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# Teacher Education Quarterly

## To Our Panel of Readers

Dear *Teacher Education Quarterly* Readers,

Scholarly inquiry relies on thoughtful researchers conducting sound empirical investigation. Journals such as *Teacher Education Quarterly* offer a public space where the strongest of these works can be shared. In my role as editor, I am honored with the task of managing the process. But this entire enterprise comes to an abrupt and irreversible halt without volunteer reviewers who dedicate their time to review manuscripts. To my mind, volunteer reviewers are the lifeblood of scholarly journals, and *TEQ* is no different.

So I want to thank you, our reviewers, for your time and expertise by listing your names on our website (see [http://teqjournal.org/TEQreviewer\\_list.html](http://teqjournal.org/TEQreviewer_list.html)). This recognition, I admit, is entirely inadequate, but I want each and every one of you to know how much Associate Editor Reyes Quezada and the *TEQ* Editorial Board appreciate your work. Of course, authors submitting papers often disagree with your assessment, especially when your recommendation is that the paper is not worthy of publication, but this is how double-blind reviewing works, and it's the only way to ensure that only the best manuscripts are published.

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Kind regards, Kip

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**“It’s Dangerous to Be  
a Scholar-Activist These Days”:  
Becoming a Teacher Educator  
amidst the Hydra of Teacher Education**

**Alyssa Hadley Dunn**

When I first met Jamie, she was a student in a curriculum and instruction doctoral program with a focus on mathematics education. Jamie was also wrestling with how to infuse her interests in social justice, feminist theory, and Latin@ education into a traditionally male-dominated, White, and quantitative field like mathematics. “Some days I know what I want to do,” she told me during an interview, “and other days, I have no idea what the hell I’m doing or want to do . . . or how to do it, actually.” One of Jamie’s struggles was that, as a doctoral student at a public institution, she saw firsthand how federal and state policies for teacher preparation impacted her professors and their programs. “What I don’t understand is how you do everything,” she continued, “how you manage to be a scholar-activist and how you also write reports and crunch numbers and make sure they don’t take your funding away. And, at the same time as all this, do research that you feel like matters to you and to the world. That’s what I need help figuring out.”

Novice teacher educators like Jamie are coming of age professionally in a complex time, a time of “lethal threats” (Weiner, 2007, p. 274) and “assaults” on teacher

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### ***“It’s Dangerous to Be a Scholar-Activist These Days”***

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preparation (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1947). In the era of standardization and accountability, colleges of education are no longer immune to the influence of policies and practices that have been affecting PK–12 instruction and assessment for decades (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Groenke & Hatch, 2009; Kumashiro, 2010; Sleeter, 2008; Weiner, 2007; Zeichner, 2010). In fact, “movements to end teacher education by framing it as irrelevant have deep historical roots and, in recent years, have become quite commonsensical, so much so that even teacher educators struggle to reframe the debate” (Kumashiro, 2010, p. 56). These threats or movements, in practice, look like the establishment of strict accountability roles, new value-added measures that tie funding for teacher education programs to the eventual test scores of graduates’ PK–12 students, and public critiques to teacher education from well-funded and well-connected organizations like the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). Other threats come in the form of growing alternative certification programs, like Teach For America, or even the closing of reputable traditional teacher preparation programs (Dunn & Faison, 2015). Zeichner (2014) sees such reforms as evidence of a “deregulation and privatisation agenda” (p. 551).

Amid this climate, what does it mean to prepare the next generation of teacher educators when so many professors are feeling the same stifling pressures as PK–12 teachers? Does the climate affect their morale or commitments? What of the teacher educators who consider themselves social justice advocates? Does such a climate hinder or enhance their commitment to educational equity and justice? These are the questions that led me to study current graduate students and recent graduates (whom I term *teacher educators for social justice*) of two education doctoral programs, both with a stated commitment to equity.

In this qualitative case study of novice teacher educators in the southeastern United States, I investigated the following research questions: (a) What are the experiences of new teacher educators for social justice, as they relate to their doctoral preparation? and (b) What is the relationship between new teacher educator development and the current landscape of teacher education? In what follows, I contextualize this inquiry within the literature on the preparation of teacher educators and a theoretical framework of teacher educator development.

## **Literature Review**

Research has continuously shown how important it is for new teachers to be able to work with diverse student populations (Banks, 2015; Nieto, 1992), finding that their preparation should include a focus on social justice pedagogies and dispositions (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers who possess such knowledge are better able to incorporate pedagogical strategies for students from many different backgrounds and improve the academic achievement of all students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ware, 2006). Teaching for social justice at the PK–12 level is not easy, however,

and is rife with challenges (Bell, 2002; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kumashiro, 2015). One might imagine that preparing people to teach others how to engage in this complicated endeavor is even more difficult. Yet we know little about who takes on that complicated endeavor or how they are prepared to do so. That is, who is teaching our teachers, and how are *they* taught?

In 2014, the *Journal of Teacher Education* published a special issue on the preparation and professional development of teacher educators, a relatively unexplored field of research. Though we know much about preparing teachers for PK–12 classrooms, we know comparatively little about how teacher educators are prepared. As Goodwin et al. (2014) have argued, there is “hardly a murmur” about this population, and “the absence of a codified knowledge base for teacher educator preparation is glaring” (p. 284). Hollins, Luna, and Lopez (2014) agreed: “How teacher educators learn to facilitate teacher learning or learning teaching is not well understood and there are few studies that address this issue” (p. 99). The existing research, as it stands, argues that (a) the state of teacher educator preparation is lagging; (b) successful PK–12 teaching is not sufficient for successful practice as a teacher educator; and (c) additional research is needed about what it takes to best prepare and support successful teacher educators. Thus the literature reveals more about what is missing than about what is present in this body of knowledge.

First, current research argues that current teacher educator preparation is minimal to nonexistent. That is, “many universities today treat teacher education as a self-evident activity” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 118), and “teacher educators are generally left to learn what they can from observation, self-reflection, and self-study” (Hollins et al., 2014, p. 100). While there is little existing research about what a pedagogy of teacher education looks like in practice, in theory, it “involves a knowledge of teaching about teaching and a knowledge of learning about teaching and how the two influence one another” (Loughran, 2005, p. 1180). Goodwin et al. (2014) contended that teacher educator preparation needs to include knowledge for practice, in practice, and of practice, yet there is much debate as to what exactly constitutes “good” practice (for discussions of these complexities, see, e.g., Kennedy, 2010; Labaree, 2000). Because of these difficulties, some argue that teacher educator preparation needs its own specialized base of knowledge (Knight et al., 2014; Superfine & Li, 2014). Others have identified certain dispositions, forms of knowledge, and skills that teacher educators need to undertake “the great responsibility of preparing teachers for today’s diverse classroom” (Prater & Devereaux, 2009, p. 25).

In the largest and most comprehensive study of teacher educators and their preparation to date, Goodwin et al. (2014) analyzed 293 surveys and 20 follow-up interviews with new teacher educators about their experiences in doctoral programs and if and how they felt prepared for the field. Data revealed “(a) happenstance in becoming engaged in teacher education, (b) luck related to doctoral experiences, and (c) lack of explicit development of teaching skills or pedagogies related to teacher educating” (p. 291). These findings illustrate the complex nature of teacher

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preparation amid research-focused doctoral programs, the individualized nature of one’s experiences becoming a teacher educator, and the lack of structured opportunities for learning about the field and practices of teacher education. This study complements the work of Goodwin et al. by offering (a) an analysis of doctoral students’ experiences, as well as first-year professors’; (b) an explicit focus on teacher education for social justice; and (c) a more explicit discussion of the policy contexts and current landscape of teacher education.

Second, existing research has pointed to the challenges of preparing teacher educators when successful teachers are assumed to be successful teacher educators. Though the field recognizes that being a good student does not necessarily make one a good teacher, the message has not yet translated to the preparation of teacher educators. Instead, “a common taken-for-granted assumption [is] that a good teacher will also make a good teacher educator” (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005, p. 110). However, Hollins et al. (2014), building on the work of Zeichner (2005) and Loughran (2006), found that teaching experience in and of itself is necessary, but not sufficient, for producing quality teacher educators. In particular, Hollins et al. (2014) argued that “those hired as teacher educators may not have a natural propensity for independently pursuing the knowledge and understanding necessary for developing competence in facilitating teacher learning and learning teaching” (p. 122).

The assumption that good educators make good teacher educators is a dangerous one to make, because teacher educator preparation comes with its own benefits and challenges (Williams, 2014). Trent (2013) examined the “identity trajectory” as these teacher educators negotiated their own experiences coupled with ideals of agency and marginalization. More positively, Olsen and Buchanan (in press) argued that “the world of the teacher educator” was a unique contextual space in which new teacher educators developed their new identities in concert with their previous strands of development: biography, educational studies, and career history. Another concern is that novice teacher educators may not feel prepared to consider issues such as diversity and multiculturalism (Goodwin et al., 2014). This is troubling to consider, as most teachers are still White and middle class, often with minimal skills dealing with issues of race and culture (Dunn, 2010; Howard, 2006; Picower, 2012). It is critical, then, to prepare teachers who can teach in culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining ways (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paris, 2012; Sleeter, 2001). But this can only happen if teacher educators are confident in their abilities to engage preservice teachers in often difficult and controversial discussions. Thus doctoral students should be provided with transformative learning experiences of their own to disrupt the constructed consciousness they bring to their own work as teachers of teachers (Vescio, Bondy, & Poekert, 2009).

Finally, studies have pointed to the need for additional research on teacher educator preparation. While Goodwin et al. (2014) found that “interviewees’ recommendations for teacher educator preparation converged around four different

areas: (a) a strong foundation of educational theories, (b) knowledge about the field of teacher education, (c) intentional mentorship and apprenticeship in teaching and research, and (d) mentoring around professional life in the academy” (p. 293), future scholarship is needed to determine if and how these adaptations to teacher educator preparation would benefit teacher educators, preservice teachers, and, in the long term, PK–12 students (Hollins et al., 2014).

A major gap in existing literature on teacher educator preparation is an inquiry into how teacher educators are trained amidst a climate of accountability in teacher preparation. While there is much literature on how accountability pressures and neoliberal reforms impact PK–12 schooling, with everything from charter schools to teacher merit pay to increased high-stakes testing, neoliberal politics have also made their way from the schoolhouse to the campus. It is first important to understand this neoliberal context in PK–12 schools. Useful here is an image utilized by the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE), in which they compared PK–12 neoliberal education reforms to a Hydra (Picower & Mayorga, 2015):

Those who are familiar with Greek mythology know that the Hydra was an immortal multi-headed creature. Any attempt to slay the Hydra was a struggle in futility and hopelessness, because if one head were removed, the Hydra would grow back two more in its place. . . . The Hydra was only finally able to be slain by Heracles because he worked together with an ally, his nephew, to remove all the heads at once, making it impossible for the decapitated heads to grow back. (p. 4)

As Picower and Mayorga (2015) have argued, “each of these Hydra heads was analogous to one of the market-based reforms unfolding in our city,” and

the initial response by those concerned with educational justice was to furiously address each individual head by focusing time and energy on one after another. . . . The group realized that focusing on one head meant that our attention was often drawn away from the larger forces, or Hydra body, driving reform—namely, the form of capitalism that some describe as neoliberalism. (p. 4)

Neoliberals view education not as a public good but as a private commodity (Apple, 2006; Chomsky, 1999; Saltman, 2007; Zeichner, 2010). In brief, neoliberal ideology argues for capitalism and competition through free-market economics with the supposed goal of increased equality. Yet decades of research on the impact of neoliberal policies and reforms in education have demonstrated that “neoliberalism has a track record of undermining equity and democracy” (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1947). Such neoliberal ideals and policies shift the focus of what and how not only students but also teachers learn. As a result, there is increased control over the work PK–12 teachers do and “an erosion of academic professionalism” (Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014, p. 40), which results in a general mistrust of teachers (Apple, 2004). Zeichner (2010) argued that neoliberal policies negatively transform the profession by adopting “a technicist view of the role of teachers and with efforts to erode teachers’ autonomy and collegial authority” (p. 1545). If this is the world

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that new teachers enter, then those preparing them—teacher educators—must also fully understand this context and, beyond that, the ways that accountability regimes are transforming teacher preparation. But are novice teacher educators prepared to handle, critique, resist, and coopt this reigning discourse that threatens education for social justice? If so, how do they make sense of the competing demands of teacher education today? Such is the inquiry undertaken here.

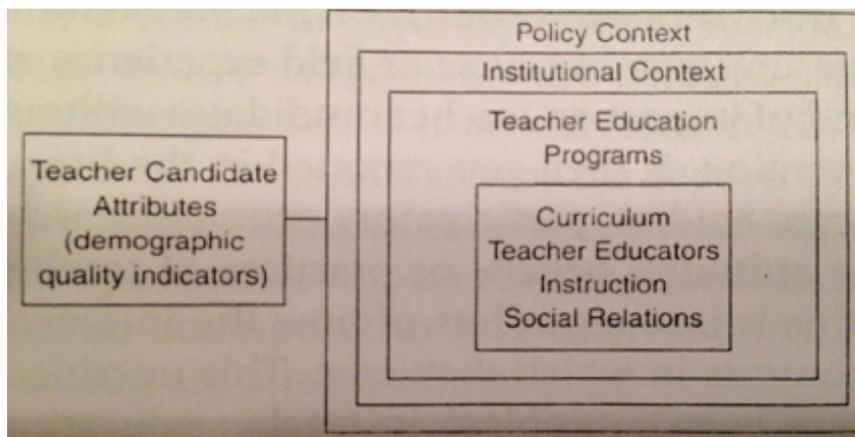
### **Theoretical Framework**

Ecological systems models, originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1994) as a way to explain how a child develops, provide a theoretical grounding for this study. Bronfenbrenner argued that various environments, or systems, influence people’s lives in different ways and at different times. Bronfenbrenner named these environments the microsystem (immediate social group), the mesosystem (relationships with peers, family, and others in close relationships), the exosystem (external networks like schools, churches, neighborhoods, and the media), the macrosystem (laws, cultural norms, etc.), and the chronosystem (time and space over one’s life course). Zeichner and Conklin (2008) adapted Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model specifically for teacher development. Zeichner (2011) called the way that people learn to teach a *complex ecology*. For example, in Figure 1, we see the factors that Zeichner and Conklin believed influence the teacher candidate, moving outward from curriculum and teacher educators to program influences, the institutional context,

**Figure 1**

#### **An Ecological Model of Teacher Development**

From “Teacher Education Programs as Sites for Teacher Preparation,” by K. Zeichner and H. Conklin, 2008, in M. Cochran-Smith, S. Fieman-Nemser, and D. J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (3rd ed.), New York, NY: Routledge. Copyright Association of Teacher Educators. Reprinted with permission.



and the policy context. One important way they have adapted existing ecological models is by illustrating that the teacher candidate brings preexisting attributes to the social contexts in which he or she is embedded.

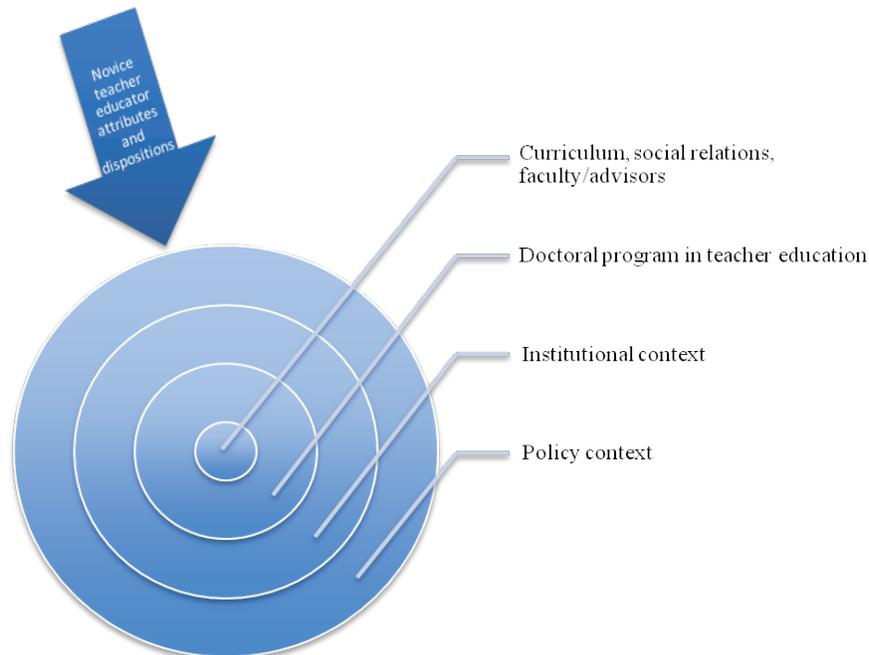
I would argue that this ecological model can also be extended from teacher development to *teacher educator* development (see Figure 2). Like teacher candidates, doctoral students who are preparing to be teacher educators bring their own identities and attributes to their programs, where they are in turn influenced by the curriculum, their own professors, doctoral program contexts, institutions, and the policy contexts of the field in which they are prepared.

## Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative case study design to analyze the experiences of novice teacher educators from two universities in the southeastern United States. Case study methodology was employed because I wanted to better understand how my participants made sense of their contexts and experiences (Denizen & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2014). Furthermore, I wanted my data collection and analysis to

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**Figure 2**  
***An Ecological Model of Teacher Educator Development***



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“retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1989, p. 4). In what follows, I describe the context and participants of this study as well as methods of data collection and analysis. Finally, I summarize my researcher’s perspective in relation to this area of inquiry.

#### **Context and Participants**

In a major metropolitan area in the southeastern United States, approximately 5 miles away from each other, there are two universities home to doctoral programs in education. Carter University, located in a wealthy suburb of the central city, is a private university with a small doctoral education program, admitting between three and six doctoral students each year to work with approximately five to seven faculty. Because of the program’s size and its emphasis on the social and cultural foundations of education, the faculty at Carter work across specialties and are not subdivided into units within the department. Montvale State University, conversely, is a public university in the center of the city with more students (about 25 per year) and faculty (approximately 25 in various content areas). Montvale faculty are subdivided within the department into content area and/or grade-level units. A final distinguishing feature between the two universities is that students at Carter are fully funded for up to 5 years of doctoral study, whereas Montvale State students pay their own tuition, unless they receive one of a handful of doctoral fellowships or research assistantships. Despite their differences, the programs had one vital thing in common for the purposes of this study: Both programs had a mission statement related to educational equity and social justice, and several professors in each program were well known for conducting research that reflected personal and professional commitments to diversity.

Participants in this study were currently enrolled in or had recently graduated from one of these two doctoral programs. Furthermore, the call for participants, distributed via social media and e-mail, specifically asked for those committed in some way (through their research, teaching, and/or service) to social justice and educational equity. The final sample comprised nine participants, a robust size for a case study, which enabled me to include a variety of participants and also gather thick, rich descriptions of their experiences. Table 1 includes participants’ pseudonyms, whether they are a doctoral student or a first-year professor, their university, and their major areas of interest. Though all participants are female, the sample is diverse in other ways, including by race, ethnicity, educational history and path to teacher education, sexuality, family composition, socioeconomic status, and age.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected in the 2013–2014 school year, through interviews and document analysis. I utilized a semistructured interview protocol to guide discussion with each participant. This interview protocol allowed for clarifying and probing

questions when needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Interviews lasted approximately 90–120 minutes and were later transcribed for analysis. Simultaneously, I collected documents from participants (CVs, syllabi, publications, philosophy statements), programs (mission statements and program standards), and national organizations (such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the National Council on Teacher Quality, among others).

I analyzed my data through multiple levels of open coding (moving from 15 codes to 10 codes to the final themes presented here), member checks, peer review, and analysis of my own memos in an attempt to understand my place in the research (Merriam, 2014).

### **Researcher's Perspective**

When I conducted this study, I was a third-year professor and, thus, relatively new to the field. I was also trying to understand my role as a teacher educator for social justice, and in part, my inquiry was motivated by the fact that there was very little literature that helped me understand what it meant to embody an ethos of social justice and activism as a new scholar in teacher education. Furthermore, as a doctoral advisor, I am also committed to supporting the next generation of teacher educators, and I found myself searching in vain for scholarship on how to best prepare and support teacher educators for social justice. Prior to beginning my research, I had professional connections to both the Carter and Montvale programs, though none of the participants were current or former students. Despite my existing knowledge of both programs, I remained open to participants' interpretations of their experiences, recognizing that my existing views could and should be informed by participants' multiple and diverse perspectives.

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**Table 1**  
**Participants**

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>DS or FYP</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Area(s) of interest</i>
Angela	DS, 4th year	Montvale	Literacy and culturally relevant pedagogy
Jamie	DS, 2nd year	Montvale	Math education and English language learners
Kathleen	DS, 3rd year	Montvale	Preservice teacher preparation
Gertrude	DS, 4th year	Montvale	Social studies and service learning
Amy	FYP	Montvale alum	Literacy and (dis)ability studies
Mary	DS, 3rd year	Carter	Multicultural education
Claire	FYP	Carter alum	Comparative education
Suzanne	FYP	Carter alum	Civic education and English language learners
Zari	FYP	Carter alum/ Montvale FYP	Literacy teaching and assessment

Note. DS = doctoral student. FYP= first-year professor.

## **Findings**

Upon inquiring into participants’ understandings of what it means to be a teacher educator for social justice and how this is related to the current landscape of teacher education, there emerged three major themes: (a) There is a disjuncture between the rhetoric and reality of social justice teacher educator preparation, (b) preparing to be a teacher educator for social justice is complicated by the neoliberalization of teacher preparation, and (c) social justice commitments are both challenging and powerful to uphold in this climate. First, participants discussed the rhetoric versus reality of social justice teacher education, a complicated nexus of messages they were receiving that made it difficult to understand what being teacher educators for social justice actually meant in practice. This was primarily because, as participants described, there was often a difference or gap between programs’ stated missions and the actual experiences they had as doctoral students and/or first-year professors. The second theme is the challenging context of teacher education, which many participants said was antithetical to their personal ethos of social justice and was also something that lowered their morale or concerned them for the future. Finally, participants revealed that their social justice commitments were difficult to uphold in a climate of attacks on teacher education; yet such commitments also provided reassurance and a powerful reminder of why they were in the profession. In the following sections, I elaborate on these central themes, and for the purposes of this manuscript, I primarily highlight interview data, using documents as supporting evidence for the interviewees’ commentary.

### ***Rhetoric Versus Reality of Social Justice Teacher Education Programs***

The departmental mission statements, strategic plans, and other materials for both Carter and Montvale made specific reference to issues of justice, diversity, and equity. Carter, for example, emphasized its goal to “reform and improve education, particularly urban education, by conducting outstanding research, providing engaged and challenging teaching, and being actively involved in schools and other educational institutions in the community.” Carter also sought to embody its

educational philosophy and professional commitment to educate a small cadre of reflective teachers and educational researchers who are competent and committed to work with diverse student populations and are able to envision schools as they might become rather than preserve schools as they presently exist.

The faculty also wrote that they, as a department with such commitments, “must first and foremost recognize [the department’s] members as participants in a democracy. This requires vigilance to serve the greater good and to advocate equal opportunity for all.” Similarly, the education program at Montvale’s mission was to “engage in research, teaching, and service in urban environments with people from multiple cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds.” They stated an ongo-

ing commitment “to innovation and creativity and to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and practice.” The faculty wrote that they strived to “realize our vision of pluralism, equity, and social justice where individuals have equal access to meaningful learning opportunities throughout their lives and the chance to apply their knowledge and skills for the greater good.” Striking here is that, though the programs were in different institutional contexts and served different populations, their missions were remarkably similar.

Though, in many ways, participants’ perceptions of the impact of these statements and philosophies is more important than the intent of such statements, a few examples of how Carter and Montvale attempted to prepare new teacher educators for social justice—despite neoliberalism—are also instructive. Carter, for example, actively recruited underrepresented scholars, especially women and people of color, into a small cohort program of no more than six students per year. This small cohort model required that all students take a series of four foundations courses: Philosophy and Psychology of Education, History of Education, Sociocultural Contexts of Education, and Comparative Education. Each of these courses was taught by tenured faculty who were leaders in their field and who approached the content from a perspective of equity and social justice. In each course, participants were asked to, as the mission statement called for, “envision schools as they might become rather than preserve schools as they presently exist.” Doctoral students also developed and/or participated with faculty in a number of community engagements, including professional development workshops for local teachers of Black youth and after-school tutoring at a local refugee development center. Similarly, at Montvale, new teacher educators had an opportunity to work with faculty from a variety of fields, many of whom espoused democratic values in their research and teaching. Because the undergraduate population of Montvale predominantly comprised students of color and first-generation college students, Montvale doctoral students were exposed to a diverse population in their teaching assistantships as they learned to become teacher educators. The college was also home to several centers focused on various aspects of urban education, where doctoral students could engage in community and professional development with faculty and peers.

When participants were asked to describe their program contexts, some specifically mentioned mission statements and related documents. They remembered: “Language of equity,” “Mission of social justice,” “Commitment to marginalized communities,” and “Commitment to students of color.” Many of them saw these missions actualized. They talked, in particular, about relationships with their advisors, cohorts, or collaborative groups they had worked to develop. For example, Jamie talked about how she was “really lucky” to have an advisor who understood what it meant to support doctoral students who were also mothers. Suzanne remembered, “I struggled for a while, and [my advisor] was there for me the whole way.” In particular, Suzanne’s advisor supported her in pursuing a social justice

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research agenda. Amy similarly commented, “I could not have done any of this without [my advisor]. I knew nothing about what it meant to do research or really be an academic until she showed me.” When asked to elaborate, Amy clarified that she specifically remembered her advisor demonstrating how to do critical research and how to be an academic who “pushes the boundaries” of traditional paradigms and methodologies, something Amy believed was critical to social justice work in the academy.

Others, like Angela, a Black woman in her fourth year at Montvale, talked about finding a mentor whose identity and professional path were more aligned with her goals. Angela’s advisor was a White woman who, in Angela’s words, was “very research heavy.” Angela sought out a Black female mentor who was committed to teaching, because Angela thought of herself more as a teacher than as a researcher. She also worked with this mentor to better understand the challenges for women of color in the academy, a personal insight that her White advisor could not provide in the same way.

Despite individual positive experiences, participants also reflected on the critical disjunctures between the rhetoric of social justice and the reality of what their programs and academia writ large looked like from their perspective. One participant remarked, upon considering these differences, “Are we *really* about social justice or do we just *say* we’re about social justice?” The participants, when describing the reality of their departments and programs, identified the following factors that seemed at odds with a commitment to social justice: (a) tension between tenured and untenured (or non-tenure-track) faculty; (b) tenure processes; (c) different “value” placed on certain research paradigms; (d) attitudes toward women and mothers; (e) attitudes and microaggressions toward people of color; (f) marginalization of or penalties for social justice scholars; (g) pressure to join the academy versus returning to teaching in the PK–12 system; and (h) “hazing” into the academy, or conditions enforced by professors that seemed more like bullying than like high standards. Considering the ecological model discussed earlier, these factors demonstrate the influence of social relationships, professors, program context, and institutional context. They also show the potential disconnect when there is a mismatch between the new social contexts and an individual’s personal attributes, despite his or her search for a social context that might be a good match.

The realities that they noted were, one could argue, reflective of national trends in higher education. That is, for example, a tension between tenured and untenured faculty might appear in many departments and colleges around the country, especially with the increasing reliance on adjunct and fixed-term faculty. Yet I would argue that so many participants in this study noted it because it seemed contrary to the stated commitment to social justice. There is also an abundance of literature on the way racism is perpetuated in the academy (e.g., Harper, 2012). At the time of the study, while I was interviewing participants, for example, there was a national news story about a professor in Minnesota who taught about structural racism in

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the media and society, and her university formally disciplined her after three White male students complained that she was being racist toward them (McDonough, 2013). Despite knowing this theoretically, Mary, a Black woman, noted that, at Carter,

I just kind of thought it would be different because this is a place where people talk openly about racism in K–12 schools and in society as a whole. So you'd think people would call each other out and work together to make things better in our own community.

During our interview, Mary and I spent a lot of time talking about her experiences with social *in*justice in the academy. She chose to study at Carter because her mother had been a doctoral student there many years prior, but she commented that her mother's experience seemed much more "like an automatic fit" than hers was. After discussing the mission of Carter's program, I asked her if she saw this mission reflected in academia:

ALYSSA: Do you feel like academia is a socially just space?

MARY: No. [*answers immediately and forcefully, then looks down and sighs. Silence for several beats.*]

A: Why?

M, *looks up quietly, with tears in her eyes*: Academia is really very White and very male. It's not people trying to be a problem when they say that; it really is the case and every aspect of it is that way. It is a constant pushback of ideas, and I have to put on armor to be OK because it is not a space that was created for me. . . . I feel like I'm not understood.

A: Even in your program that's focused on social justice.

M: Yes! Even then. I think people choose programs for different reasons. I don't think [some students and professors] chose [Carter] for social justice.

Mary mentioned several examples of this "pushback," one in which a professor questioned the "validity" of her research focus and attempted to sway her trajectory in a way that felt "like a microaggression." She also spoke of peers whose ideas of social justice were more reflective of a color-blind ideology, who challenged her when she "wanted to talk about race so much," and who lacked the critical perspectives that she anticipated her classmates would have if they had selected a social justice program.

Several participants also talked about the "danger" of being seen as a scholar-activist, especially at a public university or in a conservative region of the country. Gertrude said she had "seen what happens to other people who are 'out' with their political work" and then commented,

I don't know if I would say that [I'm fully a social justice scholar]. I feel like it's dangerous to say something blatantly like that. People may think you are a Communist or something crazy. It's dangerous to be a scholar-activist these days!

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She cited several examples of scholar-activists facing challenges within their universities (being alienated from the faculty or being positioned as “troublemakers”) or from the general public (being targeted by local or state politicians for their politics or maligned in the media for such politics).

When I asked Jaime how she felt about being a social justice teacher educator, she described how her mentors had talked with her about ways she would need to “play the game” and “negotiate” this stance. She spoke at length about this messaging:

It’s playing the game of academia . . . learning how to navigate and negotiate the politics. . . . And especially in that I know I want to work in equity and social justice [which] gets devalued a lot. I don’t do quantitative educational psychology so my work takes a lot longer to collect data, publish, [and] it doesn’t have the funding. I’m in a space that is not always valued by the academy, so I need to know how to negotiate spaces to make sure that I continue to be able to do that work. . . . So much is like a political game, so you have to learn *how* to play, if you want to be safe to do what you want to do.

Finally, a last difference between rhetoric and reality was the pressure to go into higher education versus returning to the K–12 classroom or doing work at the state or district level. Both Carter’s and Montvale’s mission statements and program descriptions specifically mentioned that PhDs from their universities could lead to school, district, and state-level administration and leadership. Yet the “unstated” push was for doctoral students to go into the academy or, more specifically, into tenure-track positions at research universities. For example, Gertrude reflected that she envisioned herself exercising her social justice commitments as a classroom teacher but said she received both “implicit and explicit” questioning from professors about her choice:

I feel that if you don’t go into academia right after [you get] your degree . . . that people will look down on you, and it makes it harder to go that route after making your decision. . . . It’s not a good feeling. . . . It kind of makes me feel like a failure, as if I have come this far and failed.

What is important to note about all of the experiences outlined here is that participants’ feelings were often the result of things left unspoken, of conversations veiled in secrecy, and of mixed messages from faculty and official statements. I argue that the contradiction between rhetoric and reality—and the way participants were left, in many cases, on their own to make sense of how to be a social justice teacher educator—results from a lack of clear understanding of how best to prepare teacher educators. As previous research has demonstrated, there is little in the way of a pedagogy of teacher education, and here it is revealed that there is even less in the way of a pedagogy of social justice teacher education. Unsurprisingly, participants noted that some of the disparities between their expectations and the reality were influenced by the changing landscape of teacher preparation—a second

theme that emerged in the data collection. They felt their professors and colleagues were under more pressure, and this trickled down to them.

### ***Challenging Context of Teacher Education***

A second emergent theme regards the context of teacher education, which participants said presented many challenges to their preparation and practice, and especially to their commitment to social justice. This was particularly prominent for first-year professors, who were in the midst of assuming new duties and tasks related to accountability, program reporting, and assessment. They were also more aware (but only slightly) of groups like NCTQ that received frequent press about their critiques of teacher education programs. Doctoral students did, however, understand that there were clear challenges to traditional university-based teacher education, many referencing Teach for America. As Kathleen explained in her interview, “teacher ed is clearly under attack. There’s no end to the groups that think we’re not doing things right or that they could do better.”

Participants identified several contextual factors or policies that challenged their commitment to social justice. Interestingly, all the factors they identified are usually spoken of in acronyms, resulting in transcriptions that were a veritable alphabet soup of organizations and policies: edTPA, TFA, NCLB/RTTT, VAMs, DOE, NCTQ, InTASC, PSC, and NCATE/CAEP. Table 2 summarizes each of these factors, including its full name, a brief description of its purpose or mission from an organizational Web site, and one participant’s description of the factor. Though not all participants mentioned all factors, I only included factors in Table 2 if they were mentioned by at least four of the nine participants.

To be clear, participants drew distinctions between some of these factors. Some, like the DOE, PSC, and NCATE/CAEP, they saw as a “necessarily evil,” as organizations that were necessary for their university and department to function but that, in practice, enforced policies in ways that made it difficult for teacher educators to practice social justice. For example, Zari understood that writing reports for accreditation by these three organizations was important for maintaining program viability, but she also felt her and her colleagues’ time was better spent working directly with preservice teachers. Other factors, like edTPA, NCTQ, and VAMs, were viewed as more detrimental and immediately harmful to teacher education and teacher educators. These were the more obviously neoliberal reforms.

In her interview, Jaime commented specifically on the connection between neoliberal policies and reforms at the K–12 level and in higher education, what she called “bullshit” or “crap.” Jamie saw these neoliberal reforms as detrimental to her role as a teacher educator and to teacher education in general because they were based on “faulty ideology that competition increases quality,” echoing researchers who find that neoliberal reforms value “profit over people” (Chomsky, 1999). In this analysis, Jamie raises a critical point that nearly all of the participants discussed:

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**Table 2**  
**Participant-Identified Factors That Challenge Social Justice in Teacher Education**

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Full name</i>	<i>Organization/ policy description</i>	<i>Sample participant commentary</i>
edTPA	Education Teacher Performance Assessment	“A multiple-measure assessment of teaching—built and submitted by the candidate—that addresses planning, instruction, assessment and analyzing teaching” ( <a href="http://edtpa.aacte.org/">http://edtpa.aacte.org/</a> )	“The edTPA is a miserable assessment. There are so many things wrong with it, and when I see our department using it, it infuriates me because it seems to go against everything we say we believe.”
TFA	Teach For America	“Teach For America’s mission is to build the movement to eliminate educational inequality by developing such leaders. We recruit committed recent college graduates and and professionals of all backgrounds to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools” ( <a href="http://teachforamerica.org/">http://teachforamerica.org/</a> )	“[TFA] makes us look like we’re not needed and perpetuates the false reality that all you need to be is smart to be a good teacher.”
RTTT	Race to the Top	“A competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas” ( <a href="http://www2.ed.gov/">http://www2.ed.gov/</a> )	“The ideology of NCLB is now part of Race to the Top, which is now coming to higher education. This competition and quest for money and testing—it’s part of the language of teacher prep now.”
VAM	Value-Added Measures (or Models)	Measures that “estimate or quantify how much of a positive (or negative) effect individual teachers have on student learning during the course of a given school year” ( <a href="http://edglossary.org/">http://edglossary.org/</a> )	“Tying students’ scores on standardized tests to teacher education programs? That doesn’t make any sense. There is no evidence that will work and I feel like a whole lot of evidence that it won’t.”

**Table 2 (continued)**  
**Participant-Identified Factors That Challenge Social Justice in Teacher Education**

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Full name</i>	<i>Organization/ policy description</i>	<i>Sample participant commentary</i>
DOE (State)	Department of Education (State)	The state authority responsible for managing curriculum, assessment, budgets, and certification for schools, teachers, and students in that particular state.	“We’re expected to do more with less. The budgets for higher education and for K–12 education are decreasing by the day because the [state] DOE doesn’t really care about high-quality teaching and teachers.”
NCTQ	National Council for Teacher Quality	“Advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers. In particular, we recognize the absence of much of the evidence necessary to make a compelling case for change and seek to fill that void with a research agenda that has direct and practical implications for policy. We are committed to lending transparency and increasing public awareness about the four sets of institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: states, teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers unions.”	“It’s not a surprise that NCTQ exists, but it is a little bit of a surprise that people are taking it seriously. I mean, it’s getting news coverage and I can tell that there is a debate about whether or not to respond. But it shows an inherent misunderstanding of what teacher education is and should be.”
InTASC	Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium	“A consortium of state education agencies and national educational organizations dedicated to the reform of the preparation, licensing, and on-going professional development of teachers. Created in 1987, InTASC’s primary constituency is state education agencies responsible for teacher licensing, program approval, and professional development. Its work is guided by one basic premise: An effective teacher must be able to integrate content knowledge with the specific strengths and needs of students to assure that all students learn and perform at high levels” ( <a href="http://www.ccsso.org/">http://www.ccsso.org/</a> )	“So many standards, so little time!”

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**Table 2 (continued)**  
**Participant-Identified Factors That Challenge Social Justice in Teacher Education**

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Full name</i>	<i>Organization/ policy description</i>	<i>Sample participant commentary</i>
PSC	Professional Standards Commission	“Responsibility for providing a regulatory system for ‘certifying and classifying’ professional employees in public schools. . . . Educator preparation regulations and standards are established to assure the citizens of [state] that public school educators meet high standards and are well prepared to teach in the classrooms of this state” ( <a href="http://www.gapsc.com/">http://www.gapsc.com/</a> )	“To be honest, I don’t know exactly what they do, but I know the faculty has to do a lot of reporting for them.”
NCATE/ CAEP	National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education/ Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation	“CAEP advances excellence in educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P–12 student learning. Accreditation is a nongovernmental activity based on peer review that serves the dual functions of assuring quality and promoting improvement” ( <a href="http://www.caepnet.org/">http://www.caepnet.org/</a> )	“How much time is wasted on writing reports that may not even be read? How much time is wasted on site visits and meeting to talk about standards? Imagine what else we could be doing with that time that would actually benefit our students.”

the fact that they left teaching for specific reasons, many of which were tied to the increasing standardization and socially unjust policies, only to find those same initiatives infiltrating their way into colleges of education. Jamie explained, “The same thing happening to teachers at the K–12 level is now at the higher [education] level and I’m hoping tenure still exists when I am teaching. So I think a lot of things in a K–12 arena that push me to do this kind of work are happening here now, more and more.” When asked if she knew how to deal with this as a teacher educator, she replied emphatically, “No, not in the least.”

Several participants referenced how these factors and reforms impacted the morale of their professors, mentors, and themselves. For example, Mary commented,

I’ve seen the reaction to policy [and how it] affects their morale. . . . Some of my professors have checked out, meaning they are in it now for themselves because there is not as much of a hope for their work to be changing things. . . . My own morale is low. I don’t know what teacher education is going to look like in the future,

if teacher educator programs are run [like] the polar opposite of social justice. . . . So my morale is affected by these role models that I have. They do not seem very hopeful about the future of teacher education in the university setting or otherwise.

Amy, a first-year professor at a teaching college in the Midwest and an alumnus from Montvale, concurred with the relationship between these reforms and the morale of her former department at Montvale. She stated,

A lot of my professors were working hard to keep positive outlooks and to put on a face of not being burned out . . . distancing themselves because a situation is too painful. . . . You could tell that they were trying really hard not to show they were feeling certain things.

As a novice teacher educator herself, Amy said she did not feel prepared to deal with such accountability measures because “it wasn’t even really talked about formally. It was just assumed we’d figured it out I think.”

Finally, Zari’s story offers unique insight into the two programs and into the transition from doctoral student to first-year professor. Zari attended Carter and then, upon graduation, became an assistant professor at Montvale State. When asked if and how she sees herself as a teacher educator for social justice, she explained, referencing Delpit (1995), “Social justice is part of everything that I am, and everything that I do. I see myself as a gateway. If I wouldn’t want my students teaching my future children, then they shouldn’t be teaching *other* people’s children.”

This commitment is evident in all of Zari’s documents as well: in her teaching evaluations, in her philosophy of teaching, and in her research. Upon coming to Montvale State, however, Zari found that one of the biggest challenges was dealing with components of teacher education that impacted her ability to truly function as an advocate for social justice. For example, she referenced the challenge of serving as a “gatekeeper” in a school that has a policy in which all students who apply to the undergraduate teacher education program are accepted, so that course numbers are not low enough to justify budget cuts. “I can only do so much with a policy like that,” she said, “And it makes me wonder sometimes, why am I actually here? If my professional experience and opinion really doesn’t make a difference with policies like that standing in the way? It doesn’t mean I’m going to stop, but it does make me wonder.”

Overall, participants expressed varying degrees of awareness of the current landscape of teacher preparation. Unsurprisingly, first-year professors knew slightly more logistical information than doctoral students who were early in their programs, and Montvale students and alumni knew more than Carter students and alumni because of the increased requirements for public universities. However, no participant from either university was able to clearly articulate concrete ways that he or she or his or her mentor *resisted* the neoliberalization of teacher preparation. Some did not question the need to report on their departments’ successes for improving programs, but they did see “trouble ahead,” as one participant commented,

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because of NCTQ’s critiques of teacher education at the same time that TFA was proliferating. Participants also remarked that some of their fears and concerns were born out of a lack of knowledge and a general sense of despair that “runs through the department when these things are discussed.” Thus they may have assumed that the status of the department (or profession) was in more jeopardy than it truly was, because of the shrouded ways that discussed are often had in academia. This is not meant to argue that doctoral students should be involved in serving on accreditation committees or writing accountability reports but rather that the conversations between faculty about the requirements of working in a teacher preparation program in today’s climate need not always remain behind such closed doors. There must be a balance between “protecting” doctoral students from the politics of higher education and giving them the knowledge they need to adequately understand—and then critique—the structures in which they are and will be embedded.

#### ***The Power of Social Justice***

There are certainly many challenges to social justice teacher education and to preparing the next generation of scholar-activists in a neoliberal environment. As Claire remarked about her social justice mind-set, “you can never turn it off,” and you are “almost constantly viewing things in a critical way,” which makes it difficult to see beyond the challenges and injustices within each level of one’s ecological system. They acknowledged that possessing a social justice orientation might “make it harder” because they felt constantly barraged by neoliberal reforms and policies that contradicted their goals.

Yet all of the participants also emphasized that a social justice stance is what, in part, kept them going despite the challenges. Kathleen described her commitment to teacher education for social justice as a “double-edged sword” for just this reason. Their ideologies made it possible to remain hopeful and to trust in the inherent possibilities and promise of social justice education. For example, two first-year professor participants reflected as follows:

Reminding myself why I wanted to do this in the first place helps me keep going at the times when I feel very frustrated and kind of questioning why I am doing this or why I am putting myself through this stress of what it takes to be a professor. It’s because I want the teachers who are coming through this program to have me as a professor so they get these social justice things from me that they will not get from other professors. (Amy)

If I can make one person take on [teaching for social justice] as a life commitment . . . then I feel worth it. The reason you step out of your class of 25 [K–12] students each day and you become a teacher educator is for that exponential factor. You touch one person that will touch many lives. (Suzanne)

Overall, then, their social justice mind-sets offered, as one participant explained it, “a sort of buffer” against what often felt like an onslaught of policies and reforms

that did not align with their beliefs. Social justice is what brought them to the profession and what kept them in the profession.

## **Discussion**

Findings from this study extend and enhance existing knowledge on novice teacher educators, including on their preparation and their experiences. Just as previous literature (Goodwin et al., 2014) found that teacher educators were prepared by “happenstance,” the participants in this study reflected similar feelings about how they were inducted into the profession. In particular, given the focus of their programs on social justice, they had many questions and concerns about if and how their preparation was aligned with the stated missions and the incidents they witnessed in their departments. They felt further challenged by the landscape of teacher education that reflected a turn toward neoliberal, accountability-focused measures. Previous literature has highlighted the need for an explicit pedagogy of teacher education, and this study supports such a pedagogy. It also highlights the need for teacher educator preparation to include explicit instruction in and dialogue around the politics of teacher preparation itself. Just as Hollins et al. (2014), Goodwin et al. (2014), and others (e.g., Forzani, 2014) uncovered, there were many assumptions made about what novice teacher educators could know and do in their new profession. Neglecting to address the politics of teacher education and how to remain committed to social justice amid a challenging climate contributed to participants’ confusion, unease, and apprehension for their future careers.

Participants in the study revealed the impact of various contexts on their development and experiences, supporting a notion of teacher educator development as an ecological model (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). While an ecological model would likely be applicable to the development of any new teacher educator, I find it particularly salient for those embodying social justice stances because their personal stances may often be in conflict with the contexts in which they are embedded. Some participants’ experiences, like Mary’s, appeared to be most influenced by the interaction between her personal attributes and those of her professors and peers. Others, like Jamie, experienced a deep personal connection to her mentor, which appeared to mediate some of the challenges she experienced when she realized that her personal commitments conflicted with the institutional and policy contexts of teacher education.

The policy context of the ecological model of teacher educator development proved to be particularly salient for new teacher educators with a commitment to social justice. Like in Zeichner and Conklin’s (2008) model, this policy context, rife with accountability measures and threats to traditional teacher preparation, has a reverberating impact on novice teacher educators’ experiences. Though this policy context may appear distant from the individual teacher educator, it still impacts one’s daily practice and one’s possibilities for (and concerns about) the future. One way

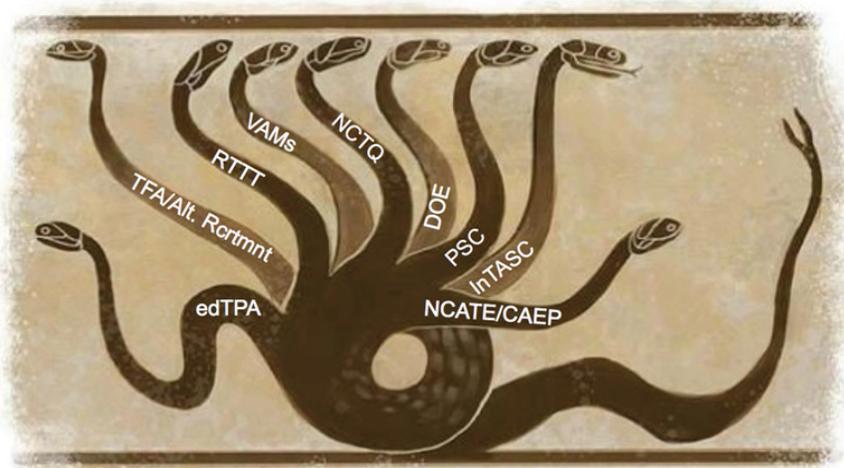
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to visualize individual elements of the policy context that are particularly salient for new teacher educators is to view the “Hydra of Teacher Education.”

Just as the Hydra identified by NYCoRE represents the ways that neoliberal reforms, policies, and organizations threaten social justice pedagogy and curriculum in public education, so, too, does the Hydra of Teacher Education lurk menacingly over the possibilities for preparing teacher educators for social justice. As depicted in Figure 3, we can imagine each head in this Hydra as one of the reforms that participants identified as impacting their practice. As teacher educators make efforts to respond to one contextual factor, such as TFA or NCTQ or VAMs, each of the other heads only gets stronger. Driving the Hydra are the core values of neoliberalism: competition (as seen, for example, in the competition of TFA with traditional teacher preparation), capitalism (demonstrated in the role of for-profit companies in the edTPA, for instance), and commodification (as seen in the reduction of programs and individuals to test scores on value-added measures).

The findings from this study point to the existence and potentially destructive effects of a Hydra of Teacher Education. If we are to adequately prepare teacher educators for social justice who are coming of age in the era of accountability for teacher education, the solution, then, cannot be to respond to each individual head but but, as Picower and Mayorga (2015) contend, by addressing, critiquing, and developing a compelling argument against the core values of neoliberalism and commodification in higher education that drive the Hydra of Teacher Education.

**Figure 3**  
*The Policy Context of an Ecological Model of Teacher Educator Development: The Hydra of Teacher Education*



## **Implications**

This research on new teacher educators for social justice has implications for teacher educator preparation, future research, and future policy in teacher education. First, this research points to the critical importance of remaining committed to university and departmental missions about social justice. For students who want to be activist-scholars, they need to see their professors also engaged in such commitments. Professors need to be transparent about the ways that current contexts might challenge or buoy our commitment to social justice—how do we negotiate academia? What institutional supports can we work with doctoral students to improve their experiences and our own? How can we be honest with ourselves about the ways that we may replicate social injustice in our own programmatic structures, curriculum, or relationships? And then how can we work together to create more equitable spaces for ourselves and our students? For example, institutions may institute a formal mentoring program—with funded support from administration in order not to further overburden faculty—in which senior faculty, junior faculty, and doctoral students form triads or other professional learning communities to discuss the ways they fight for equity in their research, teaching, and service and how they can support each other in these “dangerous times.”

Like previous research on the preparation of teacher educators, this research highlights the need for additional scholarship in this field. This is a field ripe for new scholarly possibilities, especially given the increased focus on teacher preparation regulations by the federal government. Future research may, like Goodwin et al. (2014), use mixed methodology to expand this study’s focus on teacher educators for social justice—to those in different institutional and state contexts, to larger samples of scholars across the country, to veteran teacher educators who are reflecting upon their own preparation, or to examining innovative programs that focus on developing and implementing a pedagogy of social justice teacher education. Researchers may also take a longitudinal approach and follow new teacher educators into their careers, noting if and how explicit preparation in teacher education impacts their research, teaching, and career trajectory as scholar-activists.

This study also holds implications for teacher education policy and reform. While many of the reforms in teacher education are relatively new, forthcoming scholarship is likely to find that such reforms jeopardize how teachers are prepared to enact social justice, culturally relevant pedagogy, and other critical teaching methods in their classroom. For example, Dunn (in press) found that teacher candidates said the edTPA took time away from what was most important in their programs and limited their abilities to enact social justice pedagogy in the classroom. In other research, faculty revealed that they gave up time teaching about social justice in order to prepare students for the edTPA and that they felt overburdened by the requirements (Picower & Marshall, in press). If we know such policies and reforms are lowering morale and contributing to teacher educators’ stress, such policies may

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contribute to additional challenges in the profession. The findings presented here advance the position that such reforms jeopardize teacher educators’ development and suggest that such reforms and initiatives should be reconsidered. Reconsidering these reforms will not just positively impact preservice teachers’ experiences, but may also enhance teacher educators’ experiences, as well. That is, if new teacher educators have to spend less of their time concerned with standards compliance or responding to attacks on the profession, they can better devote their time and energy to (a) improving teacher education programs for preservice teachers and (b) contributing to the development of more equitable reforms and improvements in the profession.

Overall, this research and implications from it highlight the importance of better understanding how teacher educators are prepared, how to support their social justice commitments, and how to help them make sense of the changing landscape of teacher education. In a world where PK–12 education and teachers seem constantly under attack, teacher educators need to be strong allies in the fight for justice in classrooms around the country, and we can only do this when we ourselves feel prepared, supported, and nurtured in our own profession.

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### **“It’s Dangerous to Be a Scholar-Activist These Days”**

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## **Information on the California Council on Teacher Education**

Founded in 1945, the California Council on the Education of Teachers (now the California Council on Teacher Education as of July 2001) is a non-profit organization devoted to stimulating the improvement of the preservice and inservice education of teachers and administrators. The Council attends to this general goal with the support of a community of teacher educators, drawn from diverse constituencies, who seek to be informed, reflective, and active regarding significant research, sound practice, and current public educational issues.

Membership in the California Council on Teacher Education can be either institutional or individual. Colleges and universities with credential programs, professional organizations with interests in the preparation of teachers, school districts and public agencies in the field of education, and individuals involved in or concerned about the field are encouraged to join. Membership entitles one to participation in semi-annual spring and fall conferences, subscription to *Teacher Education Quarterly* and *Issues in Teacher Education*, newsletters on timely issues, an informal network for sharing sound practices in teacher education, and involvement in annual awards and recognitions in the field.

The semi-annual conferences of the California Council on Teacher Education, rotated each year between sites in northern and southern California, feature significant themes in the field of education, highlight prominent speakers, afford opportunities for presentation of research and discussion of promising practices, and consider current and future policy issues in the field.

For information about or membership in the California Council on Teacher Education, please contact: Alan H. Jones, Executive Secretary, California Council on Teacher Education, Caddo Gap Press, 3145 Geary Boulevard, PMB 275, San Francisco, California 94118; telephone 415/666-3012; email [alan.jones@ccte.org](mailto:alan.jones@ccte.org); website [www.ccte.org](http://www.ccte.org).

The next semi-annual conference of the California Council on Teacher Education will be:

*October 20-22, 2016, Kona Kai Resort, San Diego*



## **Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections**

### **Framing a Competence View of Early Teacher Thinking**

**Amy E. Ryken & Fred L. Hamel**

#### **Developmental Frameworks and Reflective Practice**

Thirty years ago, Schön (1983) described practitioner reflection as a process of framing and reframing problems, creating reflective conversations with oneself and with others, taking actions to change one's practice, and evaluating the consequences of those changes. Like many teacher educators, we teach and model reflection on teaching practices, and we observe a range of ways that our teacher candidates engage in the reflection process. Yet a consistent finding in the research on teacher reflection is that higher levels of reflection are rarely observed among teacher candidates (Klein, 2008; Larrivee, 2006; Lee, 2005; Mena-Marcos, García-Rodríguez, & Tillema, 2013; Pedro, 2005; Shoffner, 2008; Ward & McCotter, 2004) or practicing teachers (Belvis, Pineda, Armengol, & Moreno, 2013). For example, teacher candidates may remain focused on themselves, pondering the demands of the profession and of taking on new responsibilities:

How much am I going to put into this job/student teaching? The job/student teaching

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### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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extends outside the classroom and the regular hours, and the question is where I’m going to draw the line. How far outside of regular hours? (J. S., January 31, 2012)

Other candidates may react with frustration to issues that have multiple layers, such as how assessment practices interact with perceptions of student ability: “I feel like it is so unfair to have a test with six long story problems when many students can’t read very well” (A. H., March 5, 2013).

Preservice teachers face a dizzying array of questions, practical issues, and new responsibilities as they learn to acclimate to the intensity of a complex profession. How can we validate candidate efforts to reflect on practice and support candidates to grow in their capacities to reflect? How can we understand a wide range of teacher reflection practices, especially those that do not appear to exhibit much depth?

As we examine and engage the literature on teacher reflection, we note a focus on naming different kinds of reflection, often in a sequence or continuum. For example, Larrivee (2006) described a continuum of reflection, noting that teachers can reflect at different levels simultaneously. At a *nonreflective* level, the teacher focuses on one explanation or solution. *Surface reflection* involves posing questions about strategies that maintain an efficient classroom, for example, “how can I limit transition time?” *Pedagogical reflection* focuses on questioning assumptions and biases and posing questions about theory, beliefs, and actions in the classroom, for example, “should I use reading groups?” In *critical reflection*, the teacher poses questions about the ethical and social equality implications of classroom practices, for example, “is my classroom promoting a sense of agency and freedom in all of my students?”

Although Larrivee suggested that teachers can reflect at different levels continuously, throughout the literature, we see models that describe “low levels” and “high levels” of reflection. In Figure 1, we contrast four theories that describe levels of reflective thinking and then note patterns among these models for reflection.

As we consider these models for reflection, we note several consistencies: All the models describe low and high levels of reflection and equate low levels of reflection with narrative or descriptive accounts, lack of questioning, and a focus on the self; alternatively, the highest levels of reflection are associated with abstraction, a critical stance, and engaging multiple perspectives. One concern we bring to these patterns is that framing reflection as low level or high level, while describing a trajectory of growth, can also contribute to deficit perspectives about the developing capacities of teacher candidates. Likewise, Clarà (2015) warned about conceptualizing reflection prescriptively as a series of steps, highlighting that reflection is a “descriptive notion” that refers to “spontaneous, common, real thinking” (p. 270).

Like Clarà (2015), Shoffner (2008), and Pedro (2005), we are interested in supporting relevant and meaningful reflection grounded in where candidates are in their unique growth trajectories as teachers. Clarà (2015), for example, described the practice of reflection as transforming “an incoherent situation into a coherent one” (p. 263) and as creating a “continuous interaction between inference and observation” (p. 265). He argued that prescriptive views of reflection too often imply

that “student teachers do not reflect as they should” (p. 269), and he suggested that the act of questioning—any question—can be critical in establishing or initiating a conversation between “the subject and the situation” (p. 270). From this perspective, teacher educators must aim to observe, value, and engage the actual, rather than idealized, reflection practices of beginning teachers and to support them in using such reflections to create meaning, coherence, and growth.

In this article, we seek to gain greater appreciation for the kinds of thinking and reflection that teacher candidates actually do. We look at reflections of teacher candidates that are typically categorized as descriptive, routine, or technical and seek to identify if and how “low levels” of reflection in fact serve a relevant purpose for teacher growth and development. We seek additional ways to understand what are typically labeled as “surface-level” reflections.

**Figure 1**  
**Four Theories of Reflective Thinking**

Lee (2005) describes three intertwined levels of reflective thinking:			
<i>recall level</i> describing one’s experiences	<i>rationalization level</i> identifying relationships across experiences and acknowledging the complexity of teaching	<i>reflectivity level</i> suggesting alternative approaches to teaching	
Larivee (2006) describes a continuum of reflection, noting that teachers can reflect at different levels simultaneously:			
<i>non-reflective</i> describing one explanation or solution	<i>surface reflection</i> posing questions about strategies that maintain an efficient classroom	<i>pedagogical reflection</i> questioning assumptions and biases and posing questions about theory, beliefs, and actions in the classroom	<i>critical reflection</i> posing questions about the ethical and social equality implications of classroom practices
Ward & McCotter (2004) designed a rubric to evaluate levels of reflection and found that pre-service teachers rarely reflect at the transformative reflection level:			
<i>routine reflection</i> focus on self-centered concerns, questions are not posed	<i>technical reflection</i> describing or asking questions about specific teaching tasks	<i>dialogic reflection</i> engaging in an inquiry cycle of considering questions actions, and others’ perspectives	<i>transformative reflection</i> poses questions focused on pedagogical, ethical, moral, cultural, or historical concerns
Mena-Marcos, Garcia-Rodriguez, & Tillema (2013), building on the work of Hatton and Smith (1995), describe four levels of reflection and emphasize the transition from telling narrative accounts to codifying experiences for knowledge-productive inquiry:			
<i>simple or habitual reflection</i> giving a lay account	<i>descriptive reflection</i> giving a personal justification	<i>dialogic reflection</i> assuming alternative viewpoints	<i>critical reflection</i> giving a sociopolitical explanation
<b>Consistent Patterns/Assumptions</b>			
Lower Level-----Higher Level			
Narrative-----Critical			
Descriptive-----Abstract			
Self-Focused-----Multiple Perspectives			

## **Research Methods**

### **Research Question**

In this study, we explore the following research question: What role do “surface-level” reflections play in teacher inquiry and growth?

### **Data Sources**

The context for this inquiry is a fifth-year master of arts in teaching (MAT) program within a small liberal arts university that graduates approximately 30 teacher candidates each year. Our study analyzes written reflections candidates have shared on a Learning From Practice reflection tool used weekly during a 15-week student teaching seminar.

**Reflection tool and protocol.** The reflection tool (Appendix A) invites teacher candidates to pose a question about their practice, to provide evidence related to the question, to engage in dialogue with a colleague, and to share realizations and possible actions.

This Learning From Practice tool is based in Dewey’s (1938/1997) concept of experience as the grounding point for all learning and in Cochran-Smith’s (2005) belief in the importance of taking “an ‘inquiry stance’ on practice, by treating one’s work as a site of systematic and intentional inquiry” (p. 8). The reflection tool provides space for candidates to generate questions from their own teaching experiences rather than focusing candidate reflection on particular instructional models or instructor-driven topics. Candidates are invited to determine what content is relevant to them at a particular moment in time and to express concerns, successes, or surprises. The reflection tool thus allows candidates to drive the content of reflection, as we invite teacher candidates to “tap into their own realm of experience, reflect on those experiences, and construct personal meaning to inform their developing practice” (Larrivee, 2006, p. 20).

The reflection tool also offers a form of structured guidance, directing candidates to specific practices, such as posing questions, naming realizations, and proposing an action. In this way, the tool helps candidates to participate explicitly in multiple dimensions of a teacher reflection cycle and can assist new teachers in expanding the range of their reflection practices. Research from Dobbins (1996) has suggested that specifically prompted written reflections deepen preservice teachers’ abilities to describe their own learning and engage broader educational issues. Larrivee (2006) emphasized that preservice teachers “often need to be explicitly prompted to think, respond, and act in new ways” (p. 20). In contrast, Shoffner (2008) highlighted that structured reflection may limit the ability of candidates to authentically share the practical theories they develop from their teaching experiences—and that following steps may not honor individual meaning making. The Learning From Practice form balances structure and flexibility,

providing limited guidance while inviting students to share their individual experiences and concerns.

Finally, the reflection protocol supports teacher learning within a community of professional practice. After writing about an experience or dilemma on the first side of the reflection tool, candidates meet in pairs for 30 minutes to talk about their experiences and share related evidence. Given the intensity of many student teaching experiences, the pairing approach limits the number of voices in conversation so that each candidate can explore his or her own question in depth. After pair discussions, students write for about 10 minutes to identify a realization and/or action step. This approach reflects the work of Tosa and Farrell (2013), who highlighted the importance of productive collegial interactions in supporting a reflective stance on teaching and learning. They emphasized that teachers must be open to criticism and work collaboratively to consider how to improve instruction. The reflection tool supports collaborative interaction and dialogue—as candidates share their practice with other educators, express uncertainty, negotiate trade-offs, and build habits of making their practice public. See Appendix B for an example of a completed reflection document with student work evidence.

**Reflection portfolios.** For this study, representative reflection portfolios were selected to create a purposeful sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994), representing three different MAT cohorts and all core endorsement areas of our program. Portfolios consist of individual candidate's weekly reflections along with related classroom-based evidence, collected over a period of 8–10 weeks during one student teaching term. Each portfolio typically includes 20–30 pages total per candidate. Our overall data set includes a sample of 34 portfolios: 12 from K–8 candidates, 11 from secondary humanities candidates (4 English and 7 social studies), and 11 from secondary science/math candidates (7 science and 4 math), which represents a typical balance of core endorsements in any given year of our program. For this study, we read and coded a set of eight purposefully selected reflection portfolios. In selecting these portfolios, we aimed for candidates who experienced a range of success and difficulty in student teaching and included four elementary candidates representing a range of grade levels (kindergarten and second, third, and fifth grades) and four secondary candidates representing a range of endorsement areas (two pursuing endorsement in the sciences and two pursuing endorsement in the humanities). Eight portfolios represent approximately 25% of the total sample of 34 portfolios as well as approximately 25% of our cohort each year.

### **Data Analysis**

In an effort to understand in greater detail the kinds of questions that students pose and the possible actions they envision as they reflect upon their teaching, we used a grounded-theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to assess the reflection portfolios. We each independently read the eight portfolios, focusing specifically

### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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on candidates’ written questions, realizations, and action steps and noting patterns, themes, differences, and surprises. After individual coding, we met to compare codes and to seek agreement on categories we used to characterize candidate responses. After agreeing on categories, we placed candidate comments into tables by subcategories, recording one categorized response per candidate for each section of the reflection tool for each week. For example, questions posed by candidates each week were coded into one of three subcategories—and each student’s questioning per week was coded into one of the subcategories. We then made counts of each subcategory to consider if the patterns had changed from early in the student teaching experience (the first 4 weeks) to later in the experience (second 4 weeks). The counts reflect the total number of responses in any subcategory, including if one candidate provided more than one of those responses over the course of the semester. We reviewed the data again for outliers and further patterns. We then purposefully selected representative student reflections for each pattern identified and considered the strengths in what are typically labeled surface-level reflections.

### **Findings: Looking Again at Surface-Level Reflections**

Here we share patterns in how teacher candidates posed questions, shared realizations, and identified action steps. We analyze reflective statements to make visible ways that reflections might be sponsoring teacher growth and to demonstrate that different habits of reflection are intertwined.

#### **Questioning**

The Learning From Practice reflection tool asks candidates to generate a question in relation to their teaching experience by asking, “What *question* does this experience raise for you?” We analyzed the kinds of questions generated and found that candidates asked at least one question and often multiple questions. Candidate questioning reflected three kinds of reflection strategies: (a) narrations, when candidates do not immediately name a question but instead describe or narrate a classroom experience, often implying a question about teaching; (b) “how can I?” questions, when candidates ask a practical question about how to solve a teaching problem; and (c) reframing, when candidates use questioning to consider other perspectives. Most of the questions posed by candidates take the form of “how can I” or “how should I” and often are related to a specific instructional practice implemented. These kinds of reflections are often described as low level (Larrivee, 2006; Lee, 2005; Mena-Marcos, García-Rodríguez, & Tillema, 2013; Ward & McCotter, 2004).

Candidates share narrations and pose “how can I?” questions throughout the student teaching experience. Like other teacher educators, we found that reframing questions are rarely posed. We also noted that candidates ask reframing questions

only during the second half of the student teaching experience. As seen in Table 1, candidates pose narrations and “how can I?” questions related to *students* early in the student teaching experience, and they pose “how can I?” questions related to *instruction* as well as reframing questions later in the student teaching experience. This suggests that early in the experience, candidates are more likely to be orienting to the classroom context and focusing on understanding and connecting to students. Later candidates are more focused on instructional issues.

**Narrations.** Some reflections are notable for their narration and/or lack of a question. In the act of narration, candidates describe a range of issues they face, and sometimes questions are implied rather than directly stated. Through narrations, candidates appear to be orienting in a general way to the realities of teaching. Candidates describe challenges in managing time and take note of students’ strengths and needs. Candidates articulate a growing awareness of the context of student teaching and express concern for negotiating sustainable teaching practices. Candidates describe the challenges they face in figuring out procedures and managing time and the struggles they face in planning for instruction. For example, “I often don’t get through everything I want to in my math lessons. I struggle with wanting to plan many activities just in case we get through things quickly and I never want to not have something planned” (A. H., March 5, 2013). This candidate productively describes the tension between overplanning and underplanning and states, “I often don’t get through everything I want to in my math lessons” and “I struggle with wanting to plan many activities.” This narration is focused on a pedagogical concern. Reflections like these are often described as surface level because they are descriptive and a specific instructional question is not posed. Although this narration frames teaching as covering material (“I often don’t get through everything”), it also implies important questions about instructional practice, such as, Have I planned properly? Am I trying to cover too much material? How much math content is appropriate for my students in one lesson?

Candidates also describe their growing awareness of the vast differences between students:

**Table 1**  
**Patterns in Teacher Candidate Questioning**

Pattern	First half of semester	Second half of semester	Total
Narrations	10	5	15
How can I?			42
Students	13	5	
Instruction	6	18	
Reframing	0	6	6
Total	29	34	63

### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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I’ve just been really blown away by the differences in the kids I teach. I started thinking about this in more detail when I took a serious look at the students’ written work in their survey responses. . . . This has me thinking deeply about many things like engagement/grading/personal teaching philosophy. (J. S., February 14, 2012)

This candidate expresses how reviewing students’ written work deeply impacted his thinking. He notes that he was “really blown away by the differences in the kids I teach” and that “this has me thinking deeply about many things.” He names a wide range of intersecting pedagogical concerns, connecting the student differences he has experienced to broader issues like why a particular student might or might not be engaged. Reflections like this are often labeled as technical reflection because the candidate identifies complexity but does not explicitly question assumptions and/or consider other points of view. Descriptions often contain implicit questions, for example, this candidate is considering questions such as, What is my teaching philosophy? Which students are engaged? Why? How do I evaluate the vast range of students’ written work?

The act of narrating appears to support candidates as they orient to teaching as a profession, helping them name the many dimensions of teachers’ work, such as classroom procedures, planning, and student engagement. By looking again at descriptions, we note implied questions and a focus on pedagogical concerns.

**“How can I” questions.** As noted in Table 1, throughout the course of the student teaching experience, candidates shift the focus of their questioning from students to instructional concerns. This suggests that candidates first focus on understanding student strengths and needs and later focus their questioning on the curriculum and teaching practices.

We noted two different patterns in how candidates pose questions about students. Elementary candidates in particular express concern for *balancing student support and upholding classroom expectations*. For example, in describing a student presenting behavior challenges in class, one candidate asks, “How do I make him see his value and praise him without allowing him to get away with behaviors that cannot be tolerated?” (K. O. R., February 14, 2012). This teacher candidate uses a “how do I” question to frame the tension of valuing individual students and establishing community norms for behavior. She demonstrates awareness of other points of view by expressing that despite challenging behavior, her student has “value.” Framing her concern as a tension between giving praise and enacting discipline opens up two lenses for evaluating next steps.

Secondary candidates, conversely, tend to express concern about *gaining respect and engaging or approaching students*, as seen in the following questions: “How can I get students to see me as the teacher, listen to me and give me the respect that they give Mrs. R.?” (E. H., January 22, 2013); “How can I (or should I) approach students about which I am concerned? Do I even have time for that?” (M. M., January 29, 2013). The first question makes visible the teacher candidate’s

understanding that her actions impact how students respond to her. The second question makes visible the teacher candidate's effort to envision a range of possible actions—from approaching students to not approaching students of concern.

When posing “how can I” questions in relation to instruction, candidates highlight two concerns: (a) engaging all students and (b) teaching for understanding. In considering engagement, candidates highlight particular instructional issues, such as how curriculum and teacher questioning can influence student engagement:

I am just very confused about how to make the Reading Street curriculum more engaging and interesting for students. There are so many components that go into reading (i.e., vocab, comprehension, fluency . . .). How can we spend adequate time on engaging them all? (E. V. H., March 5, 2013)

This teacher candidate expresses confusion, names the multiple components of balanced reading instruction, and uses the question “How can we spend adequate time on engaging them all?” to frame the tension between instructional time, student engagement, and the components of the reading curriculum. Her use of the term “all” suggests that she is actively engaged in thinking about student learning and engagement in relation to curriculum. Her use of the term “we” suggests that she understands that the tension between the child and the curriculum is a dilemma that all educators engage.

Another teacher candidate posed the question “How do I ask questions that have entry points for more students?” (J. S., March 13, 2012). This teacher candidate uses a “how do I” question to identify two areas of instructional concern: teacher questioning strategies and creating entry points for students. His use of the term “more students” suggests his awareness that students have different learning needs and that his students are not equally engaged.

In highlighting teaching for understanding, candidates actively consider student thinking and needed background information as well as how to frame learning experiences so that they are intentionally focused on meaningful understandings: “How do I allow students to express their thoughts and learn from their mistakes without teaching the other students incorrectly, and how can I change this lesson or other lessons to frame understanding?” (K. O. R., February 28, 2012). This elementary teacher candidate uses a “how do I” question to frame the tension between honoring how “students express their thoughts” and creating lessons to “frame understanding.” A secondary science candidate reflects on a similar question:

I'm curious about how much prep or background information I should do with the students in order to create meaning out of this lab instead of simply having it be an engaging activity. Should I do a demo to model the activity? What analysis questions are appropriate? (E. H., March 5, 2013)

This teacher candidate expresses curiosity and uses a “should I” question to frame the tension between planning an engaging lab activity and supporting students in creating meaning and scientific understanding. She uses questions to debate a range

### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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of approaches: “prep or background information,” “demo to model,” and “analysis questions.” Reflections like this are labeled as technical because the candidate is asking questions about a specific learning task. We note that both of these candidates are framing central instructional dilemmas and are considering their students’ understandings in relation to content. Candidates may use reflections like these to highlight a continuum of choices or actions by contrasting what they view as the limits of those choices, or each end of the continuum, for example, juxtaposing “learn from mistakes” with “teaching incorrectly” or contrasting “engaging activity” with “clear learning.” Posing “how can I” questions supports candidates in clarifying instructional issues and possibilities and in considering a range of action steps they might take.

**Reframing questions.** Candidates also pose reframing questions, wherein they reconsider instructional purposes, state uncertainty, and debate trade-offs. As noted in Table 1, candidates rarely pose reframing questions, and reframing questions occur only in the second half of the student teaching experience. This suggests that candidates have the capacity to ask reframing questions and that they may need time to orient to teaching and to consider possible instructional actions before questioning the curriculum or the assumptions they bring to teaching.

When posing reframing questions, candidates express concern about the pace of instruction as mandated in curriculum guides, consider the purposes of learning experiences, and consider their own assumptions:

My experience has been me being so frustrated with how fast *Math Expressions* moves children! . . . Since [our district] is standards-based, 3rd graders only need to understand area of rectangles and perimeter of objects. What *Math Expressions* goes into is much more complex. Why don’t the curriculum that is mandated and the standards align? (E. V. H., February 12, 2013)

Posing reframing questions appears to support candidates in thinking critically about curricula and their instructional choices. This reflective statement makes visible how intertwined different kinds of reflection are. This candidate names her frustration and adds emphasis by using an exclamation mark. This kind of reflective statement is often described in the literature as self-centered. She then makes an instructional comment, noting the difference in complexity between district standards and the focus of the curriculum materials. She expresses awareness of the impact on learners, writing, “how fast *Math Expressions* moves children!” Finally, she poses a question about instructional alignment, asking a reframing question about curriculum and standards. Her question is not about “how to” but rather asks “why.” This candidate productively engages her feelings and the tension between teaching a mandated curriculum and engaging students where they are in their math learning.

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**Realizations**

Candidate realizations in our sample reflect three general patterns: (a) affirming talk, which includes self-reminders, self-encouragement, and claiming agency around particular issues; (b) taking perspective, which means placing an immediate issue in a larger picture, such as seeing teacher learning as a long-term endeavor or coming to terms with factors candidates can or cannot control; and (c) questioning assumptions, in which candidates pose critical questions, see things in a new way, and/or name new insights.

As shown in Table 2, 50% (39/78) of the written realizations involved questioning assumptions, and over the course of student teaching the number of times that candidates questioned assumptions increased. For example, 41% (12/29) of all realizations in the first half of student teaching involved questioning assumptions, while in the second half this percentage had grown to 55% (27/49).

Yet it is to the other statements that we direct our attention. Fifty percent of all realizations (39/78) reflect an even combination of affirming talk (19) and taking perspective (20)—statements that do not involve critical questioning, major shifts in perspective, or deep insights into student learning. Like reframing statements, these realizations shift over time, but in the opposite direction. Taken together, 17 affirming talk and perspective-taking statements in the first half of student teaching amount to nearly 59% of all realizations (17/29), whereas this percentage falls to 45% (22/49) in the second half.

**Affirming talk.** In stating a realization as affirming talk, candidates remind themselves of what they know, talk themselves through fear, and/or claim agency in relation to various constraints. Klein (2008) highlighted the importance of self-talk to visualizing “something not present, but desired” (p. 113). Such comments may focus on garnering courage to push back on an existing curriculum or materials: “I need to not be afraid to tweak assessments or make different assessments to see what they know” (K. O. R., March 6, 2012). Other comments reassure and remind candidates of their own abilities:

[A realization I’ve had] is to calm down and plan this lesson as I always plan lessons—with intention and thoughtfulness and trust in my own abilities, I can’t

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**Table 2**  
**Patterns in Teacher Candidate Realizations**

Pattern	First half of semester	Second half of semester	Total
Affirming talk	6	13	19
Taking perspective	11	9	20
Questioning assumptions	12	27	39
Total	29	49	78

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### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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do everything perfectly every time and I shouldn't be obsessing about trying to.  
(L. R. P., March 6, 2012)

In other cases, candidates seek confidence in situations of accountability, as in this case, prior to parent–teacher conferences:

As teachers, we make our grading scale/breakdown with a lot of thought and consideration. The grades don't lie. As long as we know that our system is “fair” and represents students' knowledge, we should not be worried to talk about it w/ parents. (E. H., January 29, 2013)

Such comments are often understood as weaker forms of reflection, in that they amount to a need for emotional reassurance and validation. Yet such comments help us see the full range of concerns that beginning teachers encounter—including the clear need to remind themselves of their own knowledge, worth, and power and to reassert these things when making specific teaching decisions. Such comments suggest the many ways in which teachers are vulnerable to self-doubt and fear as they work under powerful observational gazes of mentors, supervisors, principals, and parents. Initiating change can be risky for a student teacher; even well-considered judgment might be called into question. Finally, these comments reveal that concerns for affirmation are not isolated but intertwined with critical instructional practices, for example, how to shape an assessment, whether to trust one's abilities in lesson planning, and how to develop and represent fair grading systems. Affirming talk helps us see that worth, validation, agency, and emotional confidence are always woven into teaching decisions—that learning to manage and sustain self-confidence is central to the work of every teacher.

**Perspective taking.** In perspective taking, candidates reflect awareness of a longer timeline for teacher learning—that not all has to be learned at once. They assert the time it takes to build classroom routines and to connect to students. They name the complexity of teacher learning. For example, a secondary candidate concerned about establishing her presence in the classroom writes,

It takes time to earn the respect of students. This problem may seem big now, but as time goes on, they will become used to me and will realize that they need to listen/pay attention to me. I need to be patient with this, this won't happen overnight. (E. H., January 22, 2013)

In referencing the challenges of a mandated performance assessment, an elementary candidate writes, “The [assessment] is about where you are in your quest to become a master teacher, not an expectation that you should already be there. . . . The most important piece in all this is self-reflection and the motivation to keep improving” (L. R. P., March 6, 2012).

In perspective taking, candidates also distinguish between factors they can and cannot control. One secondary candidate writes regarding her effort to provide an after-school makeup opportunity,

I can only give students the opportunity to make up the lab; I can't *make* them take advantage of it. As long as I continue to make this option available to students, and encourage them to do it, I am doing my part. They need to step up and do their part. (E. H., March 19, 2013)

Such forms of reflection are often dismissed as being self-centered, rationalizing, or even defensive. Yet, taking perspective, like affirming talk, helps candidates not become overwhelmed or defeated by the immediate challenges they face, especially by providing broader images of their own growth trajectories and responsibilities. Perspective taking suggests that candidates have to work hard to maintain a “growth mindset” (Dweck, 2000) in relation to their own development—a stance focused on learning and not just on a display of successful performance. By placing their own learning in a longer time frame, or by reframing roles and responsibilities, candidates wrestle with ideal visions of themselves (e.g., as a “master teacher”), learning to be patient with their growth. Candidates experiment with, or try on, various frames, both to engage outside pressures and to reenvision problems that seem extremely hard. In this way, perspective taking nurtures hope in candidates by allowing them to temporarily make sense of complex situations and pressure, to which they can return later with greater experience and expertise. Through perspective taking, candidates perform rich, emotionally laden identity work (Alsup, 2006) that is fraught with ethical questions pertinent to their ongoing professional growth.

**Questioning assumptions.** In this form of realization, candidates question the instructional assumptions and larger purposes of their actions. Such reframing occurs in relation to instructional assumptions, student learning, and recognizing and supporting the whole student. In relation to instruction, a secondary social studies candidate writes,

The big thing I realized is that a “review” doesn't always have to be in the form of taking out a block of time at the beginning of class to go over things. Review can be integrated into lessons. K. specifically mentioned having stopping points for clarification during subsequent lessons. (A. M., February 28, 2012)

In this comment, the candidate reconsiders the assumption that “review” is separate from ongoing learning activities. Reframing comments provide a sense of possibility for candidates, breathing new life into their perspectives on students and instruction. Such comments open up new horizons for action and assist candidates in seeing their practice in new ways. We note that questioning of assumptions occurred most frequently in the second half of the student teaching experience.

### **Action Steps**

The debriefing form asks candidates to use the sentence frame “An action I might take is . . .” in relation to their questions and/or realizations. In Table 3, candidate action steps are reflected in two different ways. First, they are divided

### Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections

into broad content areas: (a) management/learning community–related actions and (b) instruction/curriculum actions. Across these areas, about twice as many action steps relate to instruction compared to management. Second, we categorized these steps by whether the proposed action was “general” or “specific.” Results suggest that candidates are more likely to name a general direction for action as opposed to a specific step. General steps offer relatively vague suggestions for responding to a particular instructional challenge, such as a desire to include “more group work.” Specific steps involve identifying concrete changes to lesson plans, assessments, or rubrics or naming specific instructional actions. For example, a science student teacher writes,

I will stress the need to write observations as they go and answer the questions embedded in the procedures. I will also bring back the models in the questions: How do your models of polymers and cross-linked polymers represent the goo? (E. H., March 5, 2013)

Specific steps for some candidates arise in relation to evidence presented; other candidates note that specific steps are generated through collegial conversation.

The prevalence of “general” action steps in our sample reflects a common concern in the literature that preservice teachers can become both “technical” (focused on what to do) and “surface” in their reflections. Yet the tendency to develop general steps suggests that candidates may be working through important phases in learning, such as tentatively searching for solutions, actively generating ideas, and setting broad directions for action. For example, candidates’ tendency to produce general steps suggests that they often need to situate specific actions in a broader frame, that is, to name a big-picture direction for themselves, before devoting time to specifics:

*General instructional step.* “An action I might take would be to create a more relaxing and inviting writing environment for the students” (E. V. H., January 29, 2013).

*General management step.* “I intend to up interpersonal conversations between myself and students to try to connect on some non-academic levels” (M. M., February 5, 2013).

**Table 3**  
**Patterns in Teacher Candidates’ Action Steps**

Pattern	First half of semester	Second half of semester	Total
Management/instruction			
Management	10	8	18
Instruction related	18	21	39
General/specific			
General step	20	14	34
Specific step	8	14	22

In these comments, candidates reflect upon issues of classroom climate and how students might best be served through reshaping the social–emotional and/or relational culture. Here candidates set broad frames for growth, for example, they shift away from pure content concerns, cognitive achievement, lesson planning, and tweaking the existing curriculum. One candidate sees connections between the “inviting” nature of the environment and students’ desire to write. Another names the “interpersonal” realm as an area for growth, noting the importance of relationship building through “non-academic” conversation.

Such comments suggest that preservice candidates need time to develop such vision—to decide which among many multiple instructional goals they should prioritize and pursue. The proposed steps are general, yet they also reflect important paradigm work, a shifting vision among the many stances and positions teachers can take with their students and toward their own work. Candidates may need to take such steps before they are able to focus their reflections and actions on detailed teaching practice.

## **Discussion**

Teacher candidates are faced with an immense range of issues to make sense of during student teaching: individual student concerns, using or generating a curriculum, developing specific teaching plans, building community, adapting to work conditions, assessing student learning, responding to management challenges, collaborating with a mentor, implementing school-wide mandates, and reflecting on their own identity as a new educator. They encounter multiple issues at once. Our study suggests that candidates rely on a wide range of reflection strategies to manage this complex situation, including significant amounts of narrating or describing, technical questioning about immediate teaching situations (How do I . . . ? or How can I . . . ?), self-affirmation, and perspective taking. They name and try on various general action steps. Indeed, candidates use diverse pathways for accomplishing the fundamental work of reflection, creating a “continuous interaction between inference and observation” (Clarà, 2015, p. 265).

Typical models of reflection in the literature describe low and high levels of reflection, often equating low levels with descriptive accounts, lack of questioning, and a focus on the self. Abstract, critical insights are valued over concrete or technical concerns. Yet, in our view, candidates often locate for themselves the space in which they need to learn. Likewise, candidates need time to assess the many factors that are at play in the school context and to build a sense of agency before they can reframe their stance toward instructional dilemmas. They may need to set very broad directions for action (general steps) before being able to generate specific forms of practice. Furthermore, just as candidates use many different approaches to give coherence to uncertain situations, our candidates appear to achieve different kinds of coherence. Teacher educators often look for curricular or pedagogical insights in

### *Looking Again at “Surface-Level” Reflections*

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student thinking; yet candidates may have different aims, for example, establishing a kind of “emotional coherence” with their work and clarifying how they feel, who they are or want to be, or what their confidence and agency are in relation to complex work demands. This suggests that emotional coherence and identity work, although often underappreciated, are central to the work of teacher reflection.

As we have explored and discussed teacher candidate thinking, we have grappled with our own assumptions about teacher reflection. We have asked ourselves questions such as, How can we both honor teacher candidate reflection strategies and capacities and support them in engaging in new strategies? How do descriptive accounts help us see growth in teacher questioning and in reconsidering practice? How does a particular candidate’s reflection support growth and development at a particular moment in time? We do not assume that teacher candidates do not need support to reflect or that all reflection leads to teacher growth. Instead, we respond to our awareness that beginning teachers are asked to navigate a vast array of intense, new experiences. Through our analysis, we have found that reflection is an everyday process where early career professionals use “spontaneous, common, real thinking” (Clarà, 2015, p. 270). By looking again at teacher candidates’ reflections, we are engaging the tension of honoring these efforts to make sense of teaching experiences and analytically naming different aspects of reflection.

Limitations of our research include the small sample size and that our data proceed from a single graduate-level university program, which results in representing a limited range of candidates and potential reflection practices. In addition, the reflection practices that we capture occur in a specific setting—on a university campus during a seminar, rather than in a school-based classroom setting. For example, verbal reflections in school-based contexts might shape different reflective practices or themes than those we see in our sample. Our qualitative emphasis, while helping us see nuances in patterns of reflection within a small sample, does not allow us to analyze broader patterns over time with larger numbers of candidates. We see room for continued research to test our reflection categories against larger samples.

Yet we also believe our work holds implications for teacher education practitioners. A student teaching seminar is a common learning setting in teacher education programs. As we plan for our own student teaching seminar, for example, the following questions guide our practice:

- What are our own assumptions and beliefs about what productive reflection looks like?
- What steps are candidates taking with their everyday reflections on teaching?
- To what extent do candidates have opportunities to make visible, record, and revisit reflections over time?

- How are candidates supported to question, express realizations, and propose action steps?
- What opportunities are there to engage in collegial dialogue about practice?

By considering these questions and looking again at what are typically deemed surface-level reflections, we engage a competence-based, rather than deficit-based, view of early teacher learning. We work to value how seemingly routine reflections serve a relevant purpose for teacher growth and development. Although reflection practices across a range of beginning teachers will necessarily be diverse, we believe that as teacher educators we can grow in our ability to identify, understand, and even normalize common patterns and strategies of reflection, to best support beginning teachers in the processes of entering a highly complex profession.

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#### Learning from Practice Student Teaching Debrief

Please reflect on one experience (e.g., challenging, successful, or surprising) from your student teaching that is on your mind today.

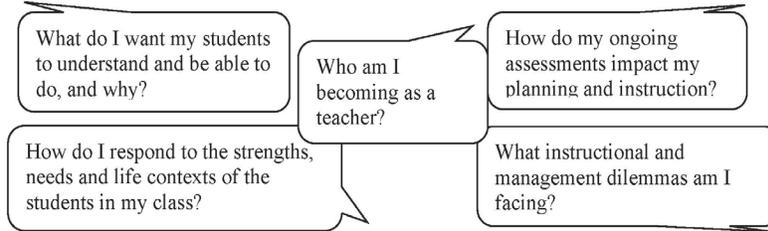
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class/Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Subject/Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Please write about your experience below. What question does this experience raise for you?

Is there anything about the context of this experience that is important to note? If so, explain.

What student and/or teacher evidence (e.g. lesson plans, student work) is relevant to this experience or would help you further reflect on this experience?

Please mark the core question for this course with which your experience most relates.



After your discussion of this experience, respond to one or both of the following:

A realization I've had . . .  
An action I might take . . .

What new or lingering question(s) do you now have?

**Appendix B**

**Example of a Completed Reflection Tool and Evidence Included**

**Learning from Practice**  
Student Teaching Debrief

Please reflect on one experience (e.g., challenging, successful, or surprising) from your student teaching that is on your mind today.

Name [redacted] Class/Grade Level 2nd  
Date MARCH 6, 2012 Subject/Topic Reading

Please write about your experience below. What question does this experience raise for you?

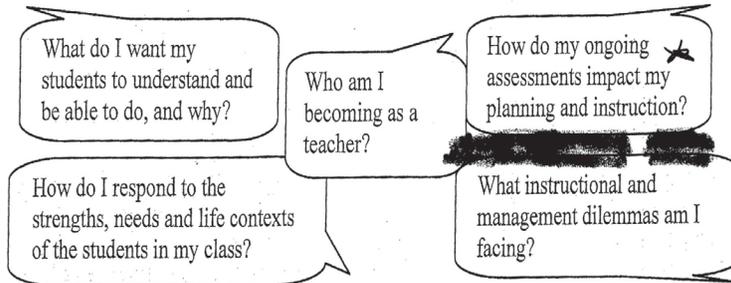
We spent all last week working on comprehension and trying to find the main idea of a story. This is something we are focusing on in writing as well. The week before all of the students did really well on the reading test but this week the kids were all across the board when it came to the writing part. Because of ELL testing our low ELL students have taken the test because they have been in class the last 3 weeks and I know they would struggle with the writing but I was shocked to find some of my higher kids had difficulties as well. We have done multiple lessons and even explicitly wrote down the main idea on a public record and no one could recall it. I know that this assessment is awful and so my question is how can I ~~test~~ teach this concept and assess it in a worthwhile manner taking into account my students needs?

Is there anything about the context of this experience that is important to note? If so, explain.  
19/25 students are ELL  
11 are low ELL  
only 11 of my students are benchmark.

What student and/or teacher evidence (e.g. lesson plans, student work) is relevant to this experience or would help you further reflect on this experience?

The story itself.

Please mark the core question for this course with which your experience most relates.



After your discussion of this experience, respond to one or both of the following:

A realization I've had . . .

An action I might take . . .

Students often have a tension between verbally being able to say what they know and writing it. Giving them a chance to write what they do know and rephrasing test questions for better understanding can help the students. I need to not be afraid to tweak assessments or make different assessments to see what they know.

*Looking Again at "Surface-Level" Reflections*

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**D**irections  
Read each question. Write your answer.

**14** What is this selection mostly about?

This selection is mostly  
about Helen.

**15** Why did the author tell about Helen's pranks at the beginning of the story?

because she wan't to be  
in charge.

**D**irections

Read each question. Write your answer.

14 What is this selection mostly about?

this is mostly about  
helen was bland.

15 Why did the author tell about Helen's pranks at the beginning of the story?

because we can  
see how she was  
bland.

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## **Preconditions for Success and Barriers to Implementation**

### **The Importance of Collaborative and Reflective Dispositions to Foster Professional Growth during a Coteaching Clinical Experience**

**Megan Guise, Mireille Habib, Amy Robbins,  
Sarah Hegg, Chance Hoellwarth, & Nancy Stauch**

Drawing on the work of Badiali and Titus (2010) and Bacharach, Heck, and Dahlberg (2010), we define coteaching as the following: both cooperating teacher and teacher candidate are engaged in student learning at all times through daily coplanning, coinstruction, and coassessment. We argue that collaborative planning (e.g., sharing ideas, developing instructional materials for feedback, sharing resources), instructing (i.e., the development of specific roles using a coinstructional strategy<sup>1</sup>), and assessing (collaborative evaluation, grading, and reflection on both formative and summative assessments) are the keys to successful coteaching.

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### *Preconditions for Success and Barriers to Implementation*

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Early research on coteaching explored how coteaching could better support special education students. With the move toward inclusion and legislation that required students to be educated in the least restrictive environment as part of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act and No Child Left Behind, coteaching began to be a model of instruction that paired general and special education teachers to serve both populations of students in the inclusion classroom (Austin, 2001; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Kamens, 2007).

Research on the perceptions of coteachers in the field of special education found that teachers and students perceive coteaching as favorable, citing reasons such as lower student-to-teacher ratio, more attention paid to individual students, and more expertise in the classroom (expertise in terms of content knowledge and teaching students with special needs; Austin, 2001; Kamens, 2007; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Although favorable results were found, studies also revealed the subordinate role that special education teachers feel they assume when working with the general educator (Scruggs et al., 2007) and the need for administrative support, time, and training to be able to implement coteaching effectively (Kohler-Evans, 2006; Murray, 2004; Scruggs et al., 2007).

### **Coteaching in the Clinical Experience**

Although coteaching has its origins in the field of special education (Friend & Reising, 1993), general teacher education programs began to explore coteaching as a model for the clinical experience (Darragh, Picanco, Tully, & Henning, 2011). Bacharach et al. (2010) explored the differences in math and reading achievement of K–6 students in cotaught and non-cotaught settings and concluded that coteaching had a positive impact on learners in the classroom, using gains on high-stakes exams as one measure to show this positive impact. Additional research on coteaching has moved beyond the gains for students and has focused on the development of coteachers, specifically how coteaching pairs engage in cogenerative dialogue throughout their coteaching experience (Scantlebury, Gallo-Fox, & Wassell, 2008). Research studies on coteaching have found value in cogenerative dialogue because this dialogue provides an opportunity to reflect on a shared experience (Badiali & Titus, 2010; Beers, 2008) and to “examine their schema and practices in the presence of the other stakeholders in the classroom” (Beers, 2008, p. 447). Researchers have also posited that coteaching can provide an opportunity for teacher development through “shared contribution, collective responsibility, [and] expanded agency” (Murphy & Carlisle, 2008, p. 505).

Although research on coteaching in the clinical experience has identified favorable results, challenges include how realistic it is for two teachers to be in the room once the teacher candidate is an employed teacher, how to foster the coteaching relationship, and how to make the expectations and understanding of the coteaching model clear (Darragh et al., 2011).

## **Theoretical Framing**

### **Reflective Practice**

In his argument for *reflection* as a critical part of quality instruction, Amboi (2006) called reflection “a quintessential element that breathes life to high quality teaching” (p. 24). Dewey (1933) wrote about reflective thinking—thinking that is grounded in a problem, question, or unknown that leads to “an act of searching, hunting, inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity” (p. 12). Rogers (2002) explained that reflection is an act of meaning making that must take place “in community, in interaction with others,” and that requires commitment to “personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others” (p. 845). Schön’s (1983, 1987) articulation of reflection extended beyond reflective thinking to *reflection-in-action*, positing that reflection can immediately impact action.

By promoting reflective thinking in teacher preparation programs, teacher educators can help their teacher candidates become active, careful thinkers who make deliberate, purposeful choices. The coteaching model of clinical practice creates an opportunity for coteachers to engage in this type of collaborative reflection by means of cogenerative dialogue (Scantlebury et al., 2008).

### **Teacher Dispositions**

As the findings of this study reveal, one precondition for the successful implementation of coteaching was connected to the collaborative and reflective dispositions that both coteachers embodied. Similar to teacher education programs supporting teacher candidates to develop professional teaching dispositions (Arnstine, 1967; Freeman, 2007; Katz & Raths, 1985; National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers, 2002), these dispositions also impacted the implementation of coteaching. Grounding our understanding of dispositions in the work of Katz (1995), we define *dispositions* as “a pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, and that is intentional and oriented to broad goals” (p. 63). Defining dispositions in this way, we also align with the work of Katz and Raths (1985), who posited that dispositions are “habits of the mind, not mindless habits” (p. 303). Viewing dispositions with an awareness of consciousness and a connection to behavior, we believe that dispositions are malleable; education programs can create spaces for “nurturing dispositions” (Hare, 2007, p. 144), and dispositions can be “learned and strengthened” (Raths, 2007, p. 162).

## **Purpose of the Study**

Given the body of research on coteaching and the theoretical frameworks of reflection and teacher dispositions, our study was guided by the following questions:

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1. How is coteaching (coplanning, coinstruction, coassessment) implemented in a single-subject clinical experience?
  - a. What are the actions of implementation?
  - b. How does the implementation of the model evolve throughout the clinical experience (practicum, part time, and full time)?
  - c. What factors facilitated or hindered implementation of the model?
  - d. What are the emerging conditions for success?

Our study adds to the current body of research on coteaching in several ways. First, we tease apart coteaching, examining the implementation not only of coinstruction but also of coplanning and coassessment. Second, we examine the impact that coteaching has on both coteachers, not just on the teacher candidate. Our study also addresses the recommendations provided by teacher candidates surveyed by Darragh et al. (2011), which included the need for longer placements and the coteaching pair's attendance at coteaching trainings.

## **Method**

### ***Context of the Investigation***

The research study occurred during the 2014/2015 school year of a yearlong post-baccalaureate credentialing program. Teacher candidates enrolled in the credentialing program simultaneously completed three-quarters of course work and a yearlong clinical experience that gradually increased from a practicum experience (mainly observing, assisting, and tutoring in a secondary classroom) to a coteaching placement (teaching side by side with a practicing teacher, first half-days and then full days). Two coteaching trainings were provided to all pairs (August and January). Trainings explored a variety of coteaching topics, such as fostering the coteaching relationship; defining and exploring coplanning, coinstruction, and coassessment; planning a gradual release model of leadership while still emphasizing collaboration; and discussing coteaching successes and challenges. Coinstructional strategies (e.g., team teaching) were also modeled.

### ***Case Study Participants***

In this article, we focus on a subset of the spring cohort—Chris—to provide a more nuanced picture of the teacher candidate's participation in a coteaching experience. Prior to attending the single-subject credentialing program in 2014, Chris completed his undergraduate degree in wildlife biology in 2007. Upon graduation, he worked as a wildlife biologist before returning to school to pursue his teaching credential. Bill, Chris's cooperating teacher, was in his 18th year of teaching and taught Anatomy and Physiology as well as Biology.

### **Data**

**Weekly teacher candidate coteaching reflections.** Each teacher candidate electronically submitted reflections each week of part- and full-time coteaching, totaling approximately 25 reflections. The weekly reflection had both open- and close-ended prompts about the implementation of coplanning, coconstructing, and coassessing. For coplanning, the close-ended prompts included nonexamples of coplanning to capture the planning practices that occurred, whether they were collaborative or not. (See Appendix A for the weekly reflection prompts.)

**Observation report and materials.** Each coteaching pair was assigned a university supervisor who observed his or her pair 12–15 times over the course of the clinical experience. Typically, one full period was observed, and then the university supervisor would debrief with the coteaching pair. For each lesson observed, the university supervisor would submit an observation report, which included quantitative data (e.g., ranking of lesson plan quality and classroom management) as well as qualitative data (e.g., what worked and recommendations for improvement). In addition, specific coteaching questions were a part of this observation report, which asked the university supervisor to describe the implementation of coteaching observed.

**Semistructured interviews.** Chris and Bill were interviewed separately on two occasions during the yearlong placement: a month before the transition from part- to full-time coteaching and at the conclusion of the clinical experience. Prior to Interview 2, Interview 1 was transcribed and coded, and specific questions were created for Chris and Bill for the purpose of member checking (Athanases & Heath, 1995; Carspecken, 1996; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Spradley, 1979). The main goal of these interviews was to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the implementation of coteaching for Chris and Bill. (See Appendix B for interview protocol.) In addition, the university supervisor was interviewed at the conclusion of the clinical experience. (See Appendix C for interview protocol.)

### **Coding and Interpretation**

As in most interpretive and qualitative research, analysis for this research study was ongoing and reiterative. Initial analysis of data included the annotation of data with interpretive and analytic memos (Emerson et al., 1995). After this initial analysis of data, a more systematic and inductive coding occurred. First, we separated the data into episodes: “a series of turns that all relate to the same topic or theme” (Lewis & Ketter, 2004, p. 123). Once episodes had been demarcated, open coding occurred to explore ideas and themes related to coteaching (Emerson et al., 1995). A core set of codes was established based on this open coding, with focused coding occurring to identify patterns and subthemes related to coteaching (Emerson et al., 1995). For example, an episode from an interview was first coded for a broad theme of *coplanning*, *coconstructing*, or *coassessing*. After coding this

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interview episode as *coconstructing*, a subcode was identified for the type of coinstructional strategy that was being described (e.g., *team teaching*). When coded as *team teaching*, an additional subcode was applied that identified *how* team teaching was implemented (i.e., *joint*, where both coteachers were equally contributing at all moments in the lesson, or *divided*, where the coteachers were “tag teaming” and one coteacher was taking the lead for a portion of the lesson and then the other coteacher took the lead for a different portion). Finally, this episode was coded for additional themes related to teaching and coteaching (e.g., *classroom management*, *power dynamic*).

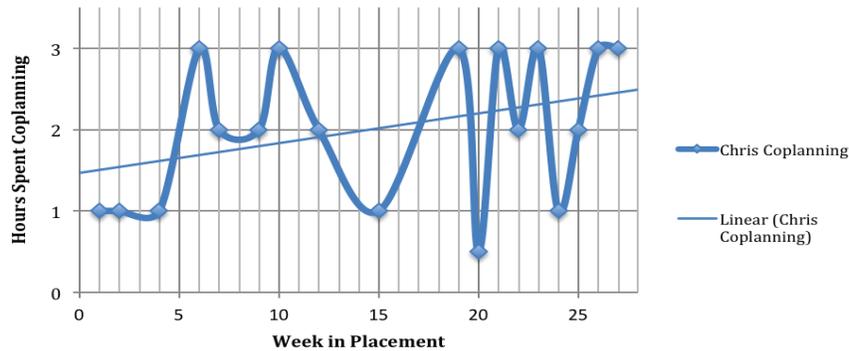
All data were double-coded, and interrater reliability was found to be at 85% or above. The agreed-upon codes for the data set were then inputted into NVivo for additional analysis.

## Findings

### What Are the Actions of Coplanning?

Examining weekly reflections from Chris over the course of 27 weeks, Chris’s coplanning was collaborative in that Chris and Bill would meet to discuss planning (spending at least 2 hours coplanning a week). The major dip in the amount of time spent coplanning during Week 20 can be attributed to a performance assessment required for Chris’s credentialing program, but even in this week, conversations about planning occurred for at least an hour. Data from Chris’s weekly reflections show that time spent coplanning increased throughout the clinical experience, and Chris and Bill frequently modified lesson plans together (72% of the time). Even when Chris took the leadership role in planning, he commonly consulted with Bill and/or modified a previous lesson or assessment that Bill had implemented. Figure 1 and Table 1 show data collected from Chris’s weekly reflections.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1**  
Amount of Time Spent Coplanning Each Week



In addition to quantitative data collected from weekly reflections, insight into what coplanning looked like for Chris and Bill was discovered through two semi-structured interviews. Interviews revealed that there was an intentional leadership transition when it came to coplanning and that coplanning allowed for an expanded curriculum, a benefit to Bill and his secondary students. In the following sections, interview data are presented to illustrate these aspects of coplanning.

**Scaffolded clinical experience: Gradual release of planning responsibility.**

The coteaching experience provided Chris and Bill with an opportunity to learn and grow as teachers. For Chris, learning occurred through a carefully scaffolded clinical experience that can be described as a gradual release of responsibilities. In interviews and weekly reflections, Chris and Bill described how they approached coplanning and the leadership progression. Chris wrote, “Co-planning has become a daily task. It is at a smaller scale, but communication and dialogue about lessons, changes to lesson, assessments has [*sic*] become regular” (Week 1 Reflection). Elaborating on their planning process during Interview 2, Chris stated, “We did a lot of brainstorming and talking. There was a lot of discussion involved in our coplanning. I don’t feel like much of it was just sit by ourselves, do stuff, and then come together and discuss it afterwards.” Chris’s weekly reflection and interviews reveal the emphasis placed on daily reflective conversations about teaching.

As the clinical experience progressed, Bill intentionally allocated more leadership responsibilities to Chris; however, he still was actively involved in the planning process and would provide Chris with materials and ideas that he could use and

**Table 1**  
**Planning Practices**

<i>Planning practice</i>	<i>No. of weeks</i>	<i>% of time</i>
You were given lesson(s) or page(s) to teach without discussion.	0/18	0
You were given lesson(s) to teach with discussion and/or clarifying questions asked and answered.	8/18	44
You were given lesson(s) and jointly modified with your cooperating teacher (CT).	13/18	72
You were given lesson(s) and you modified on your own.	8/18	44
Beginning with a standard/objective, you and your CT jointly developed a new lesson.	6/18	33
Beginning with a standard/objective, you developed your own lesson.	7/18	39
Beginning with a standard/objective, you provided your CT with a lesson for him/her to teach.	0/18	0
Other (e.g., designing an assessment).	4/18	22

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modify. During Interview 1, Bill described the shift in leadership: “In my mind, it’s the percentages. . . . I got a lot of stuff, but you need to make it yours . . . look at it, make it yours, and then you’ll do a lot better job teaching.” When describing how he was going to meet with Chris over Thanksgiving break to coplan, Bill explained, “It needs to happen for me too. I have to evaluate what I did last year.” This example not only reveals the gradual shift in leadership that Bill had planned during the last few weeks of part-time coteaching but also reveals that Bill himself is a reflective, collaborative teacher. He is open to new ideas (allowing Chris to make changes to his previous lessons and materials), but he is also reflective and wants to continue to improve his own instruction. As is explored in the discussion section of this article, Bill’s disposition of reflective teaching was one contributing factor to a successful coteaching experience.

**Expanded and refined practice of the cooperating teacher.** Not only did Chris and Bill both initiate and engage in reflective conversations during coplanning but Bill also expressed during Interview 1 that his own practice was made better as a result of coteaching, especially when it came to transitioning to the Next Generation Science Standards: “So that’s been really good for me, especially with the new standards because he’s always leaning on the new standards. And honestly, the new teacher candidates . . . probably know them as well as or better than us who are here.” This perspective reveals that Bill valued Chris and saw him as an equal teaching colleague and even a more knowledgeable colleague in regard to the Next Generation Science Standards. Having opportunities for Chris to share his knowledge of the standards with Bill and to design a curriculum together, Bill developed as a professional.

#### **What Are the Actions of Coconstructing?**

In Chris’s weekly reflections, he self-reported weekly coinstructional strategies. In any given week, more than one coinstructional strategy was employed. In addition, Chris and Bill implemented all six strategies at least once, except for parallel teaching, feeling that the classroom space made it challenging to implement this strategy. As depicted in Table 2, Chris and Bill implemented one teach/

**Table 2**  
***Coinstructional Strategies Implemented***

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>No. of weeks</i>	<i>% of time</i>
One teach/one observe	12/18	67
One teach/one assist	16/18	89
Team teaching	13/18	72
Station teaching	5/18	28
Parallel teaching	0/18	0
Differentiated teaching	7/18	39

one observe (67%), one teach/one assist (89%), and team teaching (72%) as the primary coinstructional strategies.

The semistructured interviews provided more insight into what each coinstructional strategy looked like in action and how team teaching and one teach/one assist enhanced student learning by helping make content accessible to students.

**Making content accessible through collaborative teaching.** One positive effect of having two teachers actively involved in each lesson was the ability for Chris and Bill to “reach” certain students and make content accessible to a variety of students. During Interview 1, Chris described their coinstructional strategies and noted in particular that teaching required his mind to focus on several different things at the same time and that it was easy to forget something. For this reason, he saw the value of having a second person in the room to answer questions, describe something in a different way, or even to ask aloud, “Is there anything you think I’m forgetting?” He articulated that students benefited from this team teaching within lessons regardless of who was the “lead teacher.” This example of coteaching depicts both Chris and Bill interacting as a team when instructing students, able to build off of each other’s contributions and fill in any gaps as needed. Chris contended that his secondary students benefited from the coteachers’ different perspectives, and we see value for Chris’s professional growth due to Bill assisting him when he might be struggling as a beginning teacher to manage everything in the classroom at one time.

Similar to the preceding example, Chris and Bill also collaborated on planning and designing new assessments to better support student learning and prepare students for college. One such example was designing a lab practical, which Chris felt would not have been implemented had there not been two teachers in the room:

CHRIS: Thursday was the standard exam that they’re used to . . . and then on Friday we came up with a college-style lab practical.

AMY: So was this something he [Bill] hadn’t done before?

CHRIS: Correct.

AMY: Was this something he tried new because he had you?

CHRIS: Yeah.

While Bill’s teaching practices had been expanded by codesigning this assessment with Chris and coconstructing to implement the stations required for the lab practical, the students’ learning experience was also ultimately enhanced, exposing them to a different type of assessment, which they might encounter throughout their future educational careers.

### ***What Are the Actions of Coassessing?***

Coassessing occurred daily for Chris and Bill. In his weekly reflections, Chris

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reported on what types of coassessing occurred (see Table 3), which included both informal coassessing, where the coteaching pair reflected on a lesson, and formal coassessing, where the coteaching pair analyzed the results of assessments. Although Chris and Bill implemented all six types of coassessing, the practices that were most prominent included collaborative informal reflection that focused on changes to the next day’s lesson and collaboratively grading assessments.

During both interviews, Chris and Bill were asked to describe their coassessing practices and revealed that they frequently and critically reflected on their teaching and student learning.

**Daily reflective conversations.** Chris and Bill expressed the value they found in engaging in daily reflective conversations and how these conversations aided their own individual growth as teachers. From Bill’s perspective, he enjoyed having someone to reflect with each day and felt like he was learning new ways of delivering his content:

It’s just so nice to have someone else that I can bounce ideas off of and give me feedback. . . . So from my perspective—a little selfish—but it’s nice to hear different ways of doing things because you know, I do things my way and to have someone in class, I always ask him, “What did you think? What would you do differently? How would you change it?” So he gives me good ideas. (Interview 1)

**Table 3**  
***Coassessing Practices***

<i>Coassessing practice</i>	<i>No. of weeks</i>	<i>% of time</i>
<b>Formal</b>		
Your CT evaluated/graded assessments and discussed results with you.	2/18	11
You evaluated/graded assessments and discussed results with your CT.	4/18	22
You and your CT evaluated/graded assessments collaboratively.	15/18	83
<b>Informal</b>		
You and your CT collaboratively reflected on lesson(s), student learning, and engagement.	18/18	100
You and your CT discussed possible changes that could have improved the lesson(s), student learning, and engagement.	17/18	94
You and your CT discussed modifications to future lessons based on observations and postlesson reflections.	16/18	89

Not only did Chris and Bill frequently engage in these reflective conversations but Chris described during Interview 2 that the highlight of his coteaching experience was participating in these reflective conversations:

He's [Bill's] been teaching for 17 or 18 years now, but at the end of every lesson, he makes notes on his lessons, how long it took, adjustments to make for next year. . . . He's constantly, "So what could we do now to make that better for next year? Is there new research? Is there a better video that we could show along with that? Is there a new article that we could replace this article with?" So, that was something that we do at the end of every lesson.

Chris went on to state that other teachers do a great job of teaching, but they are not necessarily looking for "the newest, greatest thing to make their lesson that's a good lesson even better or the best." Because Bill did take this approach to teaching, it positively impacted Chris's coteaching experience and his "mind-set" for the kind of teacher he wanted to be.

## **Discussion**

### ***What Factors Facilitated Implementation of the Model?***

**Collaborative and reflective coteachers.** In analyzing the data, we realize the importance of an effective coteaching pairing. Although previous research on coteaching may have suggested that personality is an important contributor to a successful or unsuccessful coteaching pairing (Darragh et al., 2011; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Noonan, McCormick, & Heck, 2003), the case study of Chris and Bill suggests that, although personality does matter, also important is whether the coteachers are collaborative, open to change, and reflective. Chris viewed Bill as collaborative and supportive throughout the entire coteaching experience. Bill asked him for input and was proactive about checking in. During Interview 1, Chris shared that Bill continually asked Chris where he wanted to take the lead in lessons, and he felt Bill genuinely wanted his input in determining how they were going to implement an upcoming sports medicine project.

In addition to having a collaborative relationship, both Chris and Bill were eager to reflect on their teaching and made time for reflecting after—and even during—a lesson. Bill described in Interview 1 how they were constantly reflecting together:

We talk kind of informally throughout the day. I mean even yesterday . . . we got to a part where the students were working somewhat independently and he kind of walked over and got this look on his face, and so we just . . . informally talked about how it went. . . . It sounds kind of weird, but there's a lot that gets done in those little talks. The little 5-minute tweaks that you do in between periods.

In Interview 2, Bill expanded on how important reflective conversations were to them as coteachers:

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It's the first sentence that comes out of my mind [*sic*]*—*we almost kind of just make eye contact after first period . . . and I'm like, "Alright. So what worked? What went well? What didn't work?" And it's just a natural kind of a starting point for us to talk about the plan.

The preceding interview excerpts show Bill initiating reflective conversations. In addition, they provide evidence of Chris and Bill being on the same page and being able to read each other. Chris and Bill seemed in tune with each other, and although they did score similarly on the informal personality test (conducted during the first coteaching training), their dispositions toward personal growth as teachers also seemed important to their success as coteachers. When asked during Interview 2 about the importance of coteachers having similar personalities, Bill responded,

Chris and I have a lot of common interests to begin with. And the two of us do work pretty easily together. But, I've had other candidates . . . and we probably weren't so similar, and it was OK too. It was fine.

In this statement, Bill explains that although similar interests and personalities can definitely help foster the coteaching relationship, he has found success in coteaching with teacher candidates with different interests and personalities from his own. We posit that Bill's success coteaching with teacher candidates can also be attributed to a mind-set of collaboration, reflection, and growth.

**Coteaching schedule can promote reflective conversations.** Chris and Bill's teaching schedule also encouraged ongoing reflective conversations. Chris and Bill taught several sections of the same course (Anatomy and Physiology), and their planning period occurred during Period 2. This schedule allowed Chris and Bill to teach the lesson during Period 1, reflect on the lesson during Period 2, and make changes to the lesson prior to implementing it in Period 3. During Interview 1, Bill described how they utilized the coinstructional strategy of one teach/one observe to enhance their reflective conversations during Period 2. He explained that he would teach a lesson while Chris observed during Period 1. During Period 2, they would reflect on what worked, what did not work, and changes to be made before Chris taught the same lesson in Period 3.

### ***Challenges to Implementation of the Model***

One challenge for Chris and Bill was the leadership transition for Chris assuming more lead responsibilities within the coteaching model. Both Bill and Chris attributed a slower progression in the shift in leadership to Chris teaching outside of his content area. During Interview 2, Bill reflected on the leadership transition, stating that initially Chris did not offer much input specifically with physiology and anatomy. He posited that Chris "doesn't have maybe the confidence that he would have had in biology or maybe the background" and recognized that this limited background knowledge perhaps made it "kind of hard for him [Chris] to

speak up and say, 'Let's try this.'" Because Chris had a degree in biology and had not taken an anatomy and physiology class since high school, Bill understood why Chris might have been hesitant to lead the coplanning meetings. Chris commented during Interview 2 on why he would defer to Bill during part-time coteaching:

In the beginning . . . Bill had a lot of input as far as "Hey, this is what I would normally do. Here you go. Take a look at it." And then I would look at it and kind of "Oh, yeah. That's cool. That's good," and I think kind of go with it that way. And over time and progressively . . . I felt a lot more comfortable just going with my own ideas. And I think that was because I got a lot more comfortable with the content as well. So that was a big hurdle for me.

In addition, Bill mentioned during Interview 2 that he was unsure of what the transition looked like and what the credentialing program recommended for its coteaching pairs, explaining that he believed the university wanted a "50/50 kind of thing" in terms of involvement and leadership. In addition, Bill recalled a conversation with another cooperating teacher who was also unsure about the progression of leadership:

There was another teacher, and he asked me that question. He said, "How many . . . like what percentage is your student teacher doing in there?" Or "How much planning?" And I said, "That's the same question I have. I don't know." . . . They're going to need to know how to do all this on their own . . . I feel like I've kind of struggled with that.

As previous research on coteaching has found (Darragh et al., 2011), a challenge of the coteaching model for the clinical experience is ensuring that the teacher candidate, upon completion of the program, is ready to be a solo teacher once employed. Cooperating teachers, like Bill, worry that if they provide too much support and do not provide an opportunity within coteaching for the teacher candidate to take the lead in collaboration and experience solo time, teacher candidates may struggle when employed and no longer coteaching. To prepare Chris for this, Bill stressed the importance of shifting who was leading the coplanning, coinstruction, and coassessment, but he felt unprepared regarding when and how to make those decisions. It is important that credentialing programs recognize and address this concern, better supporting the implementation of the model and leadership transition.

In addition, future research on coteaching could benefit from continuing to follow teacher candidates into their first several years of teaching to determine the impact that coteaching during the clinical experience has on preparing them for the profession. Although we argue that Chris and Bill found success when implementing coteaching and that both grew professionally, it is important to investigate the long-term effects on teacher candidates and the possible negative effects of coteaching.

### **Chris and Bill After the Coteaching Experience**

Immediately upon completing the credentialing program in March, Chris was hired as a long-term substitute teacher until the end of the school year in June. When asked about the impact that the coteaching experience had once he was teaching in his own classroom, Chris revealed both benefits and challenges associated with planning, instructing, and assessing. Chris explained that planning on his own took longer than when he planned with Bill and attributed this increase in time “to the fine-tuning decisions that I would mull over and over, whereas before I could bounce them back and forth with [Bill] and we’d make a decision quickly” (Interview 3). For Chris, the coteaching experience distorted the amount of time needed to plan when he had to do it all on his own. Although time management was a challenge due to limited feedback during the planning stage, even when the professional ideas of others were not readily available like they were when coteaching, Chris made a concerted effort as a long-term substitute teacher to seek out the professional opinions of others by “popping into other people’s classrooms and hearing three or four different opinions about the same question and then pulling the best pieces of the recipes and adding together” (Chris, Interview 2). Learning the value of feedback and collaboration during the coteaching experience, Chris continued to collaborate with other teachers when on his own.

In addition, Chris faced a challenge in finding his own style of teaching during his long-term substitute teaching position. He found himself mimicking instructional strategies and ways to structure the classroom that Bill had modeled, and during Interview 3, Chris explained his awareness of this challenge and how he chose to address it: “Soon I realized I had to do it the way that worked best for me. So the ‘harm’ was short-lived, and I learned a very valuable lesson about making things your own rather early on.” Similarly, Chris found success with classroom management in his own classroom when he “used a lot of what he [Bill] does and then added my own little twist to it that suits me best” (Interview 2).

Chris also had to reorient his reflection without the benefit of a coteacher. During Interview 3, he reported that daily reflection on his teaching had become routine and that he sought out other teachers for reflective conversations. Chris attributed his daily habit of reflection to what Bill had modeled to him throughout his clinical experience. Chris, however, identified a challenge to reflecting on his own:

Reflecting was easier when I had an outside observer. [Bill] usually had great things to offer but would also pick up on stuff I hadn’t noticed. . . . Reflecting [on my own] took more time, and I had to be more proactive with making little notes to myself during class in order to remember them afterward. (Interview 3)

Although Chris experienced challenges with the three aspects of coteaching (planning, instructing, and assessing) when he transitioned into long-term substitute teaching, he was able to overcome these challenges by positioning himself as a collaborative and reflective practitioner—dispositions that were modeled by Bill

and practiced by Chris during the coteaching experience. When asked to reflect on the coteaching experience and how it had prepared him for his long-term substitute teaching position, Chris explained,

Maybe it's a good thing for some people to be just like thrown out of the boat, learn to swim [traditional student teaching]. I definitely think that the time that I had building up to now [long-term substitute teaching] was invaluable. (Interview 2)

When we interviewed Bill a year later, he also expressed lasting positive effects of coteaching on his own professional development. Bill's instruction without a coteacher in the classroom had changed to include station teaching, an instructional practice Bill had not implemented before working with Chris. In addition, Bill expressed that he could see a year later how he had grown professionally through conversations with Chris "talking through everything" and seeking out Chris's help with the Next Generation Science Standards (Interview 3).

## **Implications**

The case study of Chris and Bill reveals the importance of both coteachers positioning themselves as collaborative, reflective teachers. Chris found the coteaching pairing to be positive because Bill did possess the qualities of a collaborative, reflective teacher, always seeking out and valuing Chris's feedback on *his* teaching and *their* teaching. The findings of this research study highlight the importance of a credentialing program screening cooperating teachers to determine their motivation for serving as a coteacher and whether one of the goals is to learn right alongside of the teacher candidate. In addition to recruiting cooperating teachers who are collaborative and reflective, credentialing programs should also consider how to support and prepare practicing teachers to possess (or strengthen) these dispositions. Providing professional development to coteaching pairs in cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002) and cogenerative dialogue (Scantlebury et al., 2008) could help to foster these dispositions.

Although Chris and Bill are an example of a successful coteaching pair, we recognize this may have more to do with the dispositions of the pair and prior experiences hosting teacher candidates rather than the support the program provided. Although Bill did reference a coteaching training in Interview 1, both Chris and Bill appeared well suited to implementing coteaching in a way that worked for them; their only challenge came during the leadership transition. The success of their coteaching collaboration raises questions regarding the balance between the "training" required for successful coteaching and the selection of coteaching pairs who will, for whatever reason, work well together. If coteaching must rely on genial personalities to succeed, then the prospect of wider implementation is doubtful. Future research on coteaching should address this issue.

In our study, we found that the leadership transition was the only genuine chal-

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lenge for Chris and Bill. With this challenge in mind, we suggest that credentialing programs could help support the leadership transition by providing coteachers with several models for the leadership transition. For example, a model shared at a coteaching training could include an overview of the sharing of leadership in coplanning, coconstructing, and coassessing—who is taking the lead and for which units. After sharing this model and having coteachers who have implemented the model reflect on what worked and what did not work, coteachers attending the training could be allotted time to develop their own leadership transition plans. This plan could be shared with the university supervisor for feedback. At the end of each week and/or unit, coteachers could be asked to reflect on the sharing of leadership and make changes to their plan. A credentialing program might also provide minimum requirements for the leadership transition for different phases of the program. For example, by the end of part-time coteaching, a teacher candidate should have designed one unit in which he or she facilitated coplanning discussions and the teacher candidate was developing a unit in consultation with the cooperating teacher rather than developing the unit starting from the cooperating teacher's previously implemented unit. Being more transparent about what the leadership transition might look like could help to ensure that the clinical experience remains collaborative and reflective while the teacher candidate assumes more leadership responsibilities in preparation for his or her own classroom.

In addition to gaining insight into Chris and Bill's coteaching experience, our research also indicated that there was perhaps a missed opportunity for the university supervisor to provide coteaching support. In coding observation reports for the clinical experience, the university supervisor did not provide a single coteaching recommendation to Chris and Bill. In addition, Interview 2 with Chris and Bill confirmed that coteaching recommendations were not the focus of feedback that the university supervisor provided when he did observe. Educating university supervisors in coteaching and presenting types of feedback that they might provide to strengthen the coteaching being implemented may be a logical next step for our credentialing program.

As teacher education programs look to reform their clinical experience models, the implementation of coteaching has potential to create an enriching learning environment, but only if the pairs are supported in developing collaborative and reflective dispositions and in understanding the progression of leadership.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> As a program, we identified six coinstructional strategies: one teach/one observe, one teach/one assist, team teaching, parallel, station, and differentiated teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Although the clinical experience lasted 27 weeks, Chris only submitted 18 weekly reflections due to school holidays (5 weeks) and because he forgot (4 weeks).

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### **Appendix A** **Weekly Reflection Survey**

Last Name:

First Name:

Current Program:

Cooperating Teacher:

School:

Date:

What was your most memorable moment this week?

What was your biggest challenge this week?

Did you and your cooperating teacher coteach this week?

If yes, please provide a specific example of how coteaching (coplanning, coconstructing, or

coassessing) was implemented in your classroom this past week. If coteaching did not occur, what do you see as the barriers?

Approximately how much time was spent coplanning this past week?

How often did you take the lead role during coplanning?

Which of the options below most accurately reflect your planning experiences this past week?

(1) You were given lesson(s) or page(s) to teach without discussion, (2) You were given lesson(s) to teach with discussion and/or clarifying questions asked and answered, (3) You were given lesson(s) and jointly modified with your cooperating teacher, (4) You were given lesson(s) and you modified on your own, (5) Beginning with a standard/objective, you and your cooperating teacher jointly developed a new lesson, (6) Beginning with a standard/objective, you developed your own lesson, (7) Beginning with a standard/objective, you provided your cooperating teacher with a lesson for them to teach, (8) Other.

How often did coinstruction occur this week?

How often did you take the lead role in coinstruction?

Which of the strategies below did you utilize when coinstruction this past week? (1) Station teaching, (2) Team teaching, (3) Parallel teaching, (4) Differentiated teaching, (5) None of the above, (6) Other.

How often did coassessing occur this week?

How often did you take the lead role in coassessing?

Which of the following options below most accurately reflect your assessing experiences this past week? Formal Assessment: (1) Your cooperating teacher evaluated/graded assessments and discussed results with you, (2) You evaluated/graded assessments and discussed results with your cooperating teacher, (3) You and your cooperating teacher evaluated/graded assessments collaboratively; Informal Assessment: (1) You and your cooperating teacher collaboratively reflected on lesson(s), student learning, and engagement; (2) You and your cooperating teacher discussed possible changes that could have improved the lesson(s), student learning, and/or engagement; (3) You and your cooperating teacher discussed modifications to future lessons based on observations and post-lesson reflection; (4) Other.

Do you feel your students view you as an additional teacher in the classroom?

Do you feel both you and your cooperating teacher are engaged in furthering student learning throughout the school day?

## **Appendix B**

### ***Teacher Candidate and Cooperating Teacher Interview Protocol***

#### **Interview 1**

1. Tell me about your teaching background.
2. Describe to me a day in the life of coteaching. What would I see and hear? How do you spend your time together?

### ***Preconditions for Success and Barriers to Implementation***

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3. Describe your planning process as a cooperating teacher/teacher candidate within the clinical experience.
4. Describe your instructional practice with your teacher candidate/cooperating teacher.
5. Describe your assessment practices with your teacher candidate/cooperating teacher.
6. Tell me about the sharing of leadership in coteaching—sharing planning, instructing, and assessing responsibilities.
7. Describe a coteaching experience that you have had this quarter that went well. In what ways did it go well?
8. Describe a challenging coteaching experience that you have had this quarter.
9. What is one goal that you have for coteaching as you continue to coteach next quarter?

#### **Interview 2**

1. What has *coplanning* looked like for you and your coteacher during *full-time* coteaching? How has *coplanning evolved* throughout the clinical experience?
2. What has *coconstructing* looked like for you and your coteacher during *full-time* coteaching? How has *coconstructing evolved* throughout the clinical experience?
3. What has *coassessing* looked like for you and your coteacher during *full-time* coteaching? How has *coassessing evolved* throughout the clinical experience?
4. Reflecting on the clinical experience, what has been the *highlight* of the coteaching experience?
5. Reflecting on the clinical experience, what has been the *greatest challenge* of the coteaching experience?
6. Has the coteaching experience shaped how you think about *reflection and/or collaboration*?
7. What *advice* would you provide to a coteaching pair beginning the clinical experience?

### **Appendix C**

#### ***University Supervisor Interview Protocol***

1. Tell me a little bit about your career in education and your role as a university supervisor.
2. What is coteaching? How would you describe it to someone who is unfamiliar with this method of teaching?
3. Describe the relationship between your coteaching pair. What are the *strengths* and *challenges* of this relationship in respect to implementing coteaching?
4. Over the course of the clinical experience, how did your coteaching pair establish that they were coteachers in the classroom?
5. Over the course of the clinical experience, what *barriers* prevented your coteaching pair from establishing that they were coteachers in the classroom?

***Guise, Habib, Robbins, Hegg, Hoellwarth, & Stauch***

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6. Did you observe or hear of any *strengths AND/OR challenges* from your coteaching pair regarding coplanning? If there were *challenges*, did you provide any *support/solutions*?
7. Did you observe or hear of any *strengths AND/OR challenges* regarding *coconstructing*? If there were *challenges*, did you provide any *support/solutions*?
8. Did you observe or hear of any *strengths AND/OR challenges* from your coteaching pair regarding *coassessing*? If there were *challenges*, did you provide any *support/solutions*?
9. How did the credential program help to support you to understand the coteaching model?
10. What was most helpful to you when supporting your coteaching pair to implement coteaching?
11. What would have helped you to better support your coteaching pair to implement coteaching?



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## **“How Can I Help?”**

### **Practicing Familial Support through Simulation**

**April B. Coughlin & Benjamin H. Dotger**

Teachers face numerous challenges in daily practice, including situations that involve the health, safety, and well-being of students and families. When harassment and physical abuse impact K–12 students, these situations pose unexpected challenges to novice teachers working to support their students (McKee & Dillenburger, 2009; Vanbergeijk, 2007). In this article, we report on a study of preservice secondary teachers’ (PSTs) simulated interactions with a mother who presents evidence of physical and verbal abuse, illuminating how PSTs navigate the uncertainties and challenges of domestic violence.

To begin, we describe the concept of a clinical simulation, its origin in medical education, and its influence on teacher education. We outline our design and implementation procedures for the *Summers* simulation, where each PST interacted with an actor carefully trained to portray a timid Mrs. Summers, who is worried about her son’s emerging abusive tendencies. Drawing from the resulting simulation video data, we focus our discussion and implications on the introduction of, and rehearsal within, professional uncertainty and how approximating uncertainty can foster teacher learning.

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## Conceptual Frameworks

In 1963, Howard Barrows, a neurologist and medical educator, questioned how future physicians synthesized knowledge and skills into the immediate clinical reasoning they needed in daily practice with patients (Barrows & Abrahamson, 1964). Responding to the challenge of translating knowledge into practice, Barrows crafted the first clinical simulations for future physicians. In a medical simulation, a future physician interacts with a standardized patient defined as a layperson or real patient who is carefully trained to present distinct symptoms and communicate questions/concerns to multiple medical professionals in a standard, consistent manner. In simulation with a standardized patient, a physician practices diagnosing a health concern, constructing a regimen of treatment, and communicating with the patient (Barrows, 1987, 2000). Barrows’s design of simulations and the use of standardized patients has become a widespread practice in the preparation of medical professionals. Today, more than 98% of U.S. medical education programs use clinical simulations either as formative learning experiences and/or as summative assessments of clinical practice (Hauer, Hodgson, Kerr, Teherani, & Irby, 2005; Islam & Zyphur, 2007). Barrows’s medical simulations rest on four design tenets: *prevalence*, *clinical impact*, *social impact*, and *instructional importance*. The prevalence tenet supports the design of clinical simulations that approximate situations future professionals will often encounter, whereas the instructional importance tenet supports simulations that require professionals to enact distinct skill sets. The remaining two tenets, clinical and social impact, undergird simulations of distinct situations that will likely be experienced less often in daily practice (i.e., clinical impact) but that are of importance to students, families, or communities (i.e., social impact). It is these two design tenets, clinical and social impact, that directly support our study of how PSTs navigate the complexities of sexual harassment and physical abuse.

Sexual harassment—in the form of unwanted sexual advances, gestures, derogatory and/or sexual comments toward another, or other suggestive invitations (California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, 2007)—frequently occurs in middle and high schools (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2012). All schools should have written public policies against sexual harassment as well as specific reporting procedures set in place that include both male and female personnel trained to investigate claims (Young & Ashbaker, 2008). The presence of such policies and procedures suggests that teachers, administrators, and staff should also receive specific and ongoing training on identifying suspected cases of sexual harassment and responding appropriately. Despite these steps forward, we know that physical violence occurs in schools each day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported “828,000 nonfatal victimizations” among middle and high school students in 2010, while “approximately 7% of teachers” have indicated a physical threat, injury, or attack by a student in their schools

(CDC, 2012). Additionally, we know that violence and neglect occur in the homes of K–12 students. Each year, “1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner,” with domestic violence serving as one of the strongest predictors of future abuse by young men who grow up in these abusive households (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007).

Despite these statistics, teachers are often underprepared to recognize and report cases of abuse (McKee & Dillenburger, 2009; Vanbergeijk, 2007). Although teachers serve as mandated reporters—they are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect (Kesner & Robinson, 2002; Woika & Bowersox, 2013)—a study by Kenny (2001) found that only one-third of teachers were aware of legislated child abuse reporting procedures. Often, teacher education and in-service programs do not adequately prepare teachers to identify and report suspected cases of child abuse (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2011; Kenny, 2001; Sinanan, 2011). Thus, if teachers suspect abuse, they may feel unsure of how to navigate this difficult context with parents and students (Sela-Shayovitz, 2009). Barrows’s scholarship with medical simulations focused on the synthesis of prior knowledge into immediate practice. As we consider the contexts of sexual harassment and physical abuse, and particularly the lack of preparation PSTs receive in navigating these contexts, our focus for this study is not on the synthesis of prior knowledge. Instead, our focus is on PSTs’ initial, expository learning. We questioned how PSTs would navigate a simulation focused on sexual harassment and physical abuse—contexts PSTs would encounter less often through daily practice (clinical impact) but that held implications for the success and well-being of students, parents, and communities (social impact). This study centers on one research question: How do PSTs navigate a simulation centered on the contexts of sexual harassment and physical abuse?

This study builds from the recent diffusion of medical simulations to teacher education. In 2007, Dotger began a partnership with the SUNY Upstate Medical University (UMU) Clinical Skills Center. Utilizing UMU’s roster of standardized patients who regularly participate in medical simulations, Dotger began retraining standardized patients to serve, instead, as standardized parents, paraprofessionals, and students. These standardized individuals (SIs) engage one-to-one with PSTs in simulation rooms that digitally record the resulting data.

Early simulations focused on general problems of practice, where PSTs navigated situations that broadly apply to school contexts, regardless of content area. For example, PSTs engaged with parents about mild student misbehavior, collaborated with a mother in support of her son with autism, and addressed the concerns of a worried father whose daughter was experiencing significant social and emotional challenges. Building from these initial simulations, Dotger and colleagues designed subject-specific simulations across the secondary (Grades 7–12) content areas. For example, one mathematics simulation challenged preservice mathematics teachers to engage with a standardized student who expresses misconceptions related to graphing and iconic interpretation (Dotger, Masingila, Bearkland, & Dotger,

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2015). Within these content-specific simulations, PSTs must extend beyond their knowledge of general scholastic situations, to further synthesize knowledge of content and pedagogy as they engage with standardized students. Both general and content-specific simulations are grounded by the theory of situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), where individual learners (i.e., PSTs) acquire and construct knowledge through in-the-moment, challenging professional experiences they experience in situ (through simulations; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989).

In the early diffusion of simulations from medical education to teacher education, Dotger consulted with experienced teachers (i.e., 10+ years of licensed practice) to garner topics and situations they believed PSTs should experience prior to licensure (Dotger, 2013). Their input often centered on explicit and tacit boundaries, particularly between teachers, parents, and the students they support. Specifically, experienced teachers suggested simulations that illuminate issues of harassment, violence and physical intimidation in schools, and neglect/abuse at home. Their input not only aligns with the broader national trends referenced earlier but also complements state guidelines for mandatory reporting responsibilities. Supporting novice teachers as they explore mandatory reporting responsibilities—by whom, in what situations, and in defense of whom (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, 2015)—served as additional impetus for the design of the Summers simulation presented in this article.

## **Methodology**

### ***Simulation Design***

Two documents support a clinical simulation: a Teacher Protocol and a SI Protocol. The PSTs engaging in the simulation consult the Teacher Protocol to prepare, while the actors who serve as SIs in a given simulation utilize the SI Protocol. The shared purpose of these two different protocols is to situate a PST within a simulated environment, where he or she is not scripted or directed in any way and is encouraged to engage in the simulation using his or her best professional judgment, knowledge, and skills. In contrast, the SI sitting in the same room is carefully scripted and directed to follow specific lines of discourse and response.

The Teacher Protocol for the Summers simulation provides each PST with a detailed description of the school he or she works in and of a particular student, David Summers. David is an 11th-grade student who is not performing well in class. His grades and frequent absences are far below expectations to proceed toward the next grade level. Compounding his poor academic record, David turned to one of his friends during class one morning and made a sexually explicit remark about a female student sitting nearby. The comment was graphic and grossly inappropriate, and the female student was embarrassed. As described in the Teacher Protocol, the teacher (i.e., the PST) asked David to leave the room and report to the “Time Out”

room. Noting the teacher's concern for David's academic and behavioral performances, the Teacher Protocol indicates that each teacher contacted David's mother, Angela Summers, by e-mail and requested a conference. In that brief e-mail, the teacher indicated that he or she had some concerns regarding David's academic and behavior performances.

The SI Protocol provides extensive background information for each actor portraying Angela Summers in this simulation. The background information is familial context, indicating that Angela concluded divorce proceedings with David's biological father 7 years ago and married Michael Summers 6 years ago, when David was 10 years old. The SI Protocol indicates that since that second marriage began, Angela has been subjected to repeated verbal, psychological, and physical abuse from Michael. The SI Protocol indicates that David was physically and verbally assaulted by Michael in the past, until approximately David's ninth-grade year. At that time, David was 15 years old and 180 pounds, and he was able to physically resist assaults from his stepfather. Since that time, the verbal abuse has continued, but the physical abuse of David has subsided. The unfortunate familial details in the first part of the Summers SI Protocol are necessary, helping the actors understand the gravity of the situation that Angela and David have been in for several years.

The SI Protocol requires each actor to embody the character of Angela Summers, a reserved mother who has been doing her best to weather the abuse within the family. Thus this second portion of the SI Protocol also gives contextual information on Angela's dispositions. Specifically, it outlines that Angela feels increasingly disconnected from her son, worries he might grow to be abusive/aggressive himself, is anxious about how often David is away from home, and feels guilty that their busy schedules permit only brief exchanges in the late evening hours. Furthermore, the SI Protocol indicates that Angela blames herself for the abusive environment she and David are in. These dispositional contexts are provided to help the actors envision and later embody the reticent, anxious, withdrawn, and troubled ethos that each Angela must present in simulation with each PST. Importantly, the SI Protocol also directs each actor on two important nonverbal mannerisms. First, the SI Protocol prepares each actor to sit at a 45-degree angle to, and backed away from, the conference table in each simulation room. Second, the SI Protocol directs each actor to wear a light jacket or sweater that, in simulation, she will continually clutch around her, as if drawing inward. Finally, our UMU colleagues utilized their cosmetic supplies—typically applied in medical simulations—and created a very faded, almost invisible, bruise under the right eye of each actor. Of note, this is the same side of the face that each actor turns away from each PST, while sitting at a diagonal to the conference table. Our logic in this type of bruise was twofold. We wanted to present physical evidence of past abuse, but we recognized that an individual with a very new and evident bruise might be less likely to attend a parent-teacher conference. Thus, we crafted a bruise under the right eye that authentically resembles weariness but, in simulation, represents the result of past physical abuse.

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The Summers simulation is a teacher-initiated conversation, as indicated to both parties through their respective protocols. Each PST knows he or she has initiated this conversation with Mrs. Summers to discuss concerns about David, but PSTs are not directed as to how they should facilitate the conversation. When PSTs asked us for suggestions on how to approach the conversation, we encouraged PSTs to use their best professional judgment and the information presented in the Teacher Protocol. Recall that the primary purpose of a simulation is to provide an opportunity for PSTs to practice enacting their own syntheses of knowledge, skill, and disposition. Thus the Teacher Protocol intentionally withholds direction. We want to challenge PSTs to say and do what they believe to be professionally best and not to closely mimic what faculty encourage them to say or do in specific situations.

In contrast to the Teacher Protocol, the final portion of the SI Protocol outlines exact triggers that each actor must enact in simulation. Training actors to portray Angela Summers was a 1.5-hour process, conducted jointly by the second author and the director of UMU’s Clinical Skills Center. The training session followed the SI Protocol verbatim, beginning with the illustration of Mrs. Summers’s distant relationship with David, the abusive atmosphere she and David currently live in, and the history of past physical abuse David once suffered but no longer endures. After the background context was mastered by the actors, the second author focused the training session on triggers—exact questions, concerns, statements, and nonverbal mannerisms—that each actor portraying Mrs. Summers must enact within simulation. The Summers simulation triggers are as follows:

- A. Initially sit timidly at a 45-degree angle to the conference table, saying nothing unless in response to the teacher, prompting the teacher to guide the conversation;
- B. Following the teacher’s likely provision of academic or behavioral data, convey a soft, reserved response of “This doesn’t sound like my David”;
- C. Attend closely to the teacher’s cues, responding to whether or not the teacher asks about “home,” your “thoughts/feelings,” or “how are things going?”
  - a. *If empathic questions/cues are issued* by the teacher, show an initial emotional response (e.g., trembling lip, watery eyes, mild/moderate crying). Offer veiled feeling statements (e.g., I’ve “lost touch with my son,” “don’t really know who he is,” and that David is “just like his stepfather” (exhibiting the same sexist and abusive tendencies of his stepfather). Remark that “the process of raising David is just one more thing that I’ve messed up.”
  - b. *If empathic questions/cues are not issued*, remain guarded and reserved. Do not volunteer feeling statements or emotions unless prompted by the teacher.

D. A final trigger, issuing a meek, but repetitive request (three times) for help. Ask for help in guiding your son, talking with him, advising him, getting to know him, reasoning with him, understanding him, etc.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Instructional Context and Participants***

The Summers simulation positions PSTs within a sobering situation, illuminating the contexts of domestic abuse and mandatory reporting responsibilities. This is a serious and demanding simulation, compounded when novice teachers have had no prior professional exposure to the context of domestic abuse. As researchers and teacher educators, we fully recognize that individuals participating in this simulation—either as SIs or PSTs—remain members of the general public. While PSTs had not received any prior professional training, it is possible that some PSTs are too familiar with physical, emotional, and verbal abuse within families. Thus, at each step in the process—designing the simulation protocols and triggers, training SIs to serve as Angela Summers, and facilitating the interactions between each PST and each Mrs. Summers—careful attention was given to particularly strong reactions from any individual.

Two cohorts of PSTs ( $N = 20$ ) participated in the Summers simulation and consented to have their data analyzed and reported herein. Cohort A participated in an elective course, largely constituted around clinical simulations and the debriefing processes that accompany them. Cohort B participated in the same simulations but did so through a broader course on novice teacher development. In consideration of the order of these clinical experiences, the second author positioned the Summers simulation in the latter third of both courses. The rationale was to give PSTs opportunity to acclimate to the simulation concept, its processes, and the more moderate problems of practice presented through earlier simulations. While the Summers simulation represents a necessary educative experience for the PSTs, it should not set the tone for the broader semester by serving as the very first or last simulation.

### ***Procedures***

One week prior to the scheduled simulations, PSTs were e-mailed the Teacher Protocol. Because all PSTs had engaged in other simulations at UMU, no additional background information on the process was provided. On the day of the scheduled simulations, PSTs were divided into subgroups of three. At this time, the PSTs' login/password information was distributed, giving each PST confidential access to his or her respective simulation video data on UMU's closed-loop server. At 30-minute intervals, subgroups were situated outside of three different simulation rooms in UMU's Clinical Skills Center. Each individual PST used his or her login/password to register on a computer, activating cameras and microphones in each PST's simulation room. PSTs entered their respective simulation rooms and sat at the conference table. Then, the actors portraying Angela Summers were cued to

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enter the simulation rooms from a second door in each room. At that point, with each PST situated in a simulation room with a standardized Angela Summers, the simulations began.

### **Data Analysis**

Each simulation resulted in a video ranging in length between 7 and 18 minutes. Each video was transcribed by the first author. Working from these transcripts, both authors independently coded a 15% subset of the data, using baseline codes developed from the verbal triggers in the SI Protocol. From there, each author recorded other codes that emerged in those subsets. Afterward, the authors compared and decided on which emergent codes to include in addition to those affixed within the verbal triggers. A total of 22 were developed, resulting in the coding scheme outlined in Table 1.

Following the development of these codes, each author independently coded all 20 transcripts. Few coding disparities arose, but those that did were discussed and addressed with a decided-on single code. Although each SI presented the same verbal triggers, the PSTs' responses were different in approach and content. Therefore, to organize the data and get a clear picture of the PSTs' responses, the coded conversations were collapsed into the broader themes detailed in the following.

## **Findings**

### ***Tone and Approach***

In this simulation, each PST initiated a meeting with Mrs. Summers to discuss David's academic and behavioral issues. In conversation with Mrs. Summers, PSTs used a variety of approaches to begin the meeting and present information. Some took a direct and straightforward approach by immediately recounting David's verbalizations toward the female student in class. Other PSTs took a softer approach by expressing general concern about David, indicating worry for him "falling behind" and their desire to "see him graduate." Other PSTs expressed concern about his "well-being" and "safety" and that they wanted to see him live a "healthy lifestyle."

### ***A Softer Approach: Questions and Compliments***

Of the PSTs who took a softer approach in expressing their concerns, at least half began with a question or compliment that lightened the tone of the meeting. Common questions centered on Mrs. Summers's general well-being (e.g., "How are you today?") as well as inquiries into why this meeting had been initiated (e.g., "Do you have any idea why I asked you to come in for a meeting?"). One PST chose a more focused question, "How are things at home?" in what can be presumed to have been an effort to gather information about David. Half of all PSTs began the meeting

by complimenting Mrs. Summers on her interest and involvement in her son's life in school. In similar fashion, a few PSTs complimented David directly as a positive effort to break the ice with Mrs. Summers and transition toward their concern and description of David's actions in class. Several referred to David as a "great kid" with "a lot of potential," and others made specific reference to his energy and the desire to see him "harness that energy" in his classwork and positive behavior.

### ***Straight to the Point***

Some PSTs, like Brooke, took a more straightforward approach when begin-

**Table 1**  
***Codes and Descriptions for Summers Simulation***

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>
T1	Summers sits reservedly—prompting teacher to take the lead
T2	"This doesn't sound like my David"
T3-A	Summers reserved emotional response (i.e., trembling lip, watery eyes, mild/moderate crying) "lost touch with David," "don't really know who he is," and that David is "just like his stepfather"; "the process of raising David is just one more thing that I've messed up"
T3-B	If teacher does not ask about feelings, remain guarded and reserved
T4	Meak, but repetitive plea for help
EMP	Empathy
AGR	Agreement
CONC	Concern
COMPL	Compliment
DAV	David
SUGG	Asks mother for suggestions on how to help David
Data-ACA	Data-Academic
Data-BHVR	Data-Behavior
PL	Plan of action
COM	Communication
CONF	Conference in the future with Mrs. Summers and David
SERV	Services that the school offers
JUDG	Judgment
LECTURE	Teacher lectures Mrs. Summers
AFF	Self-affirmation from teacher
NTS	Notes
Q	Question—to gather more information
OUT	Outlier
INTRO	Introduction
WC	Word choice used by teacher
ID	Identity
AWK	Awkward

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ning the conversation with Mrs. Summers. Their approaches centered on citing data/information toward the very beginning of the meeting and, frequently, using direct language in their descriptions of David:

Uh, I just wanted to call you today because of David’s academic performance right now as well as some behavioral issues I’ve been having in class. Um, he is very disruptive often and he hasn’t been handing in his homework. (Brooke)

In addition to describing David as disruptive, D’Angelo referred to David’s academic and behavioral issues as “glaring problems,” while Whistler immediately explained that there was a “sexual harassment issue with David last week.” Silvertown dually expressed concern but also optimism that David’s academics and behavior would improve:

So, basically I called you in for some concerns that I have . . . he just has [pause] no respect for authority, for any adult figures at all, and that’s . . . that’s like really disheartening, it really is, ‘cause I mean he has potential to be a great student, I know he can do it, I believe in all of my students, but he’s just not performing that way right now.

Silvertown points out David’s behavior issues directly and then softens his concerned tone by indicating that David is not “performing . . . right now,” leaving the door open for possible improvement in the future.

### *“Can I Say That to a Parent?”*

PSTs employed different approaches to recounting for Mrs. Summers what David said in class toward the female student. Some provided a direct account of the words spoken by David, while others clouded their description. Many hesitated in explaining the incident, stumbling over words or offering awkward silences that suggested discomfort in reporting the information. Three PSTs did not address the incident at all. Out of 20 PSTs, 11 described the incident as “incredibly inappropriate” or explained that David said a “very obscene comment that contained the ‘F-word.’” Others said that David expressed his intent to have “sexual relations” with the female student, and some referred to David as making a “rude” or “disrespectful” comment. One PST provided a detailed description of the incident and referred to it as “sexual harassment.” A few PSTs only gave David’s direct quote when prompted by Mrs. Summers’s specific question about what her son had said to the young woman. One PST, Emory, provided the direct quote without prompt from Mrs. Summers:

This past Friday morning, uh David was sitting in class and this young lady walked in tardy and sat down at her desk. Uh he made a very vulgar comment to her, um please excuse I have to tell you, uh I have to tell you explicitly what he said, um, uh-uh I don’t like to repeat it but, uh he said to his friends loud enough for the whole class to hear, “Damn I’d love to ———.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***PSTs' Reactions to Mrs. Summers***

Recall that Mrs. Summers's reactions to the data/information presented by PSTs were carefully directed by the SI Protocol, but PSTs were not in any way directed or scripted. As described in the SI Protocol, Mrs. Summers reacted with emotion on learning of her son's outburst in class. Responding to Mrs. Summers, some PSTs utilized empathy and understanding; others showed judgment, gave unsolicited advice, or posed questions to gather more information on David's home life.

### ***Empathy and Understanding***

While the majority of PSTs showed concern for David and conveyed that they were "worried" about him, many also expressed empathy toward and understanding of Mrs. Summers's perspectives and emotions. For example, PSTs exhibited empathy by providing tissues, verbally acknowledging her tears, and, in one simulation, offering Mrs. Summers a hug. Silverton's words exemplify PSTs' most common response pattern: "But you can't blame yourself for this, I'm sure you're doing the best you can." Similarly, Parker tried to console Mrs. Summers, saying, "It's nothing that you did wrong or anything as a parent so please don't feel guilty." Mancini displayed understanding in an effort to relate to David's assumed mind-set about school:

Um, you know he might just be at the age where he really just wants out of school completely. I mean, I remember I felt like that at one point too. You know, you feel like you're never going to get out.

Gregory expressed understanding by listening to Mrs. Summers's concern that her son may not go on to college. He responded by stating that while David may not pursue college, "there are trade schools and many things he could go on to do with a GED."

### ***"Change of Tone"***

For the PSTs whose approach was initially straightforward, they universally adopted a softer tone in response to Mrs. Summers's emotional statement, "That doesn't sound like my son." Some PSTs directed the power and expertise back to Mrs. Summers, showing that they trusted her knowledge of her son. For example, Silverton said, "You're saying that doesn't sound like him and I'm, I, I'm willing to take your word for that because you're his parent and you would know." Others responded by shifting toward an empathic tone, noting the difficulty of working two jobs and raising David at the same time. Whistler responded in agreement when Mrs. Summers said those actions did not sound like her son: "Not at all . . . uh, yeah, it's always something surprising when a kid acts like that." Perhaps the most noteworthy response to Mrs. Summers's emotion, though, was an effort to downplay David's actions. One PST (Thompson) enthusiastically said, "Right. I, I

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don't think it was anything to upset the girl, you know I don't . . . I don't think that he was trying to upset her it seemed more . . .”

#### **Information and Boundaries**

When Mrs. Summers expressed disbelief about David's academics and behavior, several PSTs began gathering more information about his past performance. Some inquired about his previous academic record in school and asked how much or how little trouble he had experienced in school. Others asked questions focused on David's home life, using general inquiries like, “Is there anything going on at home that I should know about, anything outside [pause] of the school that might be affecting his behavior?” This type of question represents a key point in the SI training session. If PSTs inquired at all about home, each SI representing Mrs. Summers was trained to issue several triggers related to her anxieties about David and her fear that he is exhibiting abusive tendencies similar to his stepfather's:

I just [pause] want my-my son to you know, be respectful. I don't want him to be like his stepfather. Um [pause] in the past he . . . he . . . he . . . he . . . he can, in the past he used to . . . to rough [pause] David up a bit um, but you know, David has . . . has grown and so, it kind of, I guess become equals or something, but he . . . he leaves David alone.

Statements like the preceding from Mrs. Summers caused some PSTs to further interrogate, questioning whether the stepfather is physically abusive toward either David or her. Per her SI training, Mrs. Summers says, “I mean I don't . . . I don't [pause] he doesn't, he doesn't really hit me you know he doesn't physically, he just pushed me a little bit and I . . . I fell into a cabinet [pause] um.”

One PST (Cramer) responded in very direct fashion to this information, asking when her husband last pushed her. Like Cramer, other PSTs responded to Mrs. Summers's trigger with communications that illuminate professional boundaries between home and school. One PST responded with forceful urgency, providing unsolicited advice about what Mrs. Summers needed to do to keep David and herself safe:

Well if it's unsafe for you then [pause] you and David [pause] I strongly . . . strongly . . . strongly recommend that you find, if or do you have family in the area? Friends? Anybody you could stay with? . . . The most important thing that happens is that we keep . . . we keep David and we keep you safe, and away from your husband.

Similarly, two other PSTs (Emory and Benitez) encouraged Mrs. Summers to leave her husband and “get out of the situation.” Benitez took a judgmental approach, questioning Mrs. Summers's reasons for staying with someone who is abusive: “I don't know why someone like you, someone so nice and respectful would want to be with someone who [pause] who hurts you.” A fourth PST transitioned from providing unsolicited advice to suggesting specific action steps and outlets for physical safety:

There are places where you and David can go where he won't be able to find you. He may not be hurting David [pause] physically, but he is emotionally and verbally abusing him and it's gotten physical with you that is [pause] for your safety and David's safety and the safety of David's girlfriend, I think it would be best for you guys to find a shelter or stay with a friend, or do anything to take yourself out of that situation.

Other PSTs also experienced Mrs. Summers's trigger but did not engage in further discussion. These PSTs either explained to Mrs. Summers that although the meeting began as "confidential," they were legally mandated to report abuse, or they came up with a plan to help David both in and out of school, offering the support of the school counselor or psychologist.

#### ***"Enlisting Other Personnel"***

Responding to information Mrs. Summers shared in conversation, four PSTs employed a "school policy" approach to mandatory reporting of abuse. Each PST who referenced a mandatory reporting policy also emphasized his or her obligation to report any cases of abuse or compromised safety. D'Angelo offered an explanation:

OK. What I have to do in cases like this, and this has to be reported to the school and also to the police. Um, because this is a matter of safety. If it were just David's academic issues this would be strictly confidential, but because it is involving other forces that have harmed you and harmed David, we need to intervene.

While 4 PSTs referenced mandatory reporting procedures, 10 PSTs recommended the support of school counselors to help David improve his behavior and academics. This suggestion was offered in a variety of ways. Some PSTs asked if Mrs. Summers had ever sought outside counseling or if she had ever thought of speaking to a counselor. Several PSTs asked if David had spoken with a counselor in the past, would be interested in doing so now, or might attend counseling with the teacher and Mrs. Summers to get issues "out in the open." Gregory approached this topic through a different, established school structure that supports students whose parents are divorced:

We do have the option, we have a school counselor you know they, they call it banana split or whatever, to sit down with these kids who . . . whose parents are either split up or you know going through tough times because it does, it affects the kids and especially when another person is brought in sometimes not every person you know adapts to it.

#### ***Plan of Action: Shared Versus Individual Responsibility***

As the conversations progressed, PSTs addressed next steps or plans of action to help David improve academically and behaviorally. Three different approaches emerged, differentiated by who would assume responsibility for guiding David.

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Several PSTs offered to work with David. Through their offers, two PSTs asked Mrs. Summers if she had any specific suggestions of approaches they might use to help him in school:

Is there anything I can do to [pause] you know, help in the situation because I . . . I’m really willing to go up there for him cause I . . . I really want all my students to succeed. (Silverton)

I wanted to know if you have been noticing any of the same things at home or if you have any suggestions of things I could try to um reach out to him or uh help him do better in school or . . . (Mancini)

Some PSTs offered to stay after school or work with David during lunch to help him make up missed assignments. Other PSTs placed the responsibility of talking to and working with David solely on Mrs. Summers and the home environment:

Uh, but maybe just [pause] say something to him see if you can make an impact um [pause] he really needs you to be there for him. (Collaggio)

I know that it’s very hard for you working two jobs but do you think there is any time available that you could sit down and talk to him maybe on the weekends or . . . ? (Cramer)

The majority of PSTs, though, recommended working collaboratively—at home and school—to find supportive solutions. Once again, PSTs utilized compliments to acknowledge Mrs. Summers as a collaborative partner:

And you’re . . . you seem to be like a really positive force on his life outside, I mean you want him to do well, we want him to do well, we’ll just try and problem solve solutions. (Gregory)

Discussions about who would work to support David naturally and quickly transitioned to concluding dialogue about a plan of action. However, a few PSTs concluded their conversations with Mrs. Summers with questions about her well-being. In these instances, Mrs. Summers still presented as visibly upset, overwhelmed, and inwardly drawn.

## **Discussion and Implications**

This study situated PSTs in a one-to-one conference with a standardized mother whose son recently made verbally abusive and sexually explicit remarks in class. We sought to examine how PSTs would engage with what David said in class, particularly as evidence of child and spousal abuse emerged within a parent–teacher interaction. PSTs in this study had no prior training in the challenging contexts of domestic abuse, sexual harassment, or mandatory reporting. Thus our discussion and implications center on the introduction of and rehearsal within uncertainties—like domestic violence and sexual harassment—to foster teacher learning and dispositional development.

Our first point of discussion—and accompanying implication—focuses on the introduction of uncertainties in PST preparation. By design, the Summers simulation presented PSTs two related challenges: David, who made an egregious verbal remark in class, and his mother, who expressed significant personal and familial concerns in conference. The combination of these two challenging contexts—a grossly inappropriate comment from David and a very unacceptable home environment presented by Mrs. Summers—situated PSTs in an uncertain professional context. Hargreaves's (1998, 2001) scholarship on emotional geographies emphasizes very specific types of professional terrain that teachers encounter. In the Summers simulation, PSTs encounter Hargreaves's *moral geography*, as they must consider different perspectives on what is best for David and his mother. PSTs also encounter Hargreaves's *professional geography*, as they navigate boundaries between home and school, speaking to David's actions in school and determining how to respond to what Mrs. Summers and David experience at home.

States and school districts have mandatory reporting expectations for a very unfortunate reason. As PSTs transition into their induction years of teaching, they will encounter—and will need to professionally navigate—the emotional geographies illuminated by the Summers simulation. In their induction years of service, novice teachers will encounter situations where they must determine what is “best” for a student and how they will navigate and bridge boundaries between school and home. Consider the often-cited gap between preparation and practice (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Education scholars (e.g., Fuller, 1969; Hargreaves, 1998, 2001) and their studies of novice teachers (e.g., Flores & Day, 2006) reference the many new uncertainties novice teachers experience in their early years of teaching. Thus one implication of this study is for teacher educators to systematically reduce the number of unknowns. Recognizing that no preparatory environment will account for all future uncertainty, we suggest intentionally situating PSTs within multiple, uncertain learning experiences, challenging PSTs to engage within situations that represent the uncertainties they will later encounter in licensed practice.

Our second point of discussion—and accompanying implication—extends beyond the introduction of uncertainty to focus on PSTs' varied approaches to the uncertainties within the Summers simulation. Data from this study provide evidence of PSTs' empathic and boundary-spanning communications, approaches that hold promise and require fine-tuning. When Mrs. Summers showed emotion, some PSTs expressed empathy, understanding, and even the willingness to give a hug. For other PSTs who began the conference in a straightforward manner, the emerging emotions softened their stances. In calculating solutions to the situation Mrs. Summers described, a few PSTs suggested that Mrs. Summers remove herself and David from the physically and verbally abusive situation. In contrast, other PSTs provided no suggestions for Mrs. Summers and instead repeatedly asked her for suggestions on how they could support David in class. Across every coded category of data we report, the uncertainties of the simulated situation yielded a variety of

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PSTs’ approaches, from an empathic “do you need a hug?” to a declarative “find a shelter.” These data are not surprising. The range of PSTs’ responses—within their small cohorts—does suggest that PSTs need additional practice within situations that involve the well-being of their students.

Recent attention to practice-based teacher education (Zeichner, 2013) has emphasized the rehearsal (Grossman et al., 2009) of discrete teaching practices (e.g., collaborating with a colleague, leading a student group discussion, engaging in a problem-solving conversation with a parent or caregiver; Ball & Forzani, 2009). Rehearsing specific teaching practices requires one to interact—beyond traditional rote reading and reflections about teaching—and engage with the professional context at hand. Piaget’s (1959) scholarship helps us understand the role of disequilibrium novice teachers will experience by rehearsing in a new professional context. Importantly, that cognitive uncertainty drives one to gather new information and construct meaning by forging new schemata. Rehearsing, or practicing, within uncertain situations allows novice teachers to employ new or amended schemata and to make adjustments in professional actions and judgments.

Recounting David’s crude comment is disequilibrating, but when compounded by his mother’s accounts of physical and verbal abuse in the home, it is understandable why several PSTs emerged from the Summers simulation exclaiming, “I’m not sure if I did that right!” and “Did I do OK in there?” When their simulations concluded, most PSTs sought immediate feedback. They also verbalized both dread and eagerness when we prompted them to look at the video data to gain perspective on their performances. To close this point of discussion, we highlight the key distinction between our first and second implications. Our first implication suggests an introduction to a wide variety of professional uncertainties. However, our second implication distinguishes simulations and other “approximations of practice” (Grossman et al., 2009, p. 2076) from traditional approaches to clinical practice (e.g., observation, tutoring, student teaching field practica; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 2000). In traditional classroom settings, when preservice or novice teachers engage in distinct situations, they do not typically have video data of that engagement. They do not typically have multiple peers who experienced the same situation, and professional circumstances rarely align in such a manner to allow the novice to engage in that situation again. However, carefully designed approximations of practice, like the simulation described herein, expose multiple PSTs to the same professional challenge and support an environment for data-informed rehearsal within the specific challenge. There is no one right way to engage with Mrs. Summers, but rehearsal, data review, and subsequent discussion of PSTs’ varied approaches will result in the development of new, and the amendment of established, schemata for action in crisis. Through action (in simulation) and careful reflection (using simulation video data), rehearsal with teaching practices can support novice teacher learning.

Our final point of discussion and resulting implication focuses on the method

employed in this study and its potential impact on teacher dispositional development. To begin, consider disposition as a “trend of a teacher’s judgment or actions in ill-structured contexts” (Johnson & Reiman, 2007, p. 677). The professional uncertainties we discussed earlier equate to ill-structured contexts; there are multiple ways to approach and support a concerned parent or struggling student. Rehearsing within ill-structured professional contexts, though, allows a novice teacher to develop more sophisticated professional schemata (Reiman & Peace, 2002) and practice the enactment of those schemata. Our final implication is predicated on the previous two: If we introduce PSTs to professional uncertainties, and if we encourage them to rehearse with these uncertainties prior to licensure, then we also have an opportunity to examine PSTs’ dispositional trends.

Looking at the data in this study, teacher educators can appropriately ask how to encourage PSTs to recognize abusive situations, judge them to be harmful, and take appropriate action in the moment. Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999) asked this same type of question in the broader context of moral development, scrutinizing how educators help students recognize an unethical situation, judge the situation as unjust, and then take action to right the wrong. Scholars’ studies of dispositional growth within professional contexts (e.g., Diez, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Reiman & Peace, 2002) have emphasized their developmental nature. Building from their assertions that dispositions become more principled and fine-tuned over time and through experience, it is premature to gauge PSTs’ identity and disposition based on their performances in the Summers simulation. However, building from the Summers data and examining PSTs’ practices across multiple simulations, we can begin considering how those practices do or do not develop toward ethical dispositions that support students and families in crisis. Aligned with Reiman and Peace (2002), we propose that the development of professional dispositions—of trends in professional action and judgment—requires deliberate practice and thus holds implications for how teacher educators support preservice and induction-stage teacher learning. Rather than chance the development of novice teacher identity and disposition to idiosyncratic experiences that may, or may not, be mediated by thoughtful mentors, our final implication emphasizes approximations of practice across a variety of teacher learning models. When multiple approximations of practice are deliberately sequenced within teacher learning models, and are supported with a careful review of data, they can further illuminate for teacher educators potential trends in PSTs’ approaches, actions, or decisions.

Earlier we noted the prevalence of violent and abusive situations that impact K–12 students, requiring teachers to engage and act to protect student well-being. To practice taking action, we suggest PSTs be exposed to—and have opportunities to rehearse within—professional uncertainties. Furthermore, we suggest PSTs and teacher educators dually examine data for evidence of dispositional development across multiple approximations of practice. This study provides data from PSTs’ exposure to and rehearsal within the uncertainties of an abusive domestic context.

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We consider this study to be an initial expository effort, because PSTs had no prior professional training with this challenging context. Other studies might consider PSTs’ interactions within traditional mandatory reporting training sessions juxtaposed with PSTs’ interactions within the Summers simulation. Such studies would help illuminate if and how in situ practice through simulations advances teacher learning. Similarly, the Summers simulation, and our study of PSTs’ actions and decisions therein, is intentionally focused on one familial context. Future research might sequence the Summers simulation alongside other simulations that offer very distinct professional challenges. Such a design would allow scholars to measure novice teachers’ potential development of moral/ethical dispositions, contrasting the potential dispositional growth of PSTs enrolled in traditional teacher learning environments with that of PSTs enrolled in a series of clinical simulations.

We recognize that there is no way to prepare PSTs for every challenging situation they will encounter. In his design of medical simulations, Barrows recognized this reality as well. Thus his design tenets call for very intentional simulations that help support the broader preparation of the professional. The Summers simulation reflects Barrows’s clinical and social impact tenets. In licensed practice, novices are unlikely to regularly encounter situations like those that David and his mother present (clinical impact), but their infrequency does not reduce the importance of the situation or the requirement that novice teachers engage to support students and families in crisis (social impact). We are under no illusion that the Summers simulation has “prepared” the PSTs in this study to comprehensively navigate the challenges of abuse and domestic violence. Instead, we suggest this simulation served an expository role. Having engaged with Mrs. Summers, we hypothesize that the PSTs in this study now have early “abuse/neglect” and “mandatory reporting” schemata they can enact later, in similar situations. Employing clinical simulations—as a core pedagogy in teacher education (Dotger, 2015) or a methodology to examine novice teacher learning—supports novice teachers’ initial exposure to and rehearsal within the geographies of K–12 teaching.

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> Interested researchers/teacher educators may obtain the *Summers* simulation protocols directly from the second author, without fee or licensure obligation, via e-mail communication. In addition, the second author will support simulation training and implementation efforts via video conference.

<sup>2</sup> The actual onscreeny has been redacted by the authors but was not by the PST in simulation.

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