and supervision. Alexander explores the connection between courses that graduate student supervisors are taking and the problems they encounter while supervising teacher candidates. Alexander posits that TC supervisors often utilize resources from course work to navigate experiences in clinical settings. Thus, developing coursework that allows supervisors to develop learning philosophies around supervising clinical experiences could help them navigate future problems when working with preservice teachers. The article emphasizes that graduate course work should be structured to help support graduate students' supervision of teacher candidates. Indirectly, if graduate coursework also focused on practical application of Milner's five tenets, supervisors' learning philosophies may be developed to include ideas around more inclusive and equitable teaching practices while supporting preservice teachers.

Like several other articles, Price-Dennis and Colmenares (2021) point out that while the teacher preparation program their teacher candidates are part of have goals and frameworks for developing stances and abilities in curricular inquiry, reflective practice, and social justice, not all teacher candidates ultimately develop these stances. To look inward, Price-Dennis and Colmenares identify and analyze five of their supervision practices (intellectual learning communities, video debriefs/observations, lesson studies, guided observations with triad debriefs, and formal observations with supervisor debriefs) to understand how such practices allow teacher candidates to make meaning of and understand the goals of the program (curricular inquiry, reflective practice, and socially just pedagogies). Through a case study analysis, they found that while their teacher candidates demonstrated learning in curricular inquiry and reflective practice, they struggled with demonstrating deeper conceptions and practices of inclusion and social justice. Price-Dennis and Colmenares (2021) made changes to their program, introduced supervisor professional learning on anti-racism and bias, and created space to share feedback on what is working. They recommend that "a critical approach to teacher education grounded in sustained conversations on equity, diversity, and successful teaching and learning in a range of environments is necessary to align theory and practice for justice-oriented curriculum development and pedagogy" (p. 19).

## **Discussion**

Our inquiry asked *To what extent does scholarship about teacher candidate supervision in clinical settings focus on practices aimed at closing opportunity gaps?* In our examination of the *Journal of Education Supervision*, we found that 11 of 75 articles, or 15% of the *JES* corpus, centered directly on teacher candidate supervision discussed issues related to P–12 opportunity gaps. Although one article mentioned opportunity gaps by name, the articles in the journal indicate an emerging series of issues which comprise opportunity gaps in clinical supervision.

The most discussed issue is that of low expectations and deficit mindsets. The studies focused on addressing deficit mindsets predominantly showed how teacher candidates often come to clinical experiences with deficit mindsets and that mentor teachers can hold these mindsets as well. We posit that attention to low expectations and deficit mindsets may be the most commonly addressed factor in creating and sustaining opportunity gaps due to the role teacher candidate supervisors have in developing dispositions in teacher candidates based on requirements from accreditation bodies, state policies, and teacher preparation programs (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013).

Indeed, the dynamic of the supervision triad looks to be instrumental when addressing issues causing an opportunity gap. Teacher candidates who are encouraged to teach to a limiting curriculum, or made to feel that their instruction is controversial, are less likely to create instruction in a way that benefits a diverse classroom. As a result, context-neutrality causes an opportunity gap for learners that the teacher candidate is not equipped to address. This problem is exacerbated by colorblind attitudes in teachers, mentors, and supervisors whose approach restricts learning opportunities for students of color. Similarly, there is a lack of representation in supervision (Mette, 2019), leading to cultural conflicts. The role of the supervision triad is important here in that the mentor teacher and supervisor should be aware of and help teacher candidates navigate cultural diversity within their classrooms.

From the reviewed articles in *JES*, we can infer that the majority of opportunity gaps as reported are rooted in the dispositions and attitudes of at least one member of the supervision triad. Implicit cultural biases can disrupt the learning of marginalized students and negatively influence the development of the teacher candidate. Although systemic and curricular issues are prevalent throughout, how teacher candidates are trained and encouraged to navigate them by mentors and supervisors is vitally important. Therefore, we argue that further research into how the lens of supervisors, supervisees, and mentors influence opportunity gaps would be beneficial, especially as further research should examine issues such as representation, color blindness and context neutrality. We encourage scholars of supervision to add to the knowledge base with more case studies, narrative inquiries, and examples of how the supervision triad navigates such issues.

Our next steps are to expand this systematic review out to other journals which include clinical practice in their scope. We hope that a similar search will add to our examples of how members within the supervision triad can individually and collectively work to close P–12 student opportunity gaps intentionally. From this we hope that future research can further inquire about how teacher education addresses attitudinal and disposition opportunity gaps, while clinical practice encourages teacher candidates to experiment with instruction designed to meet the needs of all learners.

Although we are beginning to see examples of opportunity gaps, we are yet to see what can be done to address these gaps. For example, how should supervisors empower and encourage teacher candidates to teach without context neutrality? How can mentor teachers ensure that teacher candidates are dispositionally aligned to bridge opportunity gaps? And how can teacher educators ensure that opportunity gaps in clinical supervision are minimized throughout the process? These are inquiry questions we encourage other scholars in teacher candidate supervision to investigate.



## **Conclusion**

The *Journal of Education Supervision* aims to be at the “nexus of theory and practice in educational supervision.” It positions the role of supervision as a vital element of clinical practice and the preparation of teachers. If one of the purposes for quality P–12 teacher preparation is positive student outcomes, then narrowing opportunity gaps should be a focus of the supervision process. Societally, there are many opportunity gaps, for example, “the teacher quality gap; the teacher training gap; the challenging curriculum gap; the school funding gap; the digital divide gap; the wealth and income gap; the employment opportunity gap; the affordable housing gap; the health care gap; the nutrition gap; the school integration gap; and the quality childcare gap. (Irvine, 2010, p. xii)” (Milner, 2012, p. 697). Scholarship in this journal begins to identify how teacher candidate supervision is aiming to close those gaps. However, more research is needed to add to the literature regarding closing opportunity gaps in teacher candidate supervision, with practical examples of how the gap(s) should be narrowed.

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## Author Biographies

**Mark M. Diacopoulos** is an Assistant Professor & Director of Assessment in the Department of Teaching and Leadership at Pittsburg State University, KS. Mark researches and writes about the pedagogy of teacher education, focusing on supervision, technology and online learning, social

studies education, teacher candidate dispositions, as well as the ever-evolving identities of teachers and educators.

**Tamara M. Shattuck**, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Education and Co-Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Western New England University. Her research interests include professional development and access of resources for preservice and novice teachers in cultural institutions (science museums, natural history museums, children's museums, historic sites, art museums, libraries, zoos, and aquariums). She also researches professional learning communities that preservice and novice teachers are introduced to through community partnership programs.

**Megan E. Lynch**, PhD, is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and Co-Principal Investigator on Project PREP, a Teacher Quality Partnership grant at the University of North Florida, where she studies liberatory teacher education and (critical) practitioner inquiry. Megan's research draws on sociocultural and critical theories to better understand and shape the development of socially just pedagogies and political activism alongside teacher candidates, teachers, teacher educators, and P-12 students within school-university partnerships.