

**DESCRIBING THE COMPLEXITIES OF FIELD INSTRUCTION PRACTICE: AN
EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY IN A UNIVERSITY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents

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To my dissertation committee – your dedication as scholars and educators have inspired this work. Thank you for your kind guidance.

To Prof. Lesley Rex – your heart as a mentor is legendary and I stand forever grateful to have benefitted from your wise counsel and tireless coaching.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE OF STUDY.....	1
BACKGROUND	2
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	9
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	11
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE	11
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE	16
POSITIONING THEORY	19
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	24
III. METHODOLOGY	27
IV. FINDINGS	46
OVERARCHING STORYLINE 1: IVORY TOWER.....	48

OVERARCHING STORYLINE 2: STUDENTING	65
OVERARCHING STORYLINE 3: SINK OR SWIM.....	77
OVERARCHING STORYLINE 4: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT	97
OVERARCHING STORYLINE 5: NATURAL TEACHING PERSONALITY.....	108
CASE A: FI-BEN	122
CASE B: FI-NINA	151
CONCLUSION	178
V. DISCUSSION	180
IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS	183
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIELD INSTRUCTORS AND TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.....	189
APPENDIDICES	196
REFERENCES	223

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

3.1 Embedded Case-design with Pseudonyms of Triad Members	32
3.2 Summary of Interview Data.....	35
3.3 Fieldwork Data: Field Instruction Activities & Associated Paperwork	36
4.1 Overarching Storylines	47

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX

A. INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK	197
B. INITIAL CODE LIST	200
C. CROSS-CASE MATRIX (INITIAL INSTANTIATION).....	201
D. EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS (POSITION & STORYLINE)	205
E. INFORMED CONSENT: COVER LETTER & CONSENT FORM	207
F. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT TEACHER, COOPERATING TEACHER, AND UNIVERSITY FIELD INSTRUCTOR (STUDENT TEACHING HANDBOOK, P. 5-9).....	211
G. UNIT PLAN PROJECT (STUDENT TEACHING HANDBOOK, P. 22-27)	217

ABSTRACT

Pre-service teacher education programs that engage university supervisors and cooperating teachers to mentor teacher candidates during clinical practice depend heavily on the interaction of these triadic members to ensure student teacher learning. Yet, we know from reports and research that triad member interactions can be riddled with problems and do not always produce intended results. This qualitative study engages this issue by seeking to understand, from a social constructionist perspective, how members of student teaching triads engage with programmatic elements and with one another, and how these interactions influence the practice of university supervisors. Adopting Positioning Theory as a framework to analyze meaning –making patterns, this multiple case study of two university supervisors and their work with two student teaching triads surfaced five dominant storylines from which members were observed to draw their interpretations: *Ivory Tower*, *Studenting*, *Sink or Swim*, *Practice Makes Perfect*, and *Natural Teaching Personality*. The results revealed that members not only drew upon these storylines, they also reinforced and perpetuated them, often without explicit intention. Although university supervisors strongly desired to help student teachers learn, their efforts were hindered by these tacit but persistent narratives and their respective assumptions. As an increasing number of scholars are examining ways to improve teacher education, especially its field-based component, this research supplements their work by describing the powerful influences of tacit storylines on student teaching triadic member interactions and proposes that

teacher education programs, as well as their field-based instructors, attend to their members' tacit meaning-making patterns in their quest to improve teacher education.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Pre-service teacher education programs that engage university supervisors and cooperating teachers to mentor teacher candidates during clinical practice depend heavily on the interaction of these triadic members to ensure student teacher success¹. Yet, we know from reports and research that triad member interactions can be riddled with problems and do not always produce intended results. This study engages this issue by seeking to understand, from a social constructionist perspective, how triadic members engage with programmatic elements and with one another, and how these interactions influence how university supervisors enact their practice. All triadic members bring into the arrangement a variety of meaning-making resources, which are historically situated and culturally derived. Studying how field supervisors navigate these relationships in such complex settings can reveal the social factors that influence such guided teaching relationships during student teaching. A more nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay of such factors can help programs conceive of more effective ways to support the field experiences of student teachers.

¹ Student teaching is usually the last unit of the curriculum and can last from several weeks to a full year in some institutions. During student-teaching, the student teacher (ST) understudies an experienced teacher (sometimes called the cooperating teacher (CT) or mentor) in a school classroom and practices teaching in that field setting. A field instructor (FI, sometimes called a supervisor) – a university representative who is usually an adjunct or a graduate student instructor but rarely a faculty member – is deployed to “supervise” this field experience and facilitate the learning of the pre-service teacher, hence making up the third party in the student-teaching triad. Although the arrangements vary from institution to institution (as do their titles), many programs continue to employ this triad model to help pre-service teachers learn to teach.

Background

Student teaching is the capstone of most pre-service teacher preparation programs and has long been acknowledged as one of the most influential component of the teacher education experience. In fact, current discussions in the political and scholarly arenas concerning teacher education reform have focused on strengthening the clinical component of teacher education, urging both state governments and teacher education programs to ensure that pre-service teaching candidates receive at least “450 hours, or one semester” of well-supported field-based experience (AACTE, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; NCATE, 2009; NCATE, 2010). A study of 15,500 education school alumni revealed that the student teaching experience was consistently characterized as “the most valuable aspect of my education program” despite the fact that it had lasted a term or less for 76 percent of them (Levine, 2006, p. 39). More recently, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2011) declared in a press release that “strong clinical preparation of teachers is a key factor in students’ school success”:

Through both qualitative and quantitative analyses, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) found good clinical experience yields positive effects. Such effects include increased student achievement, improved teacher retention, and an improved sense of teachers’ preparedness. (p.1)

The association also recognized the importance of clinical teachers and teacher mentors, recommending that programs “train” these individuals to provide clinical teacher education and enlist only those who possess at least three years of teaching experience.

While much research has been conducted on the student-teaching experience, most have been on the student-teacher and the work of cooperating teachers. There has been a curious lack of scholarly interest in the work of the university supervisor, the third member in what is commonly known as the student-teaching triad. One reason offered by scholars for this is the low status of the role within the hierarchy of teacher education programs, which tend to privilege

research and publication over teaching (Zahorick, 1988; Goodlad, 1990; Slick, 1998). Another reason could stem from the role's association with the "traditional" model of teacher education, which had been widely criticized in the literature for decades (AACTE, 2010; Berliner, 1988; Carnegie Task Force, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Griffin et al., (1983); The Holmes Group, 1986; Zeichner, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). The result is a scholarly focus on reform efforts that restructured teacher education, mostly towards a *Professional Development School (PDS)* model advocated by the Holmes Group in their 1986 publication of *Tomorrow's Teachers*. Many published studies on teacher preparation since the late eighties investigated the effects of re-envisioned field experiences within newly forged school-university partnerships although programmatic features vary widely (Holmes Group, 1990; Levine, 2002; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Some of these programs eliminated the role of the university supervisor by putting the full responsibility of mentoring on cooperating teachers; others redefined the role of the university supervisor so as to ensure better support. These efforts sometimes involved renaming those engaged in field experience with new titles such as "preservice teacher" (student teacher), "clinical master teacher" (cooperating teacher), "school-based teacher educator" (cooperating teacher), and "university-based teacher educator" (university supervisor) (Millwater & Yarrow, 1997; Slick, 1998; Wilson, 2006). Both reasons may explain why university supervision has received scant scholarly attention but the underlying premise for these reasons needs to be challenged.

Low status does not mean unimportant

The low status of university supervision has deep historical roots in the academic traditions of education schools (Slick, 1998). Since the university reward structure privileges

research and publication over teaching and working in schools, teaching and supervision have often been delegated to clinical faculty, adjunct faculty (recently retired school teachers) or graduate students (Labaree, 2008; Holmes Group, 1986; Zeichner, 2010). It has been recognized in literature that tenure-track faculty who engage closely with practice often find themselves over-burdened and minimally compensated (Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Koppich, 2000; Slick, 1998). However, prioritizing academic prestige has cost education schools their professional credibility and relevance (Labaree, 2008). Among the latest criticisms levied against them are accusations of engaging in the “pursuit of irrelevance” (Levine, 2006) and “doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom” (AACTE, 2009). Such charges reinforce the view that the lack of scholarly attention to the subject of university supervision can be attributed more to the hierarchical structure of education schools than to the significance of the work. Indeed, it seems ironic, and even unethical, that “the most valuable aspect” of teacher preparation is left to the least compensated and recognized members of education schools.

With the clinical preparation of teachers at the forefront of current reform interests, the pressure for education schools to improve their programs is mounting again, especially in the area of field-based experiences. Considering that university supervision is a prevalent feature of this component of teacher education, perhaps it is time we examine its practice. After all, recent studies on teacher education have begun to notice the presence and significance of university supervision again (AACTE, 2010; Levine, 2006). Darling-Hammond et al., (2005), under the auspices of the *National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future* (NCTAF) in the late nineties, performed case studies of seven exemplary pre-service teacher education programs and reported that “novice teachers often attest to the important role that school and university

supervisors play in the teaching and learning of practice”; however, the authors also recognized that “there is little systematic research on exactly what the most effective supervisors do” (p. 412).

Understanding what effective supervisors do is complicated by the fact that there are many preparation programs in the United States and they are all different. In fact, Arthur Levine (2006) concluded in his policy report on education schools that the “greatest commonality among university-based teacher education programs is their diversity” (p. 15). This means the work of supervision vary from institution to institution so any study would need to take into account local contexts, but this can be said of all aspects of teacher education. It has come to the attention of an increasing number of scholars that attending to local variations and contexts would be far more meaningful in teacher education research than the “futile” search for “universally best practices in teacher education for all types of candidates in all types of settings” (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Studying university supervision within the conditions of local contexts might yield meaningful information for those in similar contexts and those who seek to improve its practice.

Bold Restructuring May Not Be the Best or Only Solution

The trend towards bold structural changes in teacher education reform literature since the Holmes Group report of 1986 in the likes of PDS seems have found new momentum in recent times. In October 2009, the U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan charged university-based teacher preparation programs to engage in “revolutionary change--not evolutionary tinkering” (AACTE, 2009). This was followed by a special issue of the Journal of Teacher Education entitled, *Bold Ideas for a New Era in Teacher Education, Teacher Preparation, and Teacher*

Practice wherein scholars were invited to examine the impact of bold ideas in the field (JTE, 2010). Against this backdrop, university supervision, with its connection to the “traditional” model of teacher education, pales in dramatic appeal. But before we dismiss its viability as a topic of study, it would be prudent to remember that the Holmes Group criticisms were not launched against field instruction, but against

. . . the gap between education schools and the world of practice, the mix of excellent and shoddy teacher education programs, top research professors who spent little time with practitioners and held schools and teacher education in disdain, instruction in outmoded conceptions of teaching and learning, the split between theory and practice, and poor student field placements. (Levine, 2006, p. 19)

In fact, one of the complaints was that university supervision was “infrequent” (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 62), suggesting that more interaction and collaboration between campus and field is key and the conception of a university supervision model that requires minimal interaction, rather than university supervision per se, is flawed. It is apparent that building better connections between university and schools as well as providing better quality support during clinical practice should be among the goals of change. Since university supervisors perform this “bridging” and support work at many institutions, would not a better understanding of their work lead to useful findings that can inform reform efforts in these very areas?

As for the trend towards bold moves, the field may well benefit from the advice of scholars who caution against the exclusive tendency towards radical change or structural overhauls. In response to the recently published special issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* entitled, *Bold Ideas for a New Era in Teacher Education, Teacher Preparation, and Teacher Practice*, Mary Kennedy (2010) argued against the “pursuit of boldness,” warning that full-scale change (as opposed to “tinkering”) are “likely to fail for they cannot be designed to

accommodate the myriad constituencies, goals, and constraints that are accommodated by common practice” (p. 18). She explained,

Radical departures are intended to correct myriad flaws we see in our current system. But in so doing they also overlook the benefits of current programs. They forget that there are reasons why our programs look the way they do, and they overlook the various and conflicting things we are simultaneously trying to accomplish (p.19).

Indeed, overhauls are also expensive measures and may not be practical in many cases.

One example is the PDS venture:

Those involved in PDSs attest to their value; yet because of their complexity, connections between PDS activities and their effect on teaching and student achievement have been hard to discern (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, 1999; Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007). Furthermore, studies conclude that PDS programs are expensive for universities in terms of faculty load and create a competing set of service demands for university-based faculty who are expected to conform to the conventional rewards system of higher academia. Finally, PDS structures are fragile and often hinge on relationships between leaders that can become undone when a principal or principal investigator moves on to another position or agenda. Although the premise of a PDS is appealing to many teacher educators, the logistical complexity of forging formal institutional connections makes this an unrealistic option in many teacher education settings. (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009, p. 513)

Securing the “resources needed to maintain program quality” is another challenge noted in the literature on PDS partnerships (Zeichner, 2006). The history of American education reform has also shown us that radical changes often fail to trigger lasting changes, especially when not “anchored in a realistic understanding” of local contexts and knowledge (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p135-7).

Instead of favoring bold measures, Kennedy (2010) recommended that the field adopt the “opposite” approach: “studying our practices closely and deliberately, deepening our understanding of the circumstances in which we work, and finding small and sustainable ways to improve” (p.20). She argues,

Any idea that is so bold as to abandon completely current practice is also likely to create a new set of unintended consequences. And unintended consequences are even more

likely when designing a system that must respond to a wide variety of competing interests, constraints, and rules. (p. 19)

The need to attend to the “interests, constraints, and rules” of local contexts is also recognized by scholars examining the field of teacher education practice and research (Corrigan & Haberman, 1990; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Tom, 1997; Zeichner, 2006; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Observing a loose use of terms like “alternate,” “traditional,” and “PDS” despite wide variations among programs and the lack of elaboration of program specifics in many studies, Zeichner and Conklin (2008) concluded:

...[W]ith regard to the substantive aspects of teacher education programs, their meanings are to be found in the elaboration and enactment of particular program features rather than in their mere presence or absence. Just as the question of whether alternative programs are more effective than traditional programs will never be able to be answered in a meaningful way, we will never settle the question of what effects the mere presence of certain practices in a teacher education program have . . . independent of an understanding of the ways in which these practices have been defined and implemented and knowledge of the contexts in which they have been enacted. (p. 285)

Scholars of late have recognized the need for “sustained inquiry about the clinical aspects of practice and how best to develop skilled practice” since field experiences is “the component of professional education over which we have the least control” (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). They are also looking for better ways to bridge the gap between the school and campus-based components of their programs so teacher candidates are not “left to figure out the complexities of student teaching by themselves,” to “sink or swim,” or to learn by “osmosis” (Zeichner, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). Many of the proposed solutions, like the PDS model, have sought to build conditions and opportunities for campus-school collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). These efforts are laudable and valuable, especially if shown to be effective and sustainable over time, but as scholars have cautioned, setting the conditions for effective administration and practice “can’t predetermine how those decisions will be made” (Elmore &

McLaughlin, 1988, p.v). Interestingly, many studies exploring new models of supervision following a PDS model reported encountering “new” problems, like communication difficulties among participants, conflicting philosophies between school and campus mentors, and workload struggles resulting from the new arrangements, or the lack of institutional support (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Sandholtz & Wasserman, 2001; Wilson, 2006). Might a better understanding and consideration of the “complex web of interests, rules, constraints, and expectations” in local contexts have helped stakeholders anticipate and better prepare for the outcomes (Kennedy, 2010, p. 19)? To ensure success, any effort to improve practice would benefit from a deep understanding of current practices and the complexities of local contexts or risk experiencing unintended consequences, if not failure.

Significance of the Study

University supervisors have been a prevalent feature in the clinical component of teacher education and, in many cases, are the only link between the university and the school during this crucial period of professional learning. While the specifics of their job description differ from program to program, their work generally involves liaising between the campus and the school. Some are entrusted with the complex work of mentoring student-teachers as well as facilitating productive relationships among all members of the student-teaching triad. These individuals provide support and guidance to student teachers at the intersection of two very different and sometimes conflicting contexts: the university and the school – the very space reformers are trying to bridge. Any effort to build campus-school connections can stand to benefit from an understanding of the complex work of these “dedicated” individuals (Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Zeichner, 2010), especially those with a good reputation of success within a program.

Understanding the contexts within which they operate and the confluence of factors that influence their work would shed light on the complex and multifaceted circumstances which a program must contend with in order to effect positive change. As Susan Slick (1998) observed,

As is the case in any reform effort, change occurs slowly, and it is unlikely to occur unless efforts are made to view current practices open-mindedly and to seriously consider potential for change (p.824)

This study is based on the premise that it is well-worth the time of those who seek to improve the clinical preparation of teachers to study the work of such university supervisors so that they might be better equipped to make informed decisions, anticipate consequences, and implement effective, lasting, and sustainable reform.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Frameworks

Review of Relevant Literature

Other than a brief spate of interest in the 1980s, the topic of university supervision has received scant scholarly attention. An exploration of over three decades of scholarship on the subject since then would reveal that university supervision has significant influence on the student teaching experience but it is complex relational work plagued by low status and riddled with challenges.

While the research on pre-service teachers and student-teaching has been relatively extensive, the topic of supervision, especially university based field instruction, has received scant attention. In her search on the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Nancy Zimpher (1987) found 1,852 articles on student teaching or field placement between the years of 1966 and 1986, out of which only 412 dealt with supervision. More notably, only 35 focused on the role of the university supervisor; the rest tended to concentrate on the role of the cooperating teacher. The paucity of research on university-based field instruction is even more apparent in the work of Enz, Freeman, and Wallin (1999), who found only four studies on the subject between the years 1981 and 1999. A more recent search performed on ERIC and ISI Web of Science databases with “supervision,” “student teaching,” and “university supervisors” as keywords to locate published studies between 1999-2011 yielded only ten studies.

The 1980s witnessed a brief spate of research interest in pre-service teacher supervision mostly in response to Novy Bowman's (1979) recommendation that the role of college supervisor be abolished. According to his observation, "Supervision is not one of those activities under the traditional reward system that earn fame and fortune. In the hierarchy of 'production' enterprise (that which gains promotion), student teacher supervision is even below classroom teaching" (p. 29). Bowman's argument rested on his observation that student teacher supervision was a low status task which was passed on to graduate assistants because faculty members resisted doing it. This led him to conclude that "...the supervision of student teachers by the university represents a needless drain upon dwindling resources..." (p. 29). In the studies that followed, researchers defended the role and recognized the contributions of the supervisor in the student teaching experience (Griffin et al, 1983; Koehler, 1984; Zimpher et al., 1980). They revealed that while supervisors provided support, facilitated growth, and managed conflicts in the student teaching triad, they frequently felt undervalued and insecure, especially when communication broke down among the members of the triad. Studies also disclosed a lack of institutional support and training (Koehler, 1984), the low status of the job (Zahorick, 1988; Goodlad 1990; Slick, 1998), and vague role definitions (Slick, 1998).

Many studies on supervision in the nineties tended to focus on the mentoring role of the CT and neglected the role of the FI. One study (Borko & Mayfield, 1995) that examined the "guided teaching" relationships among student teachers and their university supervisors and cooperating teachers found that both played limited roles in the process of learning to teach. The authors recommended a redefinition of the supervisor and cooperating teacher roles and preparation for these roles. In the late 1990s, Susan Slick (1997; 1998) noted that few studies have examined the tensions and conflicts supervisors experience in determining their role (1997;

p. 715) and “no studies have addressed the potential for the supervisor being a part of a reciprocal learning-to-teach or teaching-to-learn negotiation.” She reasoned,

If we take the research that has suggested the supervisor is an important figure in the “making of a teacher” (Grossman, 1990), we need to address the tensions and the struggles the supervisor experiences in defining and balancing her roles. (1998; p. 824)

Her case studies detailed the complexity of the role and the difficulties and tensions supervisors encountered on job. Due to the lack of clear role definitions and university support, Slick’s supervisors struggled with the dual roles of assisting and assessing (1997) and felt frustrated and disenfranchised (1998). Like the other scholars, she called for more thoughtful and deliberate institutional investment in curriculum design and role conceptualization.

In the last decade, a few studies did continue to examine the complexity and potential of university supervision, most confirming the observations of previous findings: the enactment of field instruction is rigged with challenges and tension (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Bates & Burbank, 2008); supervision is still relegated to graduate students who receive minimal guidance and assistance from the university (Cuenca, 2010); but the university supervisor still plays a significant role in the student-teaching experience (Fayne, 2007; Fernandez & Erbilgin, 2009; Yusko, 2004). In one of these studies (Fayne, 2007), the author surveyed 222 student teachers for their views on university supervisors and cooperating teachers and found that the former served a “distinct and important function.” Student teachers saw supervisors as confidantes, evaluators, and managers of their field experience while cooperating teachers as instructional coaches. As a result of the study, the unit sought for ways to elevate the supervisor role and engage them in conversations about program improvement. Such findings seem to confirm the observations of earlier studies which recognized the potential of the role (Alverman,

1981; Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Friebus, 1977; Griffin et al., 1983; Koehler, 1984; Zimpher et al., 1980; Zimpher,1987) .

Over three decades of scholarship have presented a particular view of university supervision: it is low status work and still relegated to graduate students and adjuncts to perform, often with minimal or insufficient support from the program; the role is pervasive, although its specific conceptualization vary from program to program; it can play a significant part in the dynamics of student teaching but it is also complex work rigged with tension and challenges; and many recommendations have been made to help programs optimize its practice. Some of these include: more training and support for supervisors, more faculty involvement in supervision and institutional recognition for those who do, more collaboration between faculty and supervisors, and more clearly defined goals and expectations for the role.

Yet, we also know from the few studies that did examine its interactive process and from theories of social practices that field instruction, like teaching practice, is socially mediated and contextually situated. As a social practice, it is defined by members of the student-teaching triad through interaction, actions, and language (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Green et al, 1992; Luria, 1976; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). In order for programs to conceive of viable and sustainable ways to improve supervisory practices, they need to understand the local systems of values, beliefs, norms, and meanings (Geertz, 1973) that members of the student-teaching triad construct amidst the embedded contexts of institutions, programs, classrooms and their traditions (Grossman & McDonald, 2008; McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Programmatic changes that alter the conditions of practice but do not take into account how participants make sense of their experiences run the risk of superficial results, unintended consequences, or even failure. For example, high levels of collaboration and close proximity among the participants at a

newly minted PDS program resulted in “dysfunctional” student teaching dyads characterized by strained communication among participants. The causes:

Although cooperating teachers had often talked about their student teachers in the past, the high level of collaboration and the close proximity in which the participants worked meant that the cooperating teachers were the subject of many conversations; they were not accustomed to this. Generally, cooperating teachers did not see commentary on their own teaching and supervising practices as emancipatory, but rather as an obstacle. . . . As time passed, it seemed as though everyone was talking and no one was listening. Productive communication seemed to be breaking down within and between several cooperating teacher–student teacher dyads. The student teachers did not believe the cooperating teachers were acting as advocates on their behalf and that they were siding with their colleagues. (Rodgers & Keil, 2007, p. 74)

The program also encountered resistance from parents who feared that teaching quality was compromised by the presence of so many novice teachers. The authors of the study, who were also faculty members responsible for the restructuring of the program, concluded that new ways of working produced new and “unique problems” (p.75).

Such interpersonal problems have also been observed by the few scholars who study the relational dynamics of triads (Slick, 1997, 1998; Bullough & Draper, 2004). Together, they exemplify how contextual and personal factors interact to produce tensions and conflicts in the triadic relationships under study. They also sensitize us to the competing beliefs and perspectives of members of the student teaching triad and how these can adversely affect student teacher learning. These issues are not likely to be resolved by mere structural changes in programs, alterations in the conditions of practice, or role re-definitions. Just as throwing a student teacher into a classroom for a semester does not ensure learning, so creating new structural arrangements for collaboration between school and campus personnel might not guarantee productive relationships. As Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) have noted in their seminal report on policy and practice in American education reform, setting the conditions for effective practice “can’t predetermine how those decisions will be made” (p. v). Programmatic features and resources, no

matter how well conceived, do not by themselves ensure success. Rather, it is human interaction with these elements that determine their effects on thought and action. So in addition to creative restructuring and inventive features, programs need a better understanding of how members engage with these features. They need to know how members construct meaning and make sense of programmatic elements as well as one another. To date, too few research studies have been conducted to inform this need. This study engages this problem by seeking to understand, from a constructionist perspective, how triadic members engage with programmatic elements and with one another and how these interactions influence how FIs enact their practice.

Field supervision is complex relational work, much like classroom teaching (Lampert, 2010). It is performed in the embedded contexts of campus and school and involves collaboration with student teachers and cooperating teachers. All triadic members bring into the arrangement a variety of meaning-making resources that are historically situated and culturally derived. Studying how field supervisors navigate these relationships in such complex settings can reveal the social factors that influence such guided teaching relationships during student teaching. A more nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay of such factors can help programs conceive of more effective ways to support the field experiences of student teachers.

Social Constructionist Perspective

To investigate the factors that influence how field instructors enact practice within the student teaching triad, I have adopted a social constructionist epistemology because it provides a way to systematically study the social processes that shape interaction. From this perspective, knowledge is constructed through the social processes and interactions of individuals in their daily lives. Drawing from a variety of disciplines including philosophy, psychology, sociology,

and linguistics, social constructionism has, in recent decades, offered scholars of the social sciences new lenses through which to study human beings as social animals. (Burr, 2003, p. 1-2). Relatively recent fields like critical psychology, discursive psychology, discourse analysis, deconstruction, and poststructuralism are all manifestations of social constructionism.

Fundamentally, social constructionism encourages a critical perspective about knowledge - our ways of understanding the world, others and even ourselves. It recognizes that all ways of understanding are culturally and historically specific, that knowledge is constructed by people through daily social interactions, and that knowledge is bound up with social action and power. In other words, our account of something is an interpretation – a culturally and historically effected way of knowing – meaningfully accessible to those within a community who share the same cultural and linguistic resources. We derive our ways of understanding the world not from an objective reality but from existing conceptual frameworks and categories we inherit from others, both past and present:

Concepts and categories are acquired by each person as they develop the use of language and are thus reproduced everyday by everyone who shares a culture and language. This means that the way a person thinks, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language that they use. (Burr, 2007, p. 8)

Unlike traditional psychology which looks inside a person to explain social phenomena, social constructionism focuses our enquiry on the social practices of people and their interactions with one another:

While most traditional psychology and sociology has put forward explanations in terms of entities, such as personality traits, economic structures, models of memory and so on, the explanations offered by social constructionists are more often in terms of the dynamics of social interaction. The emphasis is thus more on processes than structures. The aim of social enquiry is thus removed from questions about the nature of people or society towards a consideration of how certain phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved by people in interaction. Knowledge is therefore

seen not as something that a person has or doesn't have, but as something that people do together. (Burr, 2003; p. 9)

What is particularly useful about the constructionist framework is that it not only acknowledges that meaning is socially constructed but “points to the historical and cultural location of that construction” (Young and Collin, 2002, p. 377). Through the lens of social constructionism, we might investigate how knowledge is generated among the triad members, how they make sense of their experiences, and the kinds of historical and cultural resources they draw from – in essence, the social factors that shape interpretation. Tracking these patterns of meaning-making should prove valuable for those who seek to understand and improve triadic collaboration and promote student-teacher learning in the field.

Because language is central to human interaction, it is in the “linguistic space” (Burr, 2003, p. 54) of such social interaction (rather than within individuals) that explanations of human action and behavior are sought. Informed by structuralism and post-structuralism, social constructionism views language not as a passive vehicle of thought but as a social resource which humans use skillfully to construct different accounts of the world, events, themselves and others (Burr, 2003, p. 14).

Field instruction is a social practice that is achieved largely by interaction and language is the primary vehicle through which constructions of teaching, learning, self, and others are delivered. Within the activities that constitute field instruction such as three-way meetings and post-observation conferences, participants were observed to draw upon a repertoire of linguistic resources which they use to construct accounts of events, themselves, and others.

Comprehension among participants is possible because such resources are shared, as social analyst Jay Lemke (1995) pointed out:

We speak with the voices of our communities, and to the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion them out of the social voices already available to us, appropriating the words of others to speak a word of our own. (p. 24-25)

Exploring these catalogues of shared linguistic resources among triad members is essential because they help us understand how members construct meaning in such a social arrangement upon which much depends.

Positioning Theory

To best analyze the discursive interactions of triadic relationships, this study employed the concepts of social *positioning* and *storylines*, features of *Positioning Theory*, which is a branch of social constructionism. Davies and Harré (2005) define positioning as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (p. 264). Embedded in this definition is a notion of “self” that is not static or singular but rather a discursive construct that is interactionally achieved:

An individual emerges through the process of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives (p. 263).

Such selves – our sense of how to interpret the world from the perspective of who we take ourselves to be – are constructed via our participation in discursive practices through which we learn conventions and categories – images, concepts, and storylines relevant to each discursive practice - within which we position ourselves. ‘Position’ is a term used to describe the discursive production of a diversity of selves; it refers to “a cluster of rights and duties with respect to what can be legitimately said and done by whom” (Harré, 2005; p. 186). In conversations, speakers act

and speak from particular positions they adopt and they position others in the process. Davies and Harré (2005) call the former *reflexive positioning* and the latter, *interactive positioning* (p. 264). The words people choose to use “inevitably contain images and metaphors which both assume and invoke the ways of being that the participants take themselves to be involved in” although they may not be aware of such assumptions (p. 265). Such presuppositions include *storylines* – particular interpretations of cultural stereotypes (of events, characters, and moral dilemmas, for example) or socially accepted narrative conventions which speakers call upon and invite or require others to conform to if they are to continue the conversation. As Harré and Slocum (2003) explain,

People in daily life do not have an infinite reservoir of possible actions from which to choose. What people are permitted or licensed to do on any occasion is drawn from surprisingly narrow repertoires of categories and subcategories of actions. Among these are actions that, in those circumstances, people are taken or take themselves to have the right or duty to perform. (p. 105)

In other words, people draw from the cultural resources that are available to them to create and manage meanings in conversation, and their presumptions about the rights and duties that have been explicitly or implicitly invoked drive the dynamics of social interaction. For example, saying “thank you” in response to a compliment is an example of a fairly typical learned and expected convention, when speakers subscribe to a friendly and polite exchange:

Speaker A (male): Good driving.

Speaker B (female): Thank you.

However, a compliment might elicit an antagonistic response if the recipient interprets the gesture to communicate condescension:

Speaker A (male): Good driving.

Speaker B (female): No one asked for your opinion.

In so doing, Speaker B is resisting the “inferior” positioning within a perceived patronizing storyline and positioning Speaker A as one asserting superiority, whether that was his intention or not. The continuation of this anecdotal social exchange would be driven by the storylines and positions each speaker knows to invoke. As Harré & Slocum (2003) explain:

...a position not only delimits the speech acts available to the person so positioned, but it also serves to preinterpret what the person says or does. Actions must be made sense of within story lines. The close relation between positions adopted and/or ascribed and the story lines that are taken to be or even deemed to be unfolding is responsible for preinterpreting that is so important in understanding real life episodes. (p. 129)

Sometimes, certain storylines and their accompanying positions may be so conventional that they may “tempt speakers into compelling narratives that fit so comfortably that they may even conceal the possibilities of choice” (Moghaddam, 1999, p. 78). For example, the positioning of women in certain tribal cultures restricts the possibilities of their words and actions in response to male decisions, just as terms like “patient,” “hero,” “student,” or “ivory tower” imply a range of narratives and positions so conventional that speakers might not be cognizant of their influence. In this way, positions and their accompanying storylines are powerful in that they affect, and even constrain, what one may meaningfully, and autonomously, say and do (Harré & Slocum, 2003, p. 106). In psychology, it has been said that the goal of therapy is to “free clients from relatively ‘frozen’ narratives” and enable them to “construct new personal stories” ((Moghaddam, 1999, p. 78). Helping the client achieve awareness of the patterns of these ‘frozen’ narratives is an important step towards change. If “positions exist as expectations, beliefs, and presuppositions” in psychological reality (Harré & Slocum, 2003, p. 109), then speakers can only be free to make deliberate choices in the everyday ebb and flow of storylines and positions if they become aware of the nature of their existence and pull. In student-teaching triad relationships, might such metacognitive awareness among members

promote reflexivity and collaboration, both of which are essential components of effective learning communities?

While positioning theory has been used most frequently to analyze one-on-one conversations, it can be applied to the discursive practices of larger units like social groups, institutions, or even nations (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; Harré & Slocum, 2003). For example, in the recent Occupy Wall Street movement, financial corporations were positioned as “greedy and corrupted.” How the apartheid government in South Africa constructed the identities of those who rebelled against it initially versus how it was eventually positioned by international protest groups is another example of institutional positioning. Indeed, studies have been conducted to examine the positioning processes of men and women (Adams & Harré, 2003; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003), indigenous Australians and white Australians (Aberdeen, 2003), a youth sports club (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003), and the European Union (Slocum and Van Langenhove, 2003), just to name a few.

In educational research, an increasing number of scholars are applying positioning theory in their research, especially in the area of literacy. In 2011, McVee et al. published a collection of studies by various scholars who used positioning theory to examine literacy, “culture, discourse, narrative, and power in diverse educational contexts.” The authors used positioning theory as a framework to investigate a range of literate practices of both children and adults, demonstrating its usefulness in unpacking complex social processes and meaning-making systems within cultural contexts. In addition to the studies found in that volume, there were other works, mostly in literacy, which used positioning theory to uncover the social conventions that drive social interaction and practices in educational contexts. For example, Evans (1996) studied the gender positioning of boys and girls as they participated in literature discussion groups and

cautioned against the socialization of gender roles and identities in such classroom activities. In 2001, Enciso observed how standardized readings tests positioned students, considered their assumptions and effects, and urged teachers to question the validity and reliability of those tests. Clarke's (2006) study of students' positioning as they engage in literacy events revealed the persistent effects of positioning when power structures between the girls and boys became normalized after female students consistently assumed more powerful positions over male students in Literature Circles. In teacher education research, only one study by Bullough and Draper (2004) used positioning theory to examine the power dynamics of members of a failed triad. In all instances, scholars are noting the consequential effects of positioning practices of which participants are not aware and cautioning against the negative consequences of such oblivion.

Taking heed of such observations, this study employed positioning theory as a framework for analyzing the discursive interactions of student teaching triad members, in order to surface the social conventions and meaning-making systems that shape them. Identifying the storylines and positions in discursive interactions would reveal not only the "expectations, beliefs, and presuppositions" (Harré & Slocum, 2003, p. 109) of the speakers, but also the repertoire of cultural meanings and patterns of conventions from which they draw. As Harré and van Langenhove (1999) noted, positioning theory is not a deterministic theory but is useful as a "starting point for reflecting upon the many different aspects of social life" (p. 9-10). In this study, positioning theory was employed to analyze the discursive interaction of triad members in order to locate the psychological and sociological patterns that shape their interpretations of program elements and one another. Attending to the positions and storylines invoked by members would also shed light on the beliefs, motives, and values behind their social actions,

thus affording a way for us to examine directly processes which have otherwise been “hidden and secret” (Billig, 1997; p. 210).

Research Questions

The main question driving my research study, *How do triad member interpretations of program elements and their interactions with one another influence field instructor practice?*, is premised on the social constructionist view that meaning and knowledge are constructed by participants as they interact with the environment and with one another. This view of attending to the meaning-making processes of participants complicates the assumption that tweaking programmatic elements or role definitions will improve collaboration and practice. As described in the literature review, how participants make sense of program components or one another significantly influences student teacher experiences but little is known of these processes. Rather than identify programmatic features as factors that influence practice, this proposed study adopts the view that it is how participants interpret these features and one another that influences practice. In order to investigate such sense-making processes, my main research question calls for the pursuit of more focused interrelated questions:

- (1) How do triad members interpret program elements?
- (2) How do triad members interpret their interactions with one another?
- (3) How do these interpretations influence field instructor practice?

As discussed earlier, these questions are important because they fill in the gaps in our understanding of how field instruction is enacted, how participants engage in its activities, and associatively, how clinical practice may be influenced. The relevance of these questions is further supported by a pilot study I had conducted which investigated the interaction between a

university field instructor and her student teachers within a semester of student-teaching in an undergraduate teacher education program. In that study, the participants were observed to construct programmatic elements and one another in distinct ways, leading to significant consequences in student teaching relationships and ST learning experiences². Upon reflection, those observations also resonated with my own experiences as a field instructor for five years. Despite being given a similar set of program specifications, triad members vary significantly in the way they make sense of such features and their interactions with one another and these interpretations influence how they experience the semester. However, exactly what these interpretations are, how they are made, and how they influence member interaction and field instructor practice remain a mystery because researcher access to the practice of field instructors is difficult. Like classroom teaching, field instruction takes place among triad members only and their interactions are not usually privy to outsiders. Accessibility is also dependent on relationships of trust among FIs, CTs and STs with a researcher, whom they have to welcome

² For example, tension in the FI-ST relationship ensued when the ST failed to submit a typed-up Unit Plan because of a misunderstanding of the assignment's purpose. Cast immediately as a tardy student by his FI, the ST proceeded to adopt a position of compliance for fear of losing face and receiving a poor grade instead of explaining or clarifying his rationale. Constrained by her interpretation of him as a "lazy" student, the FI focused her effort on getting him to meet requirements and in the process, missed an important point the ST made, which was that he revised an entire unit after assessing student responses in his first class. Had she taken up that point, a productive conversation about practicing reflective teaching might have ensued, followed by a clarification about the purpose of the assignment. Instead, she presumed he was making an excuse and issued a deadline. His interpretation of their roles led him to comply. This not only closed off a learning opportunity, it also entrenched both parties in their perceptions of each other, hence straining the relationship. In an interview with me at the end of the term, the ST confessed to viewing both the FI and the assignment as "bureaucratic stuff" associated with the university – the "least important thing" to him; the "most important is really being prepared for school" and "getting... papers back to ...kids in time." His interpretation of the Unit Plan Project as a bureaucratic requirement lacking in practical value limited its use as a tool to promote critical planning and reflective skills in his learning journey. Might his learning have been different had this view been identified and challenged earlier? The storyline (Davies & Harré, 2005) of an authoritative teacher and an errant student, as well as a bureaucratic administrator versus a practical student, once invoked, constrained the FI and ST to roles which limited their ability to exploit moments in their interactions which could have contributed to a deeper understanding of the assignment and richer conversations about the processes of planning and teaching. These observations suggested that triad member interpretations of program elements and one another are significantly linked to ST learning experiences and FI practice. An important implication of these findings is that a meta-awareness of such interpretations might prove useful for teacher educators who wish to engage in more constructive interactions with their students.

into their midst. Additionally, such studies are difficult to enact within two school systems, particularly when formal approval from varying districts, institutions, and personnel are required. This could explain why most research on supervisory interactions are self-studies or are conducted by lead faculty members investigating their own program. While valuable, the existing literature represents a limited view of supervisory interactions. It is the purpose of this study, guided by its three questions, to provide a fuller understanding of how field instructors and their STs and CTs co-construct and negotiate meanings in local contexts via close-up and detailed case studies of triad group interactions using ethnographic methods.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The current study explores the interactive patterns of student teaching triad members and examines how they influence the practice of the field instructors. To date, such processes have remained mostly invisible because of the lack of scholarly interest in a low status field, the tendency of teacher education reform to focus on structural features, and difficult researcher access into a very private sphere of practice that takes place across multiple sites. Yet, much is hinged on the viability of these triadic relationships. Efforts to prepare pre-service teachers culminate in this crucial final semester and field instructors are frequently the only link between the university and the schools. Unless we achieve a better understanding of how triad members actually interpret program elements and their interaction with one another, our trust in extended field-based experiences for student teachers requires a leap of faith. From a social constructionist perspective, understanding such interpretations would shed light on the social and psychological influences that shape student teaching relationships and supervisory practices since all knowledge is socially constructed “through our collaborative activities” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 7).

Hence, the main purpose of this study was to pursue the following inquiry: *How do triad member interpretations of program elements and their interactions with one another influence field instructor practice?* To answer this question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

- (1) How do triad members interpret program elements?

- (2) How do triad members interpret their interactions with one another?
- (3) How do these interpretations influence the field instructor practice?

Due to the nature of these questions, qualitative research methods were employed as they allow researchers to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). In this chapter, I will elaborate on the specifics of these methods and how they were used to generate rich findings for this study.

Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, I employed a qualitative case study design (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003) that is particularly suitable for context-dependent inquiry that seeks to examine what a phenomenon means as it is socially enacted within a bounded system. In the case of this study, the bounded system is the social unit of the student-teaching triad, which comprises the field instructor, the student teacher whose clinical experience she is tasked to support, and the cooperating teacher with whom she must collaborate. As a comprehensive research strategy (Yin, 2003, p. 14) that relies on the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence, case study methodology was deemed suitable for the purposes of uncovering the interactive practices and the meaning-making processes of student teaching triad group members. As Merriam (1998) observed, case studies allow researchers “to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19). They are also particularly useful when “how” or “why” questions are being asked “about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2003, p. 9).

The validity of this study designs lies in the concepts of concrete universals (Erickson, 1986) and user generalizations, also known as case-to-case transfer by Firestone (1993), in the qualitative tradition. The idea that what is learned in a particular situation can be transferred or generalized to other similar situations underpins all interpretive research. Rather than seeking abstract universals (that generalizes to a population from a sample), interpretive research searches for “concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other case studies in equally great detail” (Erickson, 1986, p.130). After all, what are causal are context-bound human interpretations and understanding such complex social processes is the purpose of qualitative case studies. User generalization (a common concept in law and medicine) leaves the decisions of applicability to the reader or practitioner who determines if aspects of one case are applicable to another. To enhance generalizability from these perspectives, researchers employ the following strategies: rich, thick description; case-typicality, and multiple site or case design (Merriam, 1998). My study engages these strategies in order to investigate how participants of student-teaching triads make meaning out of their positions and interactions within a fairly typical program arrangement.

To achieve a dense description of the phenomenon of field instruction as interpreted by triad members, I employ a variety of data collection methods, which included prolonged engagement with participants, semi-structured interview protocols, participant-observation, and key written artifacts of participants’ work. Triangulation of data collected across this study allowed for in-depth exploration of my research questions and ensured trustworthiness within my research design.

Specifically, I followed the logic of a multiple case study design and investigated the practice of two well-reputed English field instructors and their work with two student teachers

each within a secondary undergraduate teacher education program at a mid-western university. This choice of a multiple embedded case study design enables a more in-depth exploration of the premise that triad member interpretations of programmatic elements and one another influence how field instruction is enacted. The careful selection of multiple cases that show different perspectives of the processes of meaning construction follows a replication logic which would provide for more compelling evidence, hence making the study more robust (Herriot & Firestone, 1983; Yin, 2003).

Site and Participant Selection

I chose to conduct my study in the program where I had been a field instructor for five years. This undergraduate, secondary, teacher education program is one of several teacher certification programs (including elementary and masters programs) at a large Midwestern university and features the fairly typical components of content-area coursework, methods, and a student-teaching semester at the end. My familiarity with program elements and the professional relationships I had established over the years afforded not only rare access to potential cases but also the contextual knowledge necessary for a deeper understanding of the complexities and processes I wished to study. For this reason, I focused my study on the subject area in which I was experienced: English.

The two FIs, both retired high school teachers, are well-respected adjuncts who have worked in the program for some years. At the time of the study, I was not a FI but my relatively extensive prior experience in the program was well regarded by these two FIs who saw my participant-observer role as an opportunity for collaboration with a more experienced colleague.

While I had attended faculty meetings with one of them as fellow FIs for a few semesters before, I was a total stranger to the other though he had heard about my work from others.

The two FIs were the only FIs hired for the secondary English cohort the semester during which this study was conducted, which is a fairly typical arrangement for this program. One supervised four STs; the other supervised five. All triad members were of Caucasian descent. While it would have been interesting to investigate the activities of all nine triads, time and logistical constraints permitted the study to a total of four triads, two per FI. The four STs were selected because their schools operated in the same district, hence serving students with similar demographics.

This embedded case-design of a total of four triad groups (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1) allows for a comparative study of how different FIs, STs, and CTs, in similar school settings, interpret similar programmatic arrangements.

Figure 3.1 Embedded Case-design of Four Student-Teaching Triad Groups

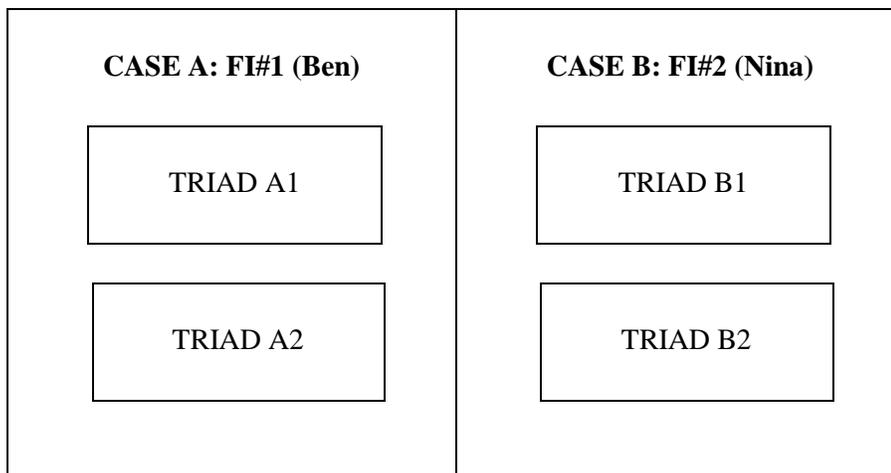


Table 3.1 Embedded Case-design with Pseudonyms of Triad Members

CASE	TRIAD GROUP	FI	ST	CT
Case A	TRIAD A1	BEN	ANDY	MR. SCOTT
	TRIAD A2	BEN	NEIL	MR. MILLS
Case B	TRIAD B1	NINA	GRACE	MS. CASSIDY
	TRIAD B2	NINA	EDITH	MR YATES

Data Collection

Qualitative research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) were employed for this study because I wanted to examine the complex meaning-making processes of triad members as they engage with program elements and one another. Participant-observation and triad member interviews are the primary sources of data collection. In addition, all paperwork associated with field instruction practice including the course handbook, syllabi, memos, reports, handouts, and program evaluation documents were also collected as data. For management purposes, my data sources were organized into the following categories:

Participant-Observation

Audio-recording and transcripts of interactions during all FI activities in which I was a participant observer;

Field Notes

Field notes taken during FI activities, including the extended field notes written up soon after each activity, contact summaries, and the analytic memos written up at regular intervals;

Interviews

Audio-recording and transcripts of in-depth one-to-one interviews with each participant and the analytic memos produced afterwards

Written Artifacts

Student Teaching Handbook, observation paperwork (lesson plans, pre- and post-observation memos), seminar paperwork (syllabus, agendas, handouts, assignments), ST assessment documents (baseline, midterm, and final assessment of ST filled up by FIs, CTs, and STs at the beginning, middle and end of the semester), and program evaluation forms.

Participant-Observation

I assumed the role of a researcher who was interested in studying the processes of triadic interaction and field instruction practice.

For all four cases, I attended all field instruction activities (totaling just under a hundred hours), which for each triad consisted of four classroom observations, four post-observation conferences, and three three-way (FI-ST-CT) meetings. I was also a participant-observer in the weekly two-hour seminar conducted by each FI for his/her group of STs. All activities (except the classroom observations) were audio-taped and later, transcribed. I took field notes during each activity and wrote extended field notes and sheet summaries afterwards. These were analyzed along with the interview data at regular intervals and emerging insights were captured in analytic memos.

Interviews

Triad members were interviewed multiple times throughout the course of the semester. Interviews followed a semi-structured open-ended format meant for eliciting participants' perspectives and beliefs on teaching, learning, student-teaching, program elements, and field instruction (see Appendix A for the interview framework). Subsequent informal conversational interviews were conducted in order to follow-up on issues raised by the participants or those that piqued my curiosity as an observer. The use of open-ended questions allows the interview process to capture the meaning-making strategies of the participants, which were also used to design follow-up interview questions. The content, frequency, and duration of the interviews also depended on the context of the emerging data and the time availability of the participants although each interview lasted between thirty to sixty minutes on average (see Table 3.2). All interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and provided to participants to check for "accuracy and palatability" (Stake, 1995, p. 115). Following each interview, I wrote contact sheet summaries and recorded emerging insights and questions in analytic memos at regular intervals.

The FIs were interviewed at least five times during the semester, the STs at least twice, and the CTs at least one time at the end of the semester. The interviews centered on their views about program elements, their experiences and relationships with other triad members, their decisions regarding practice, and issues about which I became curious as an observer of triad activities and interactions.

In addition to the interviews, there were many unrecorded discussions with participants throughout the semester for which I took written notes. These were used to clarify my understanding of emerging issues and verify my observation notes.

Table 3.2 Summary of Interview Data

Participants		Number of Interviews	Audio-Recorded	Transcripts	Field notes
FI	BEN	6	278 min.	√	√
FI	NINA	5	239 min.	√	√
ST	ANDY	2	124 min.	√	√
ST	NEIL	2	187 min.	√	√
ST	GRACE	2	105 min	√	√
ST	EDITH	2	122 min.	√	√
CT	MR. SCOTT	1	48 min.	√	√
CT	MR. MILLS	2	56 min.	√	√
CT	MS. CASSIDY	1	52 min.	√	√
CT	MR. YATES	1	49 min.	√	√

Artifacts

In addition to the observations and interviews, I also collected copies of all the paperwork associated with field instruction practice. These include administrative forms, assessment instruments, post-observation memos, handouts, emails, and lesson plans (see Table 3.3). These written artifacts were analyzed along with the other data sources for features that will inform the study.

Table 3.3 Fieldwork Data: Field Instruction Activities & Associated Paperwork

Activities	Number of sessions	Audio-Recorded	Written Artifacts	Field notes	Transcripts
Post-Lesson Observation Conferences (FI-ST)	4 sessions per triad group	Total 492 min.	Pre-Observation Memos and lesson plans written by ST, Post-Observation Memos written by FI.	√	√
Three-Way Meetings (FI-ST-CT)	2 sessions per triad group	Total 126 min.	Baseline, Mid-term, and Final Assessment forms submitted by FI, ST, and CT.	√	√
Weekly Seminars (FI-STs)	13 sessions for each FI group	Total 53 hrs. 26 min.	Student teaching Handbook, syllabus, agendas, handouts, assignments.	√	√

Methods of Analysis

Data analysis followed the procedures of data selection, data representation, and robust interpretation-building so as to generate analytical assertions through a recursive constant comparative process (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Erickson, 1986; Goetz and LeCompte, 1981).

Specifically, these steps include:

- Close reading of field notes and other gathered data;
- Developing analytic codes to group pieces of data into categories of relevant information;
- Using social constructionist concepts to analyze how field instruction and triad relationships are socially shaped and enacted;
- Noting recurrent themes, meaningful events, and ways of talking that represent and construct triad member interactions; and

- Interrelating analytic categories with situational circumstances and participant perspectives to develop assertions about “what’s happening here” relative to the phenomenon of interest.

(adapted from Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 110)

Data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection. Throughout the data collection phase, I performed open coding of field notes, memos, and transcripts as they became available. Using a constant comparative approach (Glasser, 1965), initial codes were inductively generated and categorized in a search for meaningful connections and patterns. The selection of core themes, though guided by the conceptual framework and research questions, also depended on what was recurring, what seemed significant to members, and how they were related to other themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 157).

After all the data were collected, I embarked on the reflexive and recursive work of recoding, selecting themes, focused coding, and generating and testing assertions (Erickson, 1986; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). For the purpose of generating assertions and establishing evidentiary warrants for them, I combed through the entire data corpus repeatedly to consider alternative ways of categorizing and interpreting data. To test the assertions and guard against faulty conclusions drawn inductively early in the research process, I conducted a systematic search for confirming and disconfirming evidence. Replaying audio records of both the frequent and rare events allowed me to revisit and observe them from different analytic perspectives, thereby checking against the “problem of premature typification” (Erickson, 1986, p. 144) as well as the dependence on frequently occurring events. Such microethnographic analysis, combined with fieldwork, allowed me to analyze significant events in its broader contextual framing, thus helping me to achieve a more complete analysis.

Since this study involved multiple cases, I searched for key linkages and patterns of generalizations within each case first, and then performed a thematic analysis across the cases before making final interpretations about the whole case. Within-case and cross-case displays and matrices were eventually constructed to aid the identification of patterns, themes, negative evidence, rival explanations, and evidentiary warrants. Line-by-line analysis of the transcripts and field notes produced an initial code list of forty-one themes (see Appendix B). Further cross-case analysis (see Appendix C for a cross-case matrix) identified similarities among the initial codes and distinguished between overarching themes and those that could be categorized under them. Through the lens of positioning theory, the transcripts were recoded to identify the positions speakers were assuming as well as the storylines they were invoking during interaction (see Appendix D for an example of position/storyline-analysis). Subsequent cross-case analysis saw that the themes consolidated around five overarching storylines that dominated participant interpretations. The analytic process continued until further consolidation proved impossible without losing essential themes in the final data analysis.

Ethics

I have worked hard to ensure that participants' rights and privacy are maintained at all stages of my research. Beginning with informed consent (see Appendix E), data collection procedures were subject to IRB scrutiny and approval. I have used pseudonyms in my field notes, transcripts, memos, and continued to do so throughout analysis and the final write-up. From the beginning, I was upfront and explicit about my need to protect the individual privacy of each participant. They all understood that what a member says to me in private will not be revealed to other members and so did not press me for any information I could not give. Such

respect and maintenance of privacy helped to establish trust and integrity. All data collected was used for this study only.

Validity and Reliability

As Stake (2005) observed, knowledge gained in research “faces hazardous passage from writer to reader. The writer needs ways of safeguarding the trip” (p. 455). To ensure the validity my study, I employ several strategies to rule out threats to validity and document the accuracy of my findings. These strategies are discussed in the following sections.

Triangulation

The research design described above relies on data collected from different sources (different participants in diverse settings, program documents, transcripts, and my own notes) using different methods (audio-recording, formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and field notes) consistent with case study inquiry (Yin, 2003). Combining these different sources and methods can provide a more accurate account of triad interactions and interpretations than each one could alone. It also guards against chance associations and biases inherent in any single source or method. The data was also analyzed in a variety of ways, including inductive coding of field notes and transcripts, writing analytic memos, developing matrices and networks of associations within and among cases, performing microethnography (Erickson, 1986, p. 144), identifying negative or disconfirming evidence, and performing discrepant case analysis. The following section lists the additional measures I have taken to safeguard against the limitations of my study.

Comparison

My use of a multiple embedded case study design follows a replication logic (Yin, 2003) to capture the similarities or differences in the supervisory practice of two FIs, with two different sets of STs and CTs each. Conclusions drawn from a comparison of these multiple cases would be stronger than those from a single case alone.

Intensive, Long-term Involvement

I collected data over four months, which is the entire student-teaching semester of the program. This long-term participant observation allowed me to observe the events and interactions over time, collect more direct data, and test initial understandings against ongoing data collection.

Rich Data

Both long-term participant observation and interviews, together with the other methods of data collection, allowed me to gather “rich” data that are detailed and varied enough to base my conclusions on. As Becker (1970, cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 110) notes, such data

counter the twin dangers of respondent duplicity and observer bias by making it difficult for respondents to produce data that uniformly support a mistaken conclusion, just as they make it difficult for the observer to restrict his observations so that he sees only what supports his prejudices and expectations. (p. 53)

Feedback from other researchers

I solicited the help of my study group colleagues for comparative coding and feedback to ensure inter-rater reliability and limit researcher bias.

Member Checks

To guard against my own biases and the possibility of misinterpretation, I solicited regular feedback about the accuracy of transcripts and notes from the participants of my study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I incorporated their feedback into the data corpus but was careful to check for accuracy of the accounts across other sources of evidence since participants' feedback "is no more inherently valid than their interview responses" and "should be taken simply as evidence" (Maxwell, 2005, p.111)

Reflexivity

Maxwell (2005) identifies "researcher bias" and "reactivity" (the effect of the researcher on the individuals studied) as "two broad types of threats" associated with qualitative studies (p. 108). Since it is impossible to eliminate the researcher's theories, values and perceptual lens in an interpretive study, validity is achieved by clarifying the researcher's worldview, assumptions, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study. Additionally, a researcher's inescapable influence on the talk and behavior study-members must be foregrounded and considered throughout the investigation. As Maxwell (2005) notes, "the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate this influence, but to understand it and to use it productively" (p. 109). Similarly, Emerson, et. al. (1995), citing Clarke (1975, p. 99), maintain that such "reactive effects...should not be seen as "contaminating" what is observed and learned. Rather, these effects are the very source of that learning and observation" (p. 3). They further explain,

Relationships between the field researcher and people in the setting do not so much disrupt or alter ongoing patterns of social interaction as reveal the terms and bases on which people form social ties in the first place (p. 3).

In an effort to demonstrate strong reflexivity, I discuss my background, assumptions, and research relationships in the following sections to consider their influence on my study.

My Background, Research Relationships & Reactivity

After a decade of teaching in high schools and mentoring new teachers, my interest in promoting teacher effectiveness in the classroom led me to pursue a doctorate degree in teacher education at a research university. I was in search for answers to the problems of practice and teacher learning but in the course of my study found more questions instead. What I was learning in the courses was tested in the field of clinical practice to which I was appointed a field instructor as part of my graduate school funding. With much faith and little training, I was entrusted with half a dozen student teachers to supervise each semester.

Field instructors in the program tended to be graduate students like myself, some with only a few years of teaching experience, or retired school teachers and principals. Field instructor meetings were conducted twice a month during which the program coordinator clarified program requirements and disseminated paperwork for the most part. Sometimes, the problems of supervision were raised, as were suggestions for their solutions by participants of the meeting but these were ad hoc in nature. Supervisory practice in this program was much like teaching practice in the high school – everyone worked independently and collaboration was an option few took up. As a new field instructor, I tried to seek out more experienced colleagues for advice but had to respect the sense of privacy that seem to surround most of their practice. While the occasional sharing and advice were useful, they did not satisfy my search for more definitive answers to the enormous responsibility of ensuring that student-teachers were professionally ready, certified “safe-to-practice” on real students, by the end of the semester. In desperation for

more information and guidance, I pored through the literature, from research articles to hortatory texts on supervision, only to discover that scholarly attention to this field has been scant, and that the deployment of graduate students and retired teachers as supervisors, with minimal or no formal training in supervision or teacher education, were fairly typical in university based teacher education programs.

Over time, I had to develop my own theories of practice from what I could glean from other people's suggestions, my readings, my own experiences, and what I assessed of my own practices in relation to the learning of my student teachers. In a few years, I had become an "experienced" field instructor to whom some new supervisors turn for advice. I tried my best to answer their questions and for many semesters, even "apprenticed" a number of them by lead-teaching joint seminars, sharing with them resources and the principles of my work, and availing myself for peer consultation. I was never certain of the "rightness" of my practice but continued to depend on my persistent engagement in reflective teaching and continued learning. This study is an extension of that learning, which is part of my ongoing search for answers to effective clinical teacher education.

As a researcher, I recognize that my views are mediated by my own experiences, my beliefs in the importance of clinical teacher education, and my adoption of the interpretive lens which assumes that reality is multidimensional and dependent on human interpretations. While I have made the argument for the usefulness of this framework, I remain vigilant for sources of bias in my data collection and analysis by reflecting on my decisions and interpretations through memo- writing and member-checking.

In terms of reactivity, I also recognize that the influence of my presence upon the events and members of my study. The field instructors of my study embraced my presence not only as a

scholar looking to learn about their practice, but also as a more experienced colleague with whom they can collaborate. To their student teachers and cooperating teachers, I was a researcher of field instruction but also a resource (one who is familiar with the university and the program) they could turn to for additional views, advice, and support. As such, I was not only permitted to observe and record their interactions, I was also frequently asked to participate in seminars and meetings, almost like an additional field instructor. I contributed to discussions and meetings when invited but was careful to let the members views dominate. I was also careful to steer STs towards their FIs and CTs when they solicited my help privately. I made an exception on one occasion, however, when an ST's anxiety with unit planning threatened to overwhelm her. Not wanting to appear incapable to her FI and CT, she hid her struggles although they were apparent to me. I approached her privately to verify my suspicion and as she confided in me, I offered her a sample unit plan to use as a resource. Mindful of the effects of my intervention, I accounted for my actions and its consequences in my field notes and data analysis. I also described this incident and its implications in detail in the findings chapter of this dissertation.

My participation, in addition to being an act of reciprocity, allowed me to see “first-hand and up close how people grapple with uncertainty and confusion, how meanings emerge through talk and collective action, how understandings and interpretations change over time” – all of which heightened my sensitivity to the social life I was studying as a field researcher (Emerson et. al., 1995, p. 4). While such immersion is the purpose and strength of field research, I was careful to be vigilant about the impact of my presence on what members say and do and deliberately reflect upon it in my field notes, memos, and data interpretations.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the goal of this study was not generalizability but transferability (Linclon and Guba, 1985). Via rich, thick description of the details garnered from

a careful triangulation of multiple data sources, I intend for the knowledge presented in this study to be considered for its applicability across similar contexts.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this multicase study was to explore how student-teaching triad members interpreted their interactions with programmatic elements and one another, and how these interpretations influence the practice of university supervisors. Pre-service teacher education programs that engage university supervisors and cooperating teachers to mentor teacher candidates during clinical practice depend heavily on the interaction of these triadic members to ensure student teacher learning. Yet, little is known about the interactive processes although some reports and research suggest that they can be riddled with problems and do not always produce intended results. Understanding what goes on in this black box of clinical teacher education can help programs conceive of more effective ways to support the field experiences of student teachers.

Premised on the social constructionist view that meaning and knowledge are constructed by participants as they interact with the environment and with one another, this qualitative inquiry examined the work of two university supervisors with four of their student teachers and their respective cooperating teachers in an undergraduate teacher certification program at a large Midwestern university. Over a hundred hours of data, derived primarily from participant-observation (of all supervisory activities including weekly seminars, lesson observations, post-observation conferences, and three-way meetings) and triad member interviews were collected, along with the written artifacts associated with each triad activity. The field notes, interview

transcripts, and transcripts of the post-observation conferences and three-way meetings were the primary sources of data. The written artifacts were used to triangulate my interpretations of the primary sources during the analytic process.

Data analysis followed the procedures of data selection, data representation, and robust interpretation-building via a recursive constant comparative process (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Erickson, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The iterative process of generating codes, categorizing them for meaningful patterns, identifying core themes within each case as well as across the cases, and reexamining the data for negative evidence, rival explanations, and evidentiary warrants continued until *theoretical saturation* (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 212) was achieved. Guided by the conceptual framework, the research questions, positioning theory, and what was recurring and meaningful to members, the analytical process resulted in five overarching themes – main storylines which characterized triad member interpretations. They are: *ivory tower*, *studenting*, *sink or swim*, *practice makes perfect*, and *natural teaching personality*. These storylines were observed to produce interrelated influences on triad member interactions and, ultimately, field instructor practice. (See Table 3.4 for a distribution of the storylines according to the research questions they answer).

Table 4.1 Overarching Storylines

Research Questions	Overarching Storylines
I. How do triad members interpret program elements?	1. Ivory Tower
II. How do triad members interpret their interactions with one another?	2. Studenting
	3. Sink or Swim
	4. Practice Makes Perfect
	5. Natural Teaching Personality

In this chapter, the five overarching storylines and their influences on triad member interpretations will first be presented, organized under each of the research question they answer. Exactly how these interpretations influence field instructor practice will be discussed, by way of thick description (Geertz, 1973) and the use of illustrative quotations, one case at a time, at the end of the chapter.

Focused Question I. How do triad members interpret program elements?

Overarching Storyline 1: Ivory Tower

One of the most compelling findings of this study is the predominance of a particular view of the university as an ivory tower, out of touch with practical reality. In this storyline, the university is positioned as an academic institution that persists in teaching courses with too much emphasis on theories and fails to prepare student teachers for the practicalities of real classroom teaching. Consistently, triad members regard university elements (coursework, paperwork, and other program features) as impractical, if not, irrelevant, to pre-service teacher learning. Across the data sources, terms like “busywork,” “jargon,” “buzzwords,” and “bells and whistles” were used to describe “theories” members believe the university touts in the courses, which they felt were not useful in actual classroom teaching. For example, whenever the topic of university coursework or requirements comes up, whether during seminars, post-observation conferences, meetings, interviews, or even surveys, student teachers were quick to express their criticism, best summarized in what they wrote when asked to comment on the teacher education program in its exit survey:

In my education classes, we seldom worked with concrete problem-solving situations or examples...The focus of the secondary program seems to be on theory, but while

teaching I never found myself lacking insight into the teaching profession or needing to know the names and theories of various educators to the degree I had been taught; rather, I needed practical lessons in teaching methods, grading experience, or the creation of handouts or other documents for students.

(Edith)

The program needs to be more than three semesters long and teacher candidates need more opportunities to be in the classroom. Classes are too theoretical and not practical enough.

(Grace)

Too much emphasis on theory – needs more practical teaching. No one teaches you how to teach in your subject area. Absurd to require coursework during student-teaching.

(Andy)

Their complaints about the teacher education program focusing on “too much theory” at the expense of practical know-how were also echoed by their cooperating teachers, sometimes more tacitly, though oftentimes just as directly:

My student-teacher needed more preparation with classroom management in terms of both day-to-day organization and time-management. Her general intelligence and adaptation skills, however, indicate that perhaps she was not prepared fully for the material realities of the classroom.

(Mr. Yates, Edith’s CT, in response to a question on the feedback form that asked, *How do you think that the Secondary Teacher Education Program could be improved?*)

Given that this comment was written in answer to a specific question about the university Secondary Teacher Education Program (TEP), Mr. Yates’ implicit disapproval of the program and those responsible for teacher preparation is actually, rather apparent. In this answer, he blames the university TEP for his ST’s lack of practical “classroom management” skills and deduced that her “general intelligence” and “adaptation skills” would have enabled her to learn those skills if she had been properly taught. His certainty that the TEP is not teaching enough practical know-how is further elaborated in an interview with me. This time, in answer to my question seeking suggestions for TEP coursework, his criticism of the TEP was even more direct:

If the coursework was more relevant, then one semester would be fine. If we get rid of a lot of theory that dominates a lot of them...kids do not need to know the history of education in America to come into the classroom to teach kids, you don't need that... You don't need three different classes to teach kids about American social structure, um, a course in understanding the different responses that kids bring into the classroom based on their different experience and social economic background and how that affects their approach to different classes is needed, but it's a one semester class. It doesn't have to filter into three or four different ones. What you need are classes to teach, organize, and structure lessons, classroom management skills, interaction with parent skills. . . . You can't theorize them to death because theory completely falls away when you walk into the classroom. More practical practice with everyday life with what people do in a classroom.

(Mr. Yates, in response to my interview question: *What is your recommendation for coursework at the school of education?*)

This perspective that the university TEP focuses too much on irrelevant “theory” rather than practical skills is prevalent among the other CTs as well, and they often express it with surprising candor. For example, when I asked Andy's CT, Mr. Scott, whether he saw Andy applying any material he had learned from the university to his classroom teaching, he recalled a couple of observations but did not hesitate to discredit the School of Education courses:

What Andy did get from the university clearly were skills, about how to go out and find stuff that was valuable to him. He was very good at getting on the internet, finding teacher sites that would help him create his own lessons. . . . Andy also has good connections with others students, someone who was a year ahead of him, helped him a lot with ideas. So I think those connections, I mean the university community, is a valuable resource. Specific classes at the university, not so much, which is my experience at the university as well. . . . I think most of the actual School of Education classes, the methods classes, useless.

(Mr. Scott, Andy's CT, in response my interview question, *Did you see Andy applying any material he learned from the university to teaching?*)

According to Mr. Scott, the university provided Andy internet research skills that allowed him to access teacher sites and social connections, both of which were useful for lesson planning but neither had anything to do with the TEP curriculum. In fact, he made it a point to state, in no uncertain terms, that the School of Education courses, even the methods classes, were “useless.”

Such blithe and rather disparaging statements about the immateriality of university TEP courses were often made when the topic came up during triad member interaction, even in conversations with the university field instructor and the student teacher, as in the case with Mrs. Cassidy, Grace's CT, during a final three-way meeting with FI-Nina. The following excerpt illustrates not only the CTs' discontent with the university TEP, but also the FI's as well.

After discussing ST-Grace's progress and giving her ideas for job search and tips for surviving the early years of teaching, Nina had asked the CT if she had any feedback for the university, telling her that she would be happy to relay any messages to the university; Mrs. Cassidy could also fill up the CT Feedback Form. Nina also shared that she had just talked about this with Mr. Yates (Mrs. Cassidy's colleague) and he had expressed some frustrations with the TEP. At this invitation, Mrs. Cassidy jumped in to voice her grievances against the university and the FI proceeded to join in too. In this conversation, both the CT and FI reinforced each other's beliefs about the university and built solidarity in their common case against university teacher preparation programs, which they positioned as bureaucratic, resistant to change, and out of touch with reality.

FI-Nina: ... so I told Mr. Yates he could fill up the CT Feedback Form too =³

Mrs. Cassidy: = Yeah, he came in here and showed me what he wrote, and said "did you write something similar?" Yes I did!

FI-Nina: And I was showing my frustration. . . . we [all the FIs] were all so frustrated the other day [at the monthly FI meeting with the TEP coordinator] – we gave a bunch of great ideas based on what you guys [the CTs and STs] have told us, based on being teachers, and yet they keep telling us there's no way we [the program] can make these changes, and yeah, it's very frustrating.

³ Transcription Conventions: [simultaneous speech; = latching; ___ emphatic stress (underlined); – pause

Mrs. Cassidy: Why can't they [the university teacher education program] look at some of the courses that they have, and see that they're not useful? That should be enough to make them say "let's change."

FI-Nina: Do more of the practical stuff that everyone wanted to see.

Researcher: Like classroom management and all that kind of stuff?

Nina: Exactly, exactly.

Mrs. Cassidy: Here's the bottom line. If I didn't have the experience like what I did with Grace, I don't want to take in a student teacher again. . . . There's so much that the CT needs to do and it shouldn't be at that time, it shouldn't be the day before you teach.

Nina: Like what? Give us the specifics.

Mrs. Cassidy: Well, like learning how to create an objective test, learning simple things like how much time do kids really need to read this novel, or how do you take a work like *Pride and Prejudice* and decide, what's most important? How do you take *Romeo and Juliet*, kids' first year experience with Shakespeare? Do you really teach them the language and the plot and the themes and all this? You can't! Unless you're going to teach that for one whole semester. The nitty gritty stuff of everyday teaching, they don't know how to do!

In this exchange, the FI and CT aligned with each other by sharing their frustrations with the university. Nina's account of the FI meeting served to open up the discussion of how and why the TEP is so intractable and resistant to change, just as her request for "specifics" from Mrs. Cassidy showed acceptance and further encouraged the CT to share more. Mrs. Cassidy's willingness to list the details of what the university failed to teach Grace showed her readiness to talk openly about the shortcomings of the TEP, much like the other CTs.

Interestingly, Mrs. Cassidy's list of "the nitty gritty stuff" sounded to me like topics the students would have covered while learning to lesson and unit plan in their methods class. To reconcile what I know about the methods course syllabus and what I was hearing, I interrupted the conversation at this point to verify with ST-Grace if all that was said was indeed true to her experience:

Researcher: Did you [Grace] learn to do all this in methods class?

Grace: Um – we didn't really, not really.

As I wanted to investigate what was actually taught versus what was actually learned in methods class, Grace's answer proved rather ambiguous. Did "not really" mean the STs were not taught how to plan to teach a text or did she mean they touched on it but did not get much practice? If lesson and unit planning were indeed in the methods syllabus, where was the disconnect? To better understand what Grace meant, I sought a more specific approach, only to have the effort usurped by Mrs. Cassidy, who felt the need to reinforce the validity of her point that the TEP was ineffective:

Researcher: Did you do a unit plan?

Grace: We did a unit plan.

Mrs. Cassidy: And the unit plan isn't really practical.

Grace: Right, it wasn't.

Mrs. Cassidy: It's like you have them do this crazy thing, and this crazy thing, it's not like how do you come up with discussion questions, how do you create a study guide. I mean, I know those are boring but your kids have to have discussion questions, and even if it's not written, how do you create discussion questions to discuss with your kids? Are you going to come in everyday and say, "what do you think?" And those things – not that I, you know, I'm not begrudging the university that I have to teach it, but she (Grace, her ST) should have that knowledge before she walks in my classroom.

Researcher: You were in the same program?

Mrs. Cassidy: I was a masters student at [a different university]. Same stuff, SAME stuff.

As Mrs. Cassidy spoke with such familiarity, conviction, and authority about the "crazy" unit plan Grace had to do in methods class, I wanted to check if she was an alumni of the same university, like Mr. Scott was. The fact that she was not, coupled with her claim that her university was also guilty of the "same" charge, illustrated that members believed the *ivory tower* storyline to be a universal truth, further verified by their own experiences as STs and CTs.

As Mrs. Cassidy proceeded to share her own similar experiences as an ST who had to learn the practical basics of teaching during student-teaching, more complaints against the university courses ensued as both FI and CT continued to reinforce each others' beliefs, often latching onto each other's sentences:

Nina: They didn't teach it either?

Mrs. Cassidy: Nope. They didn't teach it. I learned it in student teaching. I mean that's too much on them. We took so many classes about- and this is an inner city education that I was getting- we read why all the black kids sit together in the cafeteria, I read that same book for three different courses.

Nina: You're kidding.

Mrs. Cassidy: No! I'm so not kidding. It's all about how to reach the individual that can't be reached, the problem is, the thirty-two other students, you have to know how to reach them as well, so the whole education was based around, you know, either minority or special education students or kids- how do you get to them besides study [questions

Nina: [That was what I was trying to say too! Too much on multicultural education, and not enough on the everyday =

Mrs. Cassidy: = Right! Not to devalue it, but you got to give the other side, you know what I mean? And the other side should be bigger, because that is- you're looking at the majority of the classroom, and you have to be able to teach them. And I think it's absolutely valuable to have one or two of those other courses, but not =

Nina: = That makes sense to me too.

Mrs. Cassidy: But I don't know who it doesn't make sense to. If all of us, from different arenas...

(Nina nods in agreement)

Mrs. Cassidy: The problem with methods – and this is going way back, in my masters program – the unit plan we did in methods was way more complicated because of all that bureaucratic crap, like write out five thousand objectives...and you can't do that in reality, no one does that in real life.

Nina: I like how you said ... ask them to come up with discussion questions because they might teach that novel one day, and if they did =

Researcher: = It's so amazing to me that the practitioners all agree =

Nina: =And we can't get it done.

Mrs. Cassidy: I wish they would let us- those of us who are interested in working with students, I wish they would let us come in and even just do a lecture or

something where the kids can have an assignment, bring in this book, so that they can really understand what they have to do in the classroom.

Nina: And if I ever get you to be a teacher of mine again, I'm going to ask you to come into one of my seminars.

It is interesting to note that CTs often bring up their own education school experiences in conversations about the TEP, as if to strengthen their case against university teacher education courses and to justify their belief in the ivory tower storyline. From their perspective, their personal history as student teachers, their experiences as CTs, and the collective views of their colleagues all converge to reinforce the common belief that the university is an ivory tower that is "bureaucratic," emphasizes "too much theory" and is out of touch with reality. This belief is so prevalent that members do not examine the actual facts of the case or question the validity of the claims. For example, Mrs. Cassidy's strong opinion of Grace's unit plan was based more on her own experiences as a student, and perhaps Grace's rendition of it, rather than what actually occurred in Grace's methods class. Grace's struggle to interpret an unfamiliar text for teaching in her CT's classroom could be indicative of her neophyte status but both parties were quick to blame the TEP for not preparing her enough. Similarly, Mr. Scott, having no direct access to Andy's prior experiences at the School of Education, assumed his ST 's experiences there were "useless," just like his own. Granted, the STs have shared with their CTs their frustrations with the TEP courses, just as they have often aired them in their meetings, seminars and the interviews with me. What is noteworthy, however, is how similar their views are about the university, and how ready they are to openly state them. In fact, the *ivory tower* storyline is so accepted that once the topic is raised, members are quick to voice their presuppositions, latch onto one another's observations without question, thus entrenching the storyline further into the fabric of triadic interaction.

While the topic never came up in meetings between the other FI, Ben, and his CTs (Mr. Scott and Mr. Mills) because Ben preferred brief, amicable chats with his CTs out of respect for their time, Ben holds a similar view that the TEP needs to focus more on the practical. His belief is best summarized by his answer to my interview question at the end of the semester, about suggestions for the TEP:

Researcher: What can the School of Education do to prepare future educators?

FI-Ben: I think that they...well I don't know if I'm going to answer the question the right way or not but here it goes: I think what they need to do, I think what we need to do, is we really need to revisit class, and we really need to get down to the nuts and bolts of how to do stuff, and we need to talk to kids about how we do these expressive kinds of things, you know. Instead of all this theoretical stuff, they need to teach kids how to do it. I mean, the theories work. The theories are valid. I prove that all the time when they'd say this is what the theory is I would say "well, this is what I do," "this is what it looks like." So I know the theories work but I think we need to be a little more practical than what we do here.

Researcher: So what can the SOE do to be more practical?

Ben: Give them what they want. I do this all the time. I ask, "well, what is it that you don't know how to do? Okay, and when we're done, you'll know how to do it." [Ben then proceeded to share how when he found out from his ex-students about the writing skills they needed in college, he made sure to teach his high school students those skills so they would feel ready for college.]

FI-Ben's emphasis on the practical, translated by him to mean the how-tos of teaching which his STs have asked about, permeated his practice. Throughout the semester, "nobody showed them how; we need to show them how" was a constant refrain oft expressed by Ben whenever the topic of ST's preparation for classroom teaching came up. In the excerpt above, what is interesting is that I never brought up the word "theory" at all prior to this exchange but Ben found it necessary to include his view on theory when talking about the need for the university to emphasize the practical aspect of teaching. Apparently, he is conscious of and presupposes the

ivory tower storyline that pits theory against practice and deems it necessary to clarify that he is not against theories per se, especially when he identifies as being a part of the TEP (as a teacher educator), in his deliberate use of the pronoun “we.” Yet, his statements, “So I know the theories work but I think we need to be a little more practical than what we do here” and “Give them what they want,” clearly communicate the perennial view that the university prioritizes “theories” and does not focus on the practical nor attend to the learning needs of the STs enough – a belief held by all the other triad members.

Members assume that the university tends to be impractical and bureaucratic not only in TEP coursework, but also in other requirements (for example, paperwork and stipulated meeting schedules) as well. In response, they either comply dutifully, or they become selective about what they choose to focus on. In any case, they may not engage with the material or protocol as intended by the TEP.

Indeed, triad members’ response to university requirements clearly shows their disdain for anything impractical and “bureaucratic,” and their assumption that some university requirements are just so is another facet of the *ivory tower* storyline. For example, despite their agreement to work with the university as mentors for the STs, CTs do not pay much attention to the details of program requirements or expectations. All CTs are given a packet at the beginning of term which contains the Student Teaching Handbook, ST evaluation forms, and other paperwork or instructions necessary for the semester. CTs are also invited to an induction dinner, followed by a question and answer session, at the School of Education. Many do not attend the dinner and most have misplaced the packet by the first Getting-Started Meeting. In these cases and in my experience, rarely anyone reads the handbook and CTs would always request for copies of the forms and paperwork whenever they are reminded to submit them, multiple times

during the term, even though they have been given hard copies, electronic templates, and online access to them . By the end of the semester, all the forms required by the university will be duly filled out and submitted to the teacher education office because the program requires, rather strictly, that the FI collects and accounts for all the paperwork (a total of twenty-four pieces) associated with each triad. Typically, an FI's checklist for forms to be submitted to the TEP Office at the end of term would look like this:

ST Forms:

Baseline Progress Assessment, Mid-Term Progress Assessment, Final Progress Assessment, Course Evaluation, State Education Department Survey, Placement Evaluation, and Exit Data Survey.

CT Forms:

Baseline Progress Assessment, Mid-Term Progress Assessment, Final Progress Assessment, CT Program Feedback Form, and End-of-Term Assessment of ST.

FI Forms:

Baseline Progress Assessment, Mid-Term Progress Assessment, Final Progress Assessment, End-of-Term Assessment of ST, FI Evaluation of Placement, Pre-Observation Memo #1, Post-Observation Memo #1, Pre-Observation Memo #2, Post-Observation Memo #2, Pre-Observation Memo #3, Post-Observation Memo #3, and Pre-Observation Memo #4.

The folders may fill with completed forms at the end of term, but the contents are oftentimes hurriedly scrambled together, as members admit to me. For example, the Baseline, Mid-Term, and Final Progress Assessment Forms are supposed to be filled out (by STs, CTs, and FIs separately) several weeks apart and be used as a companion instrument to document and facilitate discussions about ST-development over time, including recommendations for future improvements. In actuality, many CTs and STs check boxes and scribble a few sentences for all three forms at the end of the semester, when the FIs need to collect them. CTs, however, recognizes the importance of the End-of-Term Assessment Form as a final evaluative report of

the ST performance and will always type a detailed and positive report (that often doubles as recommendation letter) for it. CTs explain that they would rather take the time to confer with their STs about their teaching practice than fill out a form that cannot fully represent the dynamism of their mentoring. When asked what they thought of the paperwork and assessment forms during my interview, CTs would express understanding that the university needs some way to connect with what is going on in the field. When I asked if they found them useful, their answer would be: “no” (Mr. Yates and Ms. Cassidy), “not particularly” (Mr. Mills), and “not for me” (Mr. Scott). Mr. Scott explains:

Researcher: So what do you think of the paperwork the School of Ed requires from you?

Mr. Scott: It’s a hassle but it’s got to be done. I can understand why. They need to get data back from the CTs about how they see the student is doing. They can see whether or not progress is being made.

Researcher: So for them it is a monitoring device?

Mr. Scott: I’m assuming, yeah.

Researcher: Okay, um, does it help you? Does it help the actual learning to teach process?

Mr. Scott: Not for me.

Researcher: Did you use it as a tool to teach Andy, like, did you see him demonstrate any skills they described in those forms?

Mr. Scott: No, because I wouldn’t break it down to the way it is articulated in there.

Researcher: Why?

Mr. Scott: Some of the things, like “Is the student using knowledge of unique backgrounds to design lessons” I mean, I just wouldn’t couch it like that. When we talk about his teaching, it’s much more in the flow of day to day, individualized. You just can’t say it like that.

Researcher: So did you have trouble checking a box?

Mr. Scott: Of course I did! I mean, it's a game. For someone like Andy, the temptation is to put "excellent" down for everything, you know. But I told Andy, I want them [the TEP] to see some movement. There's nowhere to go if you started from the top.

This "game" requires the CT to interpret the form in a way that the university did not intend – for the CT to show the TEP that his ST has made some progress. The items listed may not be relevant or congruent with the practical realities of their interaction but boxes will be checked anyway so the university can "see" progress in Andy. Ironically, the forms were never intended to be used by the university to evaluate ST progress. They were designed as instruments to facilitate CT-ST-FI conversations, for members to use the descriptors, and how they individually rated them, as possible talking points in conferences centered on an ST's development. No one else sees or reads the forms other than the CT, ST, and FI. This assumption positions the university as a dispassionate authority that, despite its incompetence in meeting the practical learning needs of its STs, still hold the power to dispatch judgments on their performance/abilities. Despite my explanation of the intended use of the form, members persist in their caution against university documents and indelible institutional records. This belief often strengthens CT-ST relationships/bonds, as they form an alliance against what may jeopardize a ST's future.

Another example of such ingenious adaptation of university requirements is Ben choosing not to conduct formal three-way meetings, although they are stipulated by the TEP. This is his way of exercising better judgment against what he thinks are impractical and unnecessary university specifications. Like the CTs interpretation of university paperwork, this reaction is so intuitive and automatic and Ben does not even question, clarify, or seek to

reconcile his conflicting views with the university; he simply does what he thinks is best, arbitrarily, as a matter of fact.

The program requires FIs to conduct “six site visits during the student-teaching term,” which includes four classroom observations and a minimum of two three-way meetings that involve the CTs (a Getting –Started Meeting and a Final Evaluation Meeting) in order to discuss program requirements, ST-progress, and other relevant matters (Student Teaching Handbook, p. 9. See Appendix F). While FI-Nina is careful to comply with such requirements, FI-Ben disregards anything he deems unnecessary. He chats cordially and very briefly with the CTs at the beginning of the semester for an informal introduction and occasionally asks them how things are when he visits for observations. Unless his CTs deliberately set up a time for it, he does not even sit down for a meeting with them. This does not mean that he does not care for meetings. Rather, he understands their busy schedules and did not want to waste their time for what he deemed are unnecessary formalities. Meetings with CTs, he believes, should be arranged only when there is a practical need for it. During the semester, when I reminded him about the required meetings and asked if he was scheduling any soon, he would shake his head say “nah, there’s no need for anything formal” or “They’re busy. They don’t need that” or “I’ll just check in when I see them.” According to the TEP’s Student Teaching Handbook, a field instructor is supposed to “serve as a liaison between the University and the placement sites by facilitating a positive and productive relationship among involved parties” (p. 8). Ben feels that he can accomplish this by other channels of communication, without all the formal meetings. For example, he gets updates from his STs about their placements and he can assess how a CT feels about an ST by briefly asking them about it and inviting them to contact him if they wish. Should problems arise, he would not hesitate to email or meet with them. This arbitrary interpretation of

university requirements is typical of triad members who feel the need to adapt to an environment they perceive to be bureaucratic, in order to accomplish what they feel is practical and important. And if they believe something is important, they frequently surpass university requirements, as in the case of these two FIs, who would meet with STs for as frequently and as long as they needed them. (For example, it is not uncommon for FIs to spend an additional hour after seminars to consult with a ST.) This selective dedication to all things practical and useful is the FIs' response to the underlying assumption that some TEP requirements are redundant and one must discern, arbitrarily, between what is useful and what is not, in order to engage in meaningful practice.

This belief certainly underlies Ben's take on paperwork too. For example, when I asked if he used the Baseline, Mid-Term, and Final ST Assessment Forms (aka BMF Forms) the university provided and required in his practice, his answer was:

Uh, yeah, sort of. I mean the BMF Forms I did that but did I use all of them? No because they're quite jargony and I don't, I mean I know what's good and what's not good and that's what I do.

Like Ben and the CTs, FI-Nina sometimes fails to see the rationale and use for certain university requirements, although she is more prone to dutiful compliance. Noteworthy is her response to what she perceives as not useful – she distances herself from the university even as she “requires” the submission of certain assignments or documents. For example, FI-Nina implements assignments stipulated in the handbook even though she does not fully comprehend their rationale. When the STs have questions about the nature and purpose of the assignments, she would say “they [the university] require it” or redirect the question to me, hence distancing herself from the work she did not create and positioning herself as subordinate to the institution. Once, I directed the question back to her and asked what she thought about a section of the Unit

Plan Project (which required STs to sort, assess, and analyze their student s' work in detail) she had asked me about and she admitted, "I don't love it" but chose not to elaborate. When I pressed for further clarification, she only shrugged and repeated, "I just don't love it."

FI-Ben adopts a similar stance when he appeals for his STs to submit the necessary assignment and documents during a seminar: "C'mon guys, I must give you a grade in seminar! It should be easy to give you an A...IF you have handed everything in and been diligent!" In fact, his STs confessed to me that they appreciated Ben for not following the handbook closely and letting them get away with not completing certain assignments. Ben's response to my inquiry about this was, "I've got bigger fish to fry." These examples illustrate how FIs make use of the ivory tower image of the university (as a bureaucratic institution) to promote corporation and solidarity with their STs. And they are not alone.

The approach of distancing oneself from the institution, especially for requirements that STs have difficulty with, is, according to the STs, a common practice among their instructors in the school of education. As ST-Beth cogently explains in her interview with me:

Researcher: So tell me about the courses you took at the School of Education.

Beth: I honestly don't remember what I learned in one class or another, 'cause it's all blended in together. They're the same class. We talked in circles so much. I feel like the entire time if you used the right buzzwords, then your input was valid. If you said "multi-literacy," you got an "A." If you said "recognizing different cultures," you got an "A." That's not saying you know how to do that, but you said it the right way. But it's not hard because you heard it every single week, and all you have to do is repeat what you've been hearing every single week. We used to joke about it. Daniel [pseudonym of an instructor] tried so hard to make the course relevant, and he would ask a question, and we would like, see there, you say "multi-literacy," no you say "multi-literacy," because that was always the answer. So one of us would say it and we would try to take the discussion in a different direction. And it was frustrating because we saw the instructor struggling to make the material he was teaching not boring and relevant to what we needed. He's required to teach us stuff that we're required to learn, and everyone is required to do something here.

It is interesting that STs will blame the university for their frustrations within university courses, rather than their instructors, whom they identify as fellow victims of ivory tower oppression. According to the STs, some instructors have explained, rather apologetically, that they “have to go by the course pack that was given” to them, when STs complained about course material or requirements (divulged by STs during their interviews). Apparently, teacher educators at the university also help to perpetuate the ivory tower image when they position the university as a draconian authority, responsible for irrelevance and busywork. Taken together, these examples illustrate not only the pervasiveness of this reasoning among those who invoke it, but also the ease with which it is accepted as “truth” among those who hear it – meaning that can only be so quickly taken up by those who share a common belief.

Focused Question II. How do triad members interpret their interactions with one another?

A careful analysis of the data pertaining to triad member interactions surfaced four predominant storylines that members drew upon to make sense of their triadic experience. These narratives, which I title *studenting*, *sink or swim*, *practice make perfect*, and *natural teaching personality*, recur as axioms which guided member interpretations of their experiences and interactions with one another throughout the semester. The following sections will trace the manifestations of these assumptions, one storyline at a time.

Overarching Storyline 2: Studenting

From the perspective of the student teachers in this study, their experiences during the semester are heavily influenced by their assumptions of what they must do or say in order to be successful in a college program, namely, their *studenting* storyline. Given the demands and uncertainties of semester, STs tend to fall back on the familiar narrative in order to navigate the challenges of student teaching. After all, STs are, first and foremost, college seniors who have been successful as students for more than a decade and whose chief goal is to graduate successfully from a college program. Although they all intend to learn to teach well, they are also concerned about successfully completing the program and acquiring good recommendation letters for future employability. This latter concern feature predominantly in the way they make sense of their triad relationships.

Essentially, their *studenting* storyline centers around two main considerations: what requirements must I meet in order to clear the program and whose opinion or evaluation of my performance matters? Throughout the semester, STs were observed to draw upon their beliefs regarding these criteria to interpret their experiences and interactions with their CTs and FIs. Even though they desire to learn to teach and enter the semester hoping someone will teach or show them how, STs also recognize that they need to graduate and deduce that their successful completion of the program would depend on meeting requirements and the expectations of those will evaluate them. This latter performance goal and its assumed strategy for success would influence much of their thinking and action during the semester, even among STs who are confident self-directed learners, namely Edith and Andy. Edith explained this way of thinking to me during her interview:

Researcher: What were your expectations regarding your CT? How did you work with him?

Edith: I'm not a very humble person. I went into student teaching knowing that I could do it, and knowing that I was capable of being a teacher, so my approach was, in order to work well with [Mr. Yates], I have to meet the deadlines, follow the requirements. It was, in order to do well here, I need to be responsible. When I got into arguments with him, it always came down on his end because it's his classroom. But I was willing to argue it with him and he didn't mind. He was willing to listen to my disagreements because he knew in the end, it was his decision. But it was useful in the end coz I got to hear his reasoning. He would say something and he wouldn't explain it otherwise.

Despite her self confidence and willingness to engage her CT, whom she said, "didn't guide a lot" and was quite a "control freak," in discussions about lesson ideas, Edith was mindful of deadlines and requirements and careful to submit to her CT's wishes as part of her strategy to achieve success.

ST-Andy, also a very confident and motivated learner, assumes the position of one who was careful to impress his CT, Mr. Scott. During my interview with him, Andy recounted how he thought Mr. Scott "was the coldest person [he has] ever met." Mr. Scott was "very guarded" until Andy proved trustworthy, something he worked hard to achieve:

Andy: He (Mr. Scott) was like, I don't want you to do anything, you sit in the back of the room for two weeks and then we'll see. And so, I finally went up to him after two weeks, and I was like you know, I understand and I respect what you're saying, I still feel that I'm ready, and I'm willing, and I'm excited to teach a lesson or two. Can I do something? And so he was like, he gave me the whole thing (a whole lesson) and like if you do well, I'll give you more. He gave something, I did well, he was like, okay, you can keep on. By the end of the first month, I had taught twelve classes.

Researcher: Did you take on a lot more during student teaching [than what was required]?

Andy: Way more than I ever should have. It was at the point where I would talk to the other teachers [in the school] and they'd be like, he [Mr. Scott] gave you all that?

Researcher: What did he give you?

- Andy: He never touched his grade book, never touched his attendance sheet, I had all the classes for everything.
- Researcher: Did you ask for it though?
- Andy: I did. I also took on way more extra-curriculars than I should have.
- Researcher: You earned his trust.
- Andy: I had to. This is a five month long interview!
- Researcher: That must have taken up all your time.
- Andy: And my life got screwed...[elaborated on how did not have a personal life outside of student teaching]

Andy was a very hardworking ST who was serious about learning to teach. He took on more classes and after school events not only because he was passionate about the profession, but also because he knew his future job prospects would depend on Mr. Scott's opinion of his performance.

Such studenting mindfulness of CT evaluation also directed ST-Grace's choices during the semester, even when she disagreed with Mrs. Cassidy's rationale. For instance, Grace was loaded with a lot of papers to grade, with little guidance, in the first two weeks of her field placement. Overwhelmed but afraid of speaking to her CT and FI (Nina) about it for fear of adversely affecting their impression of her, she confided in me. I advised her to open up to her FI so she may talk to the CT about it but Grace decided against it. She said she would rather try to manage it on her own although she was uncertain about how to do it. I suggested she graded a piece and consulted with her CT if that was what she wanted. That way, she would also learn about the thinking behind her CT's practice. Sensing her anxiety, I assured her that doing so would not jeopardize her image but would help assure her CT that she was serious about learning. Grace decided that would be her option. Through sheer hard work throughout the

semester, she even managed to impress her CT (Mrs. Cassidy) who, at the final three-way meeting with the FI towards the end of term, was all praise with regards to this matter:

... I also think she [Grace] is a fabulous grader. She is – I think that is the shortfall of a lot of English teachers – that we’re given this huge assignment of not only teaching them literature, but how to write, and so many think that as long as they are writing, they’ll improve, and you really have to be a rigorous grader in order – so that they can see where they need to improve specifically, and not just grammar, but the content as well, and she’s done a wonderful job. She’s a fabulous grader... That’s what I pride myself in as well. I’m a tough grader.

Apparently, Mrs. Cassidy thought that rigorous grading would help her students improve.

However, Grace revealed a different perspective of the issue during her interview with me:

Researcher: Looking back, would you like any of the aspects of student teaching to go a different way?

Grace: I think I would have liked to be more involved in the classroom for the first three weeks, more modeling in the classroom.

(By “modeling,” Grace meant watching her CT teach in one class, then practicing the same moves in the next class; something her CT did not do.)

Researcher: Did you find yourself having to meet her expectations all the time? Were there points you could have done things differently?

Grace: I was definitely in her arena, so I have to do it her way. In my own classroom, I would do more writing instruction definitely. She doesn’t do very much writing instruction. The students will write essays, they’ll get a grade. But if it’s bad, they should come in at lunch and talk about what’s lacking. But I wasn’t there at the beginning of the year. I’m sure she gave them some structure, but I haven’t seen much of, like “let’s go over your writing process” type of thing.

Researcher: What would you have done?

Grace: I would like to have days on the projector going through grammar points, academic tone, coz she marks down a lot when students use conversational words and she’ll circle and count into the grade. They [students] know it has to be an academic paper, but they’re not specifically taught.

Researcher: What stopped you from doing it [teaching writing]?

- Grace: I didn't want to seem like I was undermining her. I don't want to be like, let me step in and fill in blanks you're not covering.
- Researcher: That's very sensitive of you. Did you talk to her about it, because you could have incorporated it into your own lessons.
- Grace: I observed that in her classroom. Once or twice she said we don't have time for it, with all the literature that's being taught.
- Researcher: So you mentioned the need, but then she said that, and so you concluded?
- Grace: I just don't want to overstep. I just know in my own class [in the future], I would focus more on writing.
- Researcher: It sounds like you did mention it but she wanted you to focus more on the syllabus?
- Grace: And just let them learn like by trial and error.
- Researcher: Do you agree?
- Grace: No.
- Researcher: So you would have liked to have taken out one or two lessons for =
- Grace: = Yeah, for writing and grammar too. She doesn't do any grammar with them either. You can't expect your students to know something if you don't teach it to them. I was grading essays her way as well – circling grammar mistakes, everything, every word that wasn't academic. On an essay, we had talked about, in methods and the [university] writing center, just focusing on two or three areas and not marking down for everything coz that's just too overwhelming, too over-stimulating.

Grace clearly disagreed with her CT's approach regarding two things – not letting her model after her practice in the beginning and grading the students rigorously for things she did not teach. Feeling powerless to change either, Grace submitted to her CT's preferences even though it means compromising on her own learning needs and what she knew would be better for the students. Grace's decision to not undermine her CT or overstep her boundaries was not borne out of mere politeness. Rather, she lived in fear of her CT's harsh judgment because Mrs. Cassidy had told her that her previous ST did not complete the program. Below is Grace's revealing

account of her relationship with her CT, given during her interview with me at the end of the semester:

Researcher: How did student teaching go for you?

Grace: It was very intimidating. She's [her CT] loud, she's comfortable in her classroom, she knows what she is doing, um, and based off her last experience, that also made me nervous. At first, I thought he [the previous ST] was bad, but then after seeing how she was with the kids – a stickler about late policies, being a tough grader – she's a really nice person, but she's really tough. I wonder if she was just really tough with him and if I make a mistake, I'm out. I was pretty nervous about that. I was trying to do a lot of work ahead.

Mrs. Cassidy could have been sharing about past experiences but Grace interpreted the story according to her worst fears as a student – to be dismissed as a failure should she make a mistake. Such studenting fears of negative judgments and repercussions also plagued ST-Neil from the start. Like Grace, he was saddled with a lot of papers to grade, only much more. Neil explains his plight during my interview at the end of the semester:

Neil: First week of January, he [CT-Mr. Mills] handed me all of – he handed me papers that were handed in in September.

Researcher: On what topics?

Neil: British Lit, modern lit, and freshman seminar, all five of his classes.

Researcher: How many papers in total?

Neil: I probably graded sixty, seventy essays. They were about three pages long, and I graded about a hundred and fifty worksheets, then when I was done there was the exam. Those were huge portfolios =

Researcher: = Did he show you how to grade them? Was there a rubric?

Neil: No, no rubric. I showed him what I did and he was like, okay, here's more papers. He basically was looking for students who explained themselves. If they say they did a good job, and they explained how they did a good job, then they did a good job.

Researcher: So how did you manage?

Neil: Honestly, I used my gut instinct, and I said this looks like this person put in a B effort =

Researcher: = So you were grading for effort. And he was agreeable?

Neil: He said that's fine, here's some more.

Researcher: What did you think of that?

Neil: It was odd.

Researcher: How did that make you feel?

Neil: Very crappy. Basically, I was, I really wanted to unlock the secret of teaching and basically what I was learning was just whatever your gut tells you and there's no secret.

Researcher: At any time did you think it was exploitation?

Neil: Um – I didn't really think exploitation. I don't know what happened, I actually kinda thought that I could turn it into a project that can make him think well of me. I mean, I try to be positive. You can't offend the teacher.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Neil: You still have to get a grade, you can't, how is it going to assist you to get the grade you need in order to pass if you make any kind of problem for the teacher, then, you know, you're going to be looked at.

Researcher: So you have to be agreeable?

Neil: Definitely.

Neil's decision to stay positive was based on his assumptions about how a student ought to relate to his teacher in order to get a good grade. Although STs do not earn an actual grade but rather a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" for their field experience, Neil still abided by the same studenting rule and even positioned himself as the proverbial "student" and his CT, the "teacher" whom he needed to be careful to please. In fact, his fear of being evaluated negatively extended to his relationship with FI-Ben, from whom he hid most of his struggles. And his struggles were

many, mostly due to a CT who was absent much of the time and who provided little guidance or structure.

For instance, Mr. Mills was absent on Neil's first day of student teaching and left him to work with the substitute teacher and a worksheet. In addition, Mr. Mills could not make up his mind regarding which text he wanted Neil to teach until the week before the unit was to start, essentially leaving Neil with little time to prepare. He also did not provide Neil with useful resources to aid his planning. Neil describes his experiences as such:

Researcher: Did you think that you were not learning much [in the first few weeks]?

Neil: Yeah, that's what I brought up in the discussion with Ben. I hear everyone else's stories [during weekly seminars] and ah, all I'm doing is grading. Should I be doing something else?

According to my field notes and seminar recordings, Neil did share with the seminar group in late January about having to grade a lot of papers but since he did not present it as a problem, the group's response, including FI-Ben's, was one of sympathy and encouragement. Other STs shared that they needed to grade too and Ben opined that it is good experience, practice, a way to get to know the students' work better, and a way to build a good working relationship with one's CT. Neil did not reveal the details when Ben asked generally if everything was well and whether he was talking with his CT regularly. In fact, he assured Ben they were talking during planning hour and that they were in the process of deciding which Shakespearean play to teach – Hamlet or Macbeth. Ben invited Neil to “keep [him] posted” and to ask for help any time if he needed it. During the interview, I asked Neil why he did not ask for help or say more about the problems he was encountering then. His answer revealed the rationalizations of a student who did not want to be poorly evaluated by his teacher, a position in which he placed FI-Ben:

I definitely didn't want to appear not capable, coz, I didn't want to seem hopeless [like a hopeless case]. I really wanted to trust him [FI] as my mentor, but I also saw him as the person who's going to grade me, you know?

Having cast FI-Ben in the teacher-as-grader position, Neil could not bring himself to take the risk of revealing his problems. As the semester wore on and Neil's struggles increased, he retreated from FI contact even more, to the extent that he would not answer Ben's emails nor set up definite dates for the last two observations. When Ben tried to talk to him after weekly seminars, he would talk about problems with unit preparations (and hence he could not submit the plans to Ben yet) or his absent CT, but in a vague fashion. When Ben asked if he needed him to talk with Mr. Mills, he declined and said he was in the process of working things out with his CT or that things were improving. Later in my interview, Neil invoked his studenting concerns again when I asked about his hesitation to accept help from Ben, despite his many offers:

Researcher: Didn't you think a supervisor can be an advocate?

Neil: I did, but most important is that they [CT and FI] would be grading me. Coz this was the last semester, this was the big enchilada!

It appears that Neil was unable to allow his FI to take on an advocate role because he abided by the frozen studenting narrative. This interpretation of their relationship also caused him to hide his struggles from Ben for a long time.

The tendency to hide one's weaknesses from the FI was also observed in ST-Grace, not only regarding the grading she had to do at the beginning, but also one of the units she had to plan and teach. Through her talk during weekly seminars in January, I could tell that she was encountering difficulties with planning a *Romeo and Juliet* unit. However, she put up a brave front and, like Neil, did not exploit the FI's offers of help, usually issued weekly as a reminder that they should feel free to call her anytime should they need her assistance. As she displayed increasing signs of anxiety through the weeks even as she continued to assure FI-Nina that all

was well, I pulled her aside and asked her in private, “Are you having trouble planning for R&J [*Romeo and Juliet*]?” She teared up and admitted to not knowing how to fill up two weeks’ worth of lessons. I found out that her CT had given her some resources, like a guide called “Shakespeare Set Free” and the school curriculum folder but no definite lesson plans or a structured unit. Since she was to teach the unit in a week, I gave her a R&J folder, which contained a unit with fully articulated daily lesson plans and other teaching materials – something I had co-constructed with a student teacher from my work as a field instructor some years ago. She was so relieved and was able to adapt the materials to her needs for the subsequent weeks. In fact, she taught a lesson from that unit for her second observation and was pleased that both her CT and FI approved of her work. I advised that she should enlist the help of FI-Nina should she encounter more difficulties. She nodded and did ask the FI about teaching strategies, but they were mostly about classroom management issues related to a lesson observation. I left it to her to tell her FI and CT about the R&J experience but she chose not to say anything about it to them. While she was intimidated by her CT, she actually felt that her FI was very warm and approachable, telling me during the interview, “I really liked her a lot.” Despite their amicable relationship, Grace clearly did not think it would be useful to let her FI in on her planning difficulties, likely because she needed Nina to think well of her as a student.

The studenting strategy to hide one’s weaknesses from the FI was not restricted to more fearful STs like Neil and Grace. Edith, a very confident ST who had done well and earned “Outstanding” student awards in school and who would make statements like, “The reason I wanted to be a teacher is because I know how to do that” and “I’m an expert in both of my fields [English and German],” also applied this strategy when it came to controlling what her FI would observe.

Edith prided herself as a capable student who could choose to learn on her own terms. Even so, she was ever conscious of the *studenting* narrative and her position as one who needs to employ certain strategies to succeed in the program. Edith's consciousness to meet "deadlines" and "follow the requirements," a studenting strategy discussed earlier, came up again later in her interview with me:

Researcher: So it sounds like you had to adjust to your CT. Was that a conscious strategy, coming into the program, entering into the semester?

Edith: I'm probably not a normal student. . . . A lot of it was I came in and said, okay, this is what I need to get my certification, this is learning, I'll fulfill all their requirements, but put all my attention into learning.

Evidently, Edith distinguished between the two purposes of fulfilling requirements and learning. She thought her ability to make that distinction set her apart from "normal" students, whom she assumed would be less discerning in their effort. Indeed, Edith exercised such agency in her choice of focus regarding the assignments of the semester. When it came to certain write-ups and lesson plans required by FI-Nina in which she did not see much value, she submitted very brief sketches, often weeks after a deadline, and only after Nina's firm persistence. But when it came to her teaching unit, based on a brand new text her CT had not taught before, she put in stellar work that impressed both her CT and FI. She explained she "cared about that," unlike weekly seminars, which she thought was "a waste of time" and was consistently late to. Yet, despite such displays of independence, she was very careful about her FI's evaluation concerning lesson observations. She confessed during my interview:

Edith: I definitely planned differently for those days I was being observed. Because you're tired, you don't have a lot of time, and you say someone is coming tomorrow, I'll stay up the extra hour, put in a little work, and it'll be better.

Researcher: The field instructor is coming in, so you make it better?

Edith: Yeah. [chuckles]

Researcher: Better? As in really better [in terms of what she thought would be more pedagogically effective] or what they want to see?

Edith: What they want to see.

Researcher: So there's a performance element to it?

Edith: It's better coz I normally don't do this stuff, but I should be doing it every day. When you don't know you're going to be observed, you're going to get a more honest evaluation. I feel like you guys didn't see all my weaknesses because I knew what those weaknesses were, and I was very good at covering them up while you were in the classroom.

What her FI and I saw during her lesson observations were well-prepared, strong lessons but all four showcased a rather similar strategy – they culminated in teacher-led discussions of the same format even when a different approach might have been more effective. Edith had received praises from her FI and CT for conducting good discussions during the first two lesson observations and, apparently, had thought it safer to stick to what had worked before when preparing for subsequent observations. Such actions were deliberate and specifically tailored to what she thought might earn a positive evaluation from her FI. As she admitted to me later, “I didn't take as many risks as she [FI-Nina] was there.”

While I was not unfamiliar with the studenting concerns revealed in this study, I was quite disturbed by the extent to which they affected ST interpretations, triad relationships, and ultimately, ST-learning. For the most part, CTs and FIs were not quite aware of their STs agendas because the latter took great pains to set up facades. Eventually, some façades crumbled, like when Ben witnessed a lot of problems in Neil's teaching during this last two observations and suggested he considered repeating student-teaching in the following semester, with a different CT – an offer Neil eventually declined because he was so disheartened he decided

against teaching as a suitable career. Even for stronger candidates like Beth and Grace, I wondered about the learning opportunities they missed because of their studenting concerns. While the FIs and most of the CTs were willing to help STs learn to teach, I observed that their efforts appeared to be limited by what the STs choose to reveal to them and also by other persistent storylines like the *Sink or Swim* and *Practice Makes Perfect* narratives, on which I will elaborate in the next sections.

Overarching Storyline 3: Sink or Swim

Another prevailing storyline that affected triad member interactions is the assumption that student teachers will learn to teach when they are immersed in the practical reality of the classroom and left to manage the challenges independently. This is not unlike the assumption that one will learn how to swim when thrown into the deep end of the pool. The belief is that student teachers will learn by discovery and develop applicable knowledge and skills in the struggle. To enable this process of learning, the knowing elder should allow the apprentice to experience the struggle and step in only after the fact, to offer tips and advice. Not surprisingly, this method of learning causes much anxiety to the learner, who feels largely unsupported in the risky venture of student teaching. Naturally, some cope better than others but the sense that one has to achieve success independently haunts all student teachers and further adds to their studenting anxieties.

This sense of being thrown into the deep end to either “sink or swim” begins early, in anticipation of the student teaching semester, when student teachers feel inadequately prepared for classroom teaching and blames the university for it. During his end-of-term interview, ST-Andy elaborates:

Researcher: What changes would you like to see in the [teacher education] program?

Andy: I came up with a plan in the first semester of senior year that I showed to a lot of SoE [School of Education] students where I just revamped the whole SoE [program], and it was a three-year program just like business school. And it came to be that we would keep a couple of the classes, change the way they were being taught, in terms of a little, now I see the value in some theory, but I don't see the value in one thousand percent theory, which was what we had, and I feel like that's all we had up to the point I walked into my student teaching placement. And if it were not for that student teaching placement, I would know nothing at all coz it was, I feel like it was SoE saying, alright, now that we've given you all these floaties, and now we're gonna toss you into the deep end, and the floaties they gave us they didn't inflate, but they were on our arms, so they were there, and then they said swim, and then they walk away.

Researcher: So they just threw you into the deep end =

Andy: = and said swim!

In this excerpt, Andy may have relied on the *ivory tower* storyline about the university's focus on too many theories to explain his sense of unpreparedness but his feelings about feeling ill-prepared and being left to fend for himself was representative of all the student teachers in this study. Grace concurs:

Researcher: How did you feel, upon entering student teaching?

Grace: I remember on our last day of practicum class [just prior to the student teaching semester], we had an open forum, questions about student teaching, and there's a general feeling of oh my gosh, this is going to be overwhelming! How much prep work do we need to do over break?

Researcher: So you guys had a sense of reality, like it's gonna to hit you =

Grace: = I'm not ready to do this. I just have to dive in. Sink or swim, you know?

These anxieties about the semester, as I observed, were not just beginner's jitters. The assumption that they have to somehow "dive in" and make things work by themselves despite not being well prepared or supported guided student teacher interpretations of their experiences

and triad relationships throughout the semester. In fact, all of them attested to being left alone to prepare and teach classes, without much prior guidance from their CTs:

I had to [independently prepare lessons]. She [Mrs. Cassidy] had one folder for *Pride and Prejudice* that I can use as a resource but she's never taught it. So that was all me, and she must have really trusted me. She didn't even re-read it.

(Grace)

For the most part he [Mr. Scott] gave me the reins and said, this is your lesson, you made it... He was like, alright, you teach first hour, I teach third hour, you can take fifth and sixth, eventually we'll give you seven.

(Andy)

He [Mr. Yates] gave me a lot of freedom. He threw me into two preps, and said, you're the teacher. Even when we were team teaching, I was doing a lot on my own... I expected a lot more guidance. He didn't guide a lot.

(Edith)

You have to figure out how to do everything. And don't depend on somebody giving it to you.

(Neil, on what advice he would give to incoming student teachers)

Some CTs would give their STs resource-folders but others just expected STs to generate their own lessons independently from the get go. The worst case was Neil, whose CT was absent most of the time, without much notice, and did not provide much guidance, direction, or material. For instance, Neil found out last minute he had to teach *Macbeth*, without any plans or material, because Mr. Mills would be absent for a week. His CT only described a classroom activity he could conduct with the class over the phone:

Neil: He [Mr. Mills] said, hey, it's okay, you can always teach your unit as, he mentioned romantic posts at the time. He said, I'll handle whatever Shakespeare there is, and then, somehow, it flipped. I guess when he left for a week, he decided to start with *Macbeth*. And he gave me, over the phone, he described the activity we could do.

Researcher: No resources, plans, or worksheets?

Neil: No, never.

Researcher: Did that shock you?

Neil: Yeah, a lot.

Researcher: So you realized you were on your own.

Neil: He kept mentioning the folder Shakespeare, so I was okay, can I have a copy of that? And he said, yeah, I'll get it for you, something like that, and then he never did, coz he wasn't there, ever.

Researcher: You didn't call to ask?

Neil: He was gone for six consecutive days, out of state.

Researcher: When did you find out he was going to be gone?

Neil: The weekend before he left, two days before. He didn't have a lesson planned for that first day. He just said, hey, it's this activity. I haven't even read Macbeth yet, at that point, coz I didn't know if it would be Hamlet or Macbeth. I guess I could have read both of them but I didn't. But he didn't have a lesson plan.

Researcher: You thought he would teach it and you would just plan for the romantic poets.

Neil: Right. There wasn't a do a whole unit of Macbeth, there was never, there was teach today on Macbeth. I tried asking more questions like, what do you think, what about this play do you think, what about this scene do you think is important? He gave me very general answers that sounded, intellectual. Then he gave me an activity, he said it should take one hour but it took five minutes.

Researcher: What sort of activity?

Neil: Red light, green light, Macbeth. It was playing a children's game. He said it was representative of the paranoia of Macbeth. We played two rounds of that, and I would try to milk it. I would ask the kids questions. In the end, I just said, well, we're going to read the first scene.

Researcher: How much time did you have in between the call and teaching Macbeth?

Neil: A weekend. I was reading Macbeth, I was totally freaking out.

When I asked Neil why he did not ask FI-Ben or myself for help, even when we kept asking how he was coping with his frequently absent CT, he invoked the *sink or swim* storyline to explain his

choice of action, which was to assure us that things were getting better, even though they were not:

Neil: As far as I understood, you know, you [meaning himself] have to make it work. Either that or you drop out of the program. Or at least you would drop out of the semester, which is also not something I could do.

Researcher: Where did you get that message from?

Neil: Actually, I had spoken to another student teacher who had to do that, someone I met at orientation, in my cohort, not in English. She told me she was with her CT for a couple of weeks, and they starting bashing heads, they started getting into arguments, and she took the rest of the semester off, and had to do this again.

Researcher: So from her example, you got it in your head that your only option is, to leave?

Neil: Yeah, that's the only option I thought was available at the time... And when Ben talked about his own experience [as a CT], he had this [student] teacher who was lazy and just left, I thought, I had to make it work! So every story I've heard is you just make it work. No matter what, this is what the job is. You've got to make to make it work!

Researcher: So you didn't want to drop out, so you tried your darn best.

Neil: In most things, you know, if you can live through it, you can get through it. The trial by fire thing was what was going through my head the whole time.

Adhering to the *sink or swim* narrative, Neil assumed it was his sole responsibility to “make it work” and overcome the struggles by himself. For fear of dropping out or failing, Neil thought his only option was to stick it out. Given the way he positioned himself in this version of the *sink or swim* storyline, asking for help or admitting to the fact that he needed help was not an option. When Ben shared about his experiences as a CT during one of the weekly seminars, he recalled good relationships with his STs but remembered one who was unsuccessful because he displayed disinterest and a lack of commitment. According to Ben, that particular ST was not sure if he wanted to teach and eventually decided on a different career path. Ben even assured his

STs that, from what he had observed so far, none of them were like that. Apparently, Neil chose to view this story as a warning against being lazy. Entrenched in the *sink or swim* narrative (and compounded by his *studenting* fears), Neil interpreted every story he heard about failed ST-CT relationships as cautionary tales about the consequences of not “making it work.” If he failed to overcome difficulties with his CT, he would have to drop out or be deemed lazy. From such a perspective, the CT is hardly positioned as one who might be responsible for his troubles.

According to the *sink or swim* narrative, student teachers are positioned to bear the bulk of the burden of success or failure. Difficulties and challenges, even with problematic CTs or their questionable expectations (a lot of grading or a lack of structured guidance for example), have to be borne with grit and grace, as if they are a test of one’s ability, commitment, and sense of professionalism as a pre-service teacher. Expectedly, the more confident and resourceful among them fared better. While Neil floundered alone because he did not think it appropriate to seek help, the others who were more bold and able to seek help from a variety of sources, which included their CTs, other teachers in the school, FIs, friends, and me, benefitted from it. Andy had to convince Mr. Scott to trust him and worked hard to keep that trust. He also asked for teaching ideas and classroom management tips from FI-Ben constantly. Edith reveled in the freedom Mr. Yates gave her with regards to planning and, like Andy, was resourceful enough to prepare and execute impressive lessons without much help from the CT. As she recalled fondly when I asked if her CT taught her how to teach,

In some sort of retroactive way. He’s [CT’s] very good about letting me do what I wanted. . . . That was [Mr. Yates], he didn’t tell me how to do it. He just tells me what was wrong with it.

It must be noted, however, that within the *sink or swim* narrative, student teachers have to be the one seeking support actively. For example, Andy took the first steps to negotiate for more

teaching opportunities, Edith was bold enough to “argue” content with Mr. Yates, and Grace had to initiate collaborative conversations with her CT. As she recalls during her interview:

Researcher: Did [Mrs. Cassidy] help you out?

Grace: She was always open to me coming to her with something. Like, this is my idea for tomorrow, what do you think? Do you think some areas might cause problems given your knowledge of the kids? She was always willing to help me, but it was all coming from me to her.

From my memory and field notes, Grace did not think Mrs. Cassidy was approachable at first; in fact, she was very intimidated by her “loud” and critical CT. According to the sink or swim narrative, student teachers perceive their situation to be rather precarious for they have much at stake. They were conscious of the fact that seeking help from their CT was a risky venture that required boldness and strategy. All the STs admitted to strategizing their approach in order to develop an effective working relationship with their CTs. I remember how Grace was worried about her CT’s expectations and “intimidating” coldness at the beginning of the semester and brought the matter up several times during weekly field instruction seminars. I recalled advising her to talk to her CT and express her need for guidance. I had to assure her that expressing such learning needs would not show weakness; rather, it would demonstrate a commitment to learn. I even rehearsed with her ways to talk to her CT. With apprehension, Grace took up the suggestion and eventually, even managed to impress her CT with such a show of initiative, something which Mrs. Cassidy detailed during my interview:

She [Grace] had an incredible work ethic. She was honest in what she could and couldn’t do, when she was overwhelmed, and what she needed help with. She had confidence. . . . My previous student teacher was clearly behind, and wouldn’t admit it. Whereas she would say, can I look at your lesson plan for this, I’m a little unsure.

The student teachers were not the only ones who abided by the *Sink or Swim* storyline. Their CTs also held the same beliefs about the student-teaching semester and many preferred a

more hands-off approach to mentoring, thinking that student teachers will learn when left to “figure things out” on their own first. This entrenches the STs’ belief that they are left largely to *sink or swim*. When I asked what their role as CTs meant during their separate interviews, they all unanimously agreed that it is to provide a place for pre-service teachers to observe and practice, because that was how one learned to teach. They also believed that their role was to provide feedback about a student teacher’s effort, but only after an ST was left to “try things” out first.

Mr. Scott, for instance, explained his approach as such:

Mostly what I try to do is to help them trust their own instincts, help them understand it. I want him [ST-Andy] to put himself out there. I want him to try things. I want him to be willing to fail and see what happens and we’ll talk about it.

Mr. Yates adopted the same “retroactive” feedback strategy with Edith, admitting during my interview that he preferred a “wait and see” approach to mentoring:

Researcher: When you decided to have STs in your classroom, did you have an idea how you would structure their experience?

Mr. Yates: Not so much. With each one, I had to wait and see about competency level and connection level. And you have to watch and see how they interacted [with the students], and certain lessons worked and made sense in where it was going.

The effect of this approach on his ST, Edith, was quite unnerving. She recounted for me an episode of her interaction with him early in the semester, enacting their conversation at times during the interview:

Edith: I would come in and he would say, “All right, so how do you feel about *Catcher in the Rye*?” (She would reply) Good. I really like the book. I read it a lot. (He would then say) “Okay! Here are my *Catcher in the Rye* notes, look them over.” So I look them over, I watch that class the next day, he finishes the class and goes, “Okay! So, you’re teaching tomorrow.” (She replied) Okay, what am I teaching? (He said) “Chapter five.”

Researcher: He didn’t tell you beforehand that you were going to teach it?

Edith: No.

Researcher: How did that make you feel?

Edith: Nervous. Well, basically he got up and led an informal discussion, and all he had in front of him was his notes. No lesson plan, no script, no nothing, just talked. And when he gets to something he would say, chapter four, what's your impression of Holden [character in the novel]... and it just flowed, and it was really good, and you think the guy had a script, and he didn't. Anyway, when he handed me the notes and said you're teaching chapter five tomorrow, I was like, what? And he's like, you saw the discussion today, it's what they're used to, and if you give that a shot, they'll help you out.

Fortunately, Edith was a confident learner and appreciated her CT's post-lesson feedback but she did wish she had "a lot more guidance." Indeed, Edith confided that Mr. Yates never quite broke down for her the techniques he used and observed that he led discussions very well, but mostly "by intuition." Instead of providing pre-lesson guidance about specific class discussion techniques, Mr. Yates clearly preferred his "wait and see" approach to mentoring. Metaphorically, it is as if he threw Edith into the deep, gave her his notes as "floaties," and expected her to swim. A less confident and competent ST might have floundered badly under such a style of tutelage.

Such was the case with ST-Neil, who might have had a more successful semester had his CT, Mr. Mills, provided more support. Like his counterparts, Mr. Mills believed that student teachers ought to be left to practice teaching independently. He assumed the student teaching semester was a time for STs to put into practice what they have learnt at the university and his role was just to provide a place for them to do that:

Look, it's [student teaching] basically a five month long interview, a job interview. By the time you [a student teacher] get there, you should be able to do it. It's basically grounds for you to practice what you already know. It shouldn't be a place where you learn to do it. . . . I mean, you've got a lot of theory in your head, but this is the place where you start to put that theory into practice.

Mr. Mills recalled past experiences with STs who were eager and capable of taking over his classes independently. He expected Neil to be able to do the same and to possess the “drive” to take on “challenging” areas in the curriculum. Instead, Neil failed to deliver:

He wasn't doing that great of a job planning. You know what I mean? Like, he's a single guy, this is his student teaching experience, he's taken two sessions of British Literature [at the university], I would expect him to be able to handle it, like, wow, you know what I mean? Like really understand poetry or get excited about Shakespeare. . . . Instead of jumping in and say “here I am, this is what I'm about, this is what I'm going to teach, I am good at this, I can do this, he pulled back, you know. . . . I was surprised. I thought, this is your [Neil's] job interview, this is a big deal.

If student teaching were like open waters, then Mr. Mills expected student teachers to “jump in” as able swimmers, eager to put their skills to the test. After all, they are performing for a “job interview.” Still “surprised” that Neil did not display more competence at the time of my interview which took place a month after the semester had ended, Mr. Mills attributed Neil's struggles to “personal problems” because, in addition to his teaching struggles, Neil was caught crying in the English office by the department head in February, and looked increasingly anxious to the other teachers in the school who expressed concern on several occasions. Later in the interview, Mr. Mills did momentarily assume some accountability for Neil's troubles when I asked him to reflect on the role of CTs and FIs as teacher educators and what could be done to help STs like Neil:

Frankly, I was not the easiest supervisor for student teachers to have, 'cause I've been fairly distracted if not entirely unavailable. There are times I could have been better at this. More time of sitting down with him and help him.

However, he also quickly added, “I don't know in this particular case whether it would have helped.” When I asked what he thought could have helped, he said, “therapy” and chuckled. Mr. Mills interpreted Neil's emotional breakdown and anxiety as signs of “personal problems” rather than symptoms of mounting stress brought on by the lack of guidance and structure.

According to Mr. Mills' reasoning, Neil could not perform like he should primarily because of his own personal problems. In the *sink or swim* storyline, it is the swimmer who must bear most of the responsibility for going under.

Like the other CTs, Mrs. Cassidy also believed that the best way for a student teacher to learn is to be left to "figure things out on their own." In fact, she thought her approach with ST-Grace, which was mostly hands off except for post-lesson feedback, was still too intrusive. She believed that leaving Grace to learn things on her own when teaching would be more beneficial than watching and critiquing her afterwards. She expressed her plan of action during the mid-term three-way meeting, which took place just after FI-Nina had observed Grace's second lesson:

I think I need to leave more. . . . I'm a control freak, very difficult time letting go, but that is my personal goal. I need to be out for a whole class period, 'cause it's hard to do something you're unsure of, and have somebody watch and pick apart your mistake backwards. That seems to be a little backwards, so I need to be out more.

Apparently, Mrs. Cassidy values this form of independent learning and views this method of mentoring positively since it protects an ST from excessive scrutiny, which might promote discomfort and anxiety and hamper learning as a result. Besides, feedback given "after the fact" seems "backward" and not very useful to her. This philosophy stemmed from her own learning-to-teach experience, which was characterized by such independent discovery learning which she thought worked well for her. During her interview with me at the end of the semester, she shared about her own student-teaching experiences and how that influenced her practice as a CT.

As she recalled how she herself benefitted from a CT who left her to "feel out" what worked, she even resolved to be more like him and not be "too nit-picky" with STs in the future:

Researcher: What expectations did you have regarding being a CT?

Mrs. Cassidy: What I had anticipated was what I experienced myself. My CT, he was my mentor and I learned from him on a daily basis more than all my education professors combined. He was just absolutely wonderful. . . .

Researcher: So you modeled your CT-ing after him?

Mrs. Cassidy: Yes. I probably was more hands on than he was just because I'm a control freak. And that's the one thing I really learned about myself, I think I'm too hard on my student teachers, like I think I need to cut them more slack, not in terms of work, but like how they lead a discussion. I would write down a lot of things. I need to not be too nit-picky. They'll figure those things out on their own. Whereas he would let me start a class, and then leave, and he would come in at the end, and really talked about how I felt it went, as opposed to telling me how it went.

Researcher: And that worked out well for you?

Mrs. Cassidy: It did! And I need to do that more next time I take a student teacher.

Researcher: Why?

Mrs. Cassidy: Because I think they [student teachers] need to learn a lot of things on their own. They need to really feel out what was successful, as opposed to me saying, why wasn't that successful. They should try to do that more themselves.

Like the other CTs, Mrs. Cassidy's preference for the hands-off approach to mentoring began with her own experiences as a student teacher. In fact, all four CTs drew from their own student teaching experiences when they were explaining their approaches to me, experiences that appeared to inspire their beliefs about mentoring student teachers. Mr. Yates, for example, decided to be a CT because "it's an obligation to the profession. If someone does it for you, you should do it back for others." He remembered his own CT as such:

Mr. Yates: She [his CT] just allowed me to pretty much do what I wanted, because she saw that I was excited about it and she was trying to make sure I figured out, knowing what I was doing. It was very positive in that sense in that she just allowed me to work through things, so yeah, that was the positive part.

Researcher: Did she give you feedback?

Mr. Yates: Oh yeah, she gave feedback, and did all of that. I was new, I was making mistakes and stuff, and she explained what was wrong with certain situations or certain approaches to a lesson.

Clearly, both Mr. Yates and Mrs. Cassidy appreciated their CTs' mentoring approach and wanted to do the same for their student teachers. Mr. Mills also recalled being left to "figure out" teaching on his own and assumed one learns to teach by just "jumping in" and doing it.

In contrast, Mr. Scott did not have such a positive personal student teaching experience although that actually inspired him to want to provide a different experience for his student teachers. He explained:

...the teacher I got placed with, it was a bad placement, because the teacher I got placed with, was a pretty good teacher I think, but she was not a good mentor. She didn't want to help me find my own voice. She wanted me to teach how she taught. So we butted heads a little... So when I finally got back into teaching, I decided that, yeah, I'll work with some student teachers. It became very important for me to give them, to work with them, but I don't want to make them clones of myself.

As discussed earlier, Mr. Scott believed student teachers should put themselves "out there," be allowed to "try things," and "be willing to fail and see what happens."

All the CTs' past experiences, whether positive or negative, were interpreted to reinforce the common assumption that a hands-off method of mentoring, in which the student teacher is expected to jump in and learn by trial and error, worked best. This preference for independent discovery learning may work for confident and capable student teachers but may be detrimental for those who need more support, as in the case of Neil. Nonetheless, it is an approach that fosters the *sink or swim* storyline among all the student teachers and worsens their studenting anxieties, which may adversely affect student teacher learning. Judging by the CTs' experiences, I wonder if these STs might eventually mentor the same way when they become CTs in the future.

While the FIs in this study were passionate about helping student teachers, they too believed that STs learn best when they are given many opportunities for independent practice. FI-Nina, for example, always reiterated to her STs the importance of assuming more lead teaching in their CT's classroom. In fact, she often advised that CTs leave the room when their STs are teaching (they can be in the corridor or an adjoining room), so that STs can experience what it is like to be the only teacher in the room. When she did not see as much change in Edith's teaching as she would have liked or expected after the last observation, she was quick to conclude that she thought Mr. Yates was "too controlling" and that he did not allow her to be "independent" enough:

Researcher: What do you think of their [Edith and Mr. Yates] relationship?

FI-Nina: Until that last class, I thought it had developed well, but after that last observation, I felt it was really bad, because that last observation, he's still telling her, you do exactly what I do in the classroom. By that time, she should be totally independent and doing her own thing... I never saw a huge change in her from beginning to the end. Did you? A little more confidence, maybe? But other than that, I don't think she was allowed to grow as much as other student teachers were.

From my field notes and recordings of the last post-observation conference, Mr. Yates had interrupted Nina when she suggested that Edith could have used a different approach to solicit student answers:

Nina: What would you change about the lesson?

Edith: I'd like to change the pace, keep a tab on their questions better.

Nina: You know, you could have put questions on a handout beforehand and let the students fill out the [answers]

Mr. Yates: [Oh that was me. That's not how I wanted it. I've been doing the class a certain way and I wanted to get them back on how I would do it.

Nina: I see.

Nina interpreted this interjection by Mr. Yates as evidence of his excessive control over Edith, despite the fact that the latter had never complained about that. Also, Mr. Yates had allowed Edith to take over planning and teaching an entire novel he had not taught before, earlier in the semester, with minimal guidance from him. In fact, Nina had observed a lesson from that unit in the second observation and was very impressed with it. From my observation of the dynamics, Mr. Yates could be defending his ST because he knew it was her last observation and she was being evaluated. Nina's interpretation was influenced by her strong feelings about independent practice, a belief she extended to her assessments about other student teachers. For instance, when commenting on Grace's shyness as a problem, she remembered another student teacher in the group:

Nina: Jessica [pseudonym] was shy at the beginning too but not at all at the end. She totally changed!

Researcher: What happened?

Nina: She got confident. She learned what she was capable of doing and she did it! I haven't seen a bigger change in any one person as her. I think what she needed to do, she needed the teacher to leave the room.

Researcher: She was having some problems with her teacher =

Nina: = She was, at the beginning, and finally she said, could you leave me alone, and the teacher left, and she did fabulously. She really did! She was great.

Nina's faith in independent practice as a go-to strategy for ST learning was also borne out of her own student teaching experience, of which she recalled: "I had no help at all. I had, I think I was visited twice [by her university supervisor]...I was totally alone." Apparently, she had had to learn to practice independently in that *sink or swim* situation. It is no wonder then that when I asked how she would describe her role as a field instructor, one of her answers was, "it's

helping them [student teachers] to become more independent, on their own, cause they're afraid." Her strong emphasis on independent practice implies a mentoring approach that fosters the *sink or swim* storyline, especially for her student teachers, and even more so for those in need of more support. Grace, for example, needed more guidance from Mrs. Cassidy and felt better after she sought and received it, although she was very hesitant to ask initially. And contrary to what Nina believed, Edith felt Mr. Yates could have guided her more.

The other FI, Ben, also recalled learning by observation, both during student teaching and in his first years as a teacher. He described his own learning to teach process at his first school this way:

When I first started, I watched, I watched how other people taught, I did what they did, try it out, and when I found stuff that worked, I continued. If I didn't, I stopped. Just kept doing that. Yeah, there's no other way to do it.

Ben credited much of his learning to observing colleagues whom he thought taught well and had a great relationship with their students. He would watch and "tried to mimic their style" as best he could and admitted to learning by "trial and error." Because this way of learning worked for him and he believed "there's no other way," he frequently recommended it to his student teachers. Hence, during post-observation conferences and seminars with his student teachers, I would often hear Ben say, "That's how you do this job. You watch the pros and you do it," or "you do it little by little and eventually, you'll learn," or "you get in the zone and you do it," or "the more you do it, the better you'll get at it." Ben put so much faith in the methods of learning by observation, constant practice, and trial and error that these maxims often became the standard answer for ST inquiries into the specific techniques of teaching. However, when asked to describe the specifics of what one needed to do "little by little" in order to improve, he would

typically rephrase the same maxims and often resort to analogies (usually sports-based) to illustrate their truths. The following excerpt from one of our conversations is an example:

Researcher: So how do you break it [starting a class] down into little pieces for the student teacher?

Ben: Uh, being confident enough to move away from the desk, cause being behind that desk or podium is very comforting at the beginning, you know. So, just wander around, talk at the same time, gesture. They're [STs] all like that at the beginning, so it's just getting them to move first. One of the student teachers asked how do you do all that all at once, deal with so many different students and needs, and multitask? Well, you've got to learn it by doing little by little, and eventually, you'll learn to think in multiple ways at the same time.

Researcher: What are the steps?

Ben: So you deal with what's important first, getting the class' attention, don't worry about attendance yet, that'll come. Just little things like that.

Researcher: But how does one know what's important? How do you work out the steps?

Ben: I don't know. I suppose, it's just that mental process where you just have to focus, you have to focus on, okay, I have to do all this, and eventually you just learn how to do all this. You get in the zone and you do it. It's like being an athlete. Our coach used to tell us, "learn the plays so well you don't have to think about it anymore." And he's right. It became automatic. Um, if I'm playing left field and there's a runner in the first and second base, I have to know how many outs there are and I have to know which way the wind is blowing, right, and I have to know where the other outfielders and infielders are playing cause if the ball hits me on the ground I have to do a certain thing in the air. So you learn the game so well you don't have to think anymore, you just react. And that's what teachers have to do. They have to learn how to play the game until they can react because you're thinking of so many things at once.

Ben uses these maxims, vague as they are, not only to communicate his belief in what works but also to encourage his STs to continue in their efforts to improve, to assure them that their hard work will not be in vain, even though they may not be as effective as they would like to be for

now. Frequently, Ben would also follow up these assurances with “you’ll get there,” or “you’ll be fine.”

However, Ben’s dependence on these beliefs and his readiness to use them as assurances may perpetuate an ST’s sense of being left alone to sink or swim, especially when they are struggling and in need of actionable specifics. For example, when ST-Neil tried to bring up problems he was facing at his placement earlier in the semester, Ben would interpret them as “normal” circumstances of school which Neil “just have to learn” to adjust to:

Neil: There are so many students in the class and they can be really difficult to deal with. Like when I’m dealing with one, another one will be acting up. I’m exhausted by the end of the day and it gets worse when he’s [Mr. Mills] not around. I mean, he has one hundred and sixty students!

FI-Ben: That’s normal.

Neil: And about thirty of them are special ed.

Ben: Yeah, that’s normal.

Neil: And about three different preps.

Ben: That’s normal. Yeah, you’ll just have to learn. You just do it. There’s no other way to put it, you just do it. That’s what you do. You learn to roll with it. You’ll learn strategies along the way. Now let’s talk about when I’m coming in to see [observe] you.

Neil’s incredulity at the demands of his placement could reflect mere beginner’s anxiety but Ben could have pressed him for further details about his struggles, considering that this was not the first time Neil had talked about difficulties and an absent CT. Instead, Ben resorted to his belief that with time and practice, Neil’s problems would be resolved. Hence, he felt Neil just needed to be assured that “this is normal.” Unwittingly, Ben’s approach only served to confirm Neil’s belief in the *sink and swim* storyline, a belief he summarized for me during his interviews in statements like, “No matter what, this is what the job is, you’ve got to make to make it work”

and “You have to figure out how to do everything. And don’t depend on somebody giving it to you.”

Later, at the end of the semester, when it became apparent that Neil’s problems were much more serious than anticipated, Ben admitted to me after observing Neil teach for a final time:

Ben: I feel like I could have helped him through this, but I would have needed to start earlier on. And I assumed because he was at this stage [of student teaching] that he would be more focused and driven and know what he’s doing, much like the other student teachers.

Researcher: Coming in today, you were expecting to see improvements but you were disappointed.

Ben: Yeah, I am. I’m not seeing the same growth that I’ve seen in the other student teachers. Um, I have to say though, the other student teachers sought out more specific help. They would email me things and say, hey, what does this look like?

Researcher: Like Amanda (another ST in his group whom we were briefly chatting about earlier)?

Ben: Like Amanda, or Andy, or Penny. She relies more on her CT. She’s got a really strong CT, so she works hard at everything and when I get something from her, it’s solid. Joanne has done the same thing. She’ll run things by me, ask for ideas, I’ll make comments, and it’s good. And I know she’s got a wonderful CT, who really gives her good strong directions, so I don’t worry that much. In this case, I don’t know.

Researcher: Do you think he’s not putting in as much effort and his CT isn’t helping?

Ben: I sense he [Neil] doesn’t know how to do this, or what to do with it. He needs someone to show him how, and he’s got no one. So he’s winging it, and he’s not winging it well.

Ben’s realization that Neil had been “winging it” all along occurred in the last week of the student teaching semester, when it was too late for intervention. Although he regretted not helping Neil earlier, he noted that Neil had not sought him for help, unlike the other STs. While this explanation may help him rationalize why he did not know about Neil’s struggles earlier, it

does put the responsibility to seek help squarely on the student teacher's shoulder, which is a consistent characteristic of the *sink or swim* storyline, prevalent among triad member interpretations in this study. Notably, Neil had been complaining about his problems, especially the one about his constantly unavailable CT, throughout the semester. However, Ben tended to respond with general encouragements and promoted perseverance because of his belief that one learns to teach via observation, trial and error, and constant practice.

Later, during my interview, further insights into Ben's rationalization regarding his lack of attentiveness to Neil's struggles can be gleaned from his expressed assumptions about student teachers and his position as a field instructor:

You [student teachers] learn about teaching goals, lesson planning, you learn about all this stuff in both practicum and methods, and now is the time to show me what you can do. And they're twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three year olds, they're young adults, they need to be treated like professionals. And if I were department chair, which I was, and I give them [teachers] something to do, and I say I want this product by such and such, I don't want to see it, if it's not done properly, they'll know it. If it's done properly, it'll be fine.

Ben was commenting on his disagreement with the program's expectation that field instructors monitor their student teachers' lesson and unit plans closely, according to a prescribed schedule. He did not think that was realistic given the varying time frames and circumstances of each placement. In addition, he believed that student teachers needed to be treated like "professionals," which he interpreted to mean that they know about standards of quality and will perform accordingly to set expectations, especially if trusted to do so. He likened his responsibilities to that of a department chair, whose role is to set expectations, not to micro-manage a teacher's work. This explains why he thought Neil ought to have been more "focused and driven and know what he's doing, much like the other student teachers." He expected Neil to be like a young professional and was surprised when Neil did not deliver, contrary to his

personal theory of trust and motivation. As detailed above, these expectations may work for the more capable STs (like Andy) but not for those who need more support, like ST-Neil. In fact, these presuppositions serve to reinforce the latter's *studenting* fears and *sink or swim* beliefs, driving him into further isolation and despair.

Another predominant storyline that tended to foster *studenting* fears and *sink or swim* anxieties among student teachers, evident also in the discussions above, is the CTs' and FIs' unanimous belief in the transformative power of practice. The influence and implications of this storyline, which I title "Practice Makes Perfect" to reflect the common maxim, will be the subject of discussion in the next section.

Overarching Storyline 4: Practice Makes Perfect

An analysis of the practices and discourse of the cooperating teachers and field instructors in this study also revealed another familiar storyline, which I title, *practice makes perfect*. CTs and FIs believe that extended and repeated engagement in teaching practice will eventually lead to improvement and mastery. They feel that they themselves have learned and improved with more practice and experience and, hence, recommend the same for the STs. In fact, CTs and FIs often use this *practice makes perfect* storyline to explain away their STs' current difficulties with teaching. They also invoke this narrative as a way to assure their STs that they will automatically improve with more practice and experience, and so, not to feel discouraged by their current lack of skill or knowledge. The belief that practice will lead to improvement is so implicit, widely used, and readily accepted that not one triad member stopped to question its validity or implication. It is no wonder, then, that all the CTs and FIs

recommended more time for student teaching, frequently up to a year, when I asked how the university TEP might strengthen ST learning.

I think it [student teaching] has to be more than one semester. I would say, at least for a whole year.

(Mrs. Cassidy)

You should make student teaching a year long, but have to structure it so it doesn't become an economic challenge for the student teacher.

(Mr. Yates)

The more practical experience they get, the more it benefits them, more than anything else.

(Mr. Scott)

Obviously, the more practice they can get the better. They need to put theory to practice.

(Mr. Mills)

The CTs communicate their belief that one learns primarily through practice in the way they mentor their STs. For example, in line with his belief that “practical experience,” “more than anything else,” would benefit ST learning, Mr. Scott chose to “get out of the [student teacher’s] way and gave Andy a lot of teaching responsibilities because he wanted his ST to “put himself out there,” “try things,” and “be willing to fail and see what happens.” Similarly, Mr. Mills believed that student teachers ought to be left to practice teaching independently because that was how they learned “to put that theory into practice.” After all, according to the *practice makes perfect* storyline, practice will automatically lead to learning. His previous experiences with successful STs seemed to confirm his assumption that his role as a CT was just to provide a place for STs to learn via practice in his classroom. Consequently, he was quite surprised that ST-Neil still struggled at the end. Since he did provide Neil with many practice opportunities, he reasoned that it must be the latter’s emotional problems, rather than the lack of practice or guidance, that led to his ST’s struggles. Hence, he said “therapy” when I asked him what he thought might have helped Neil.

Much like their belief in the importance of independent discovery learning, their implicit trust in the power of practice frequently stemmed from the CTs' and FIs' own learning to teach experiences. When talking about how they learned teaching, many recalled "figuring things out" and "getting a feel" for what worked in and through practice. For example, Mrs. Cassidy remembered learning about designing assessments during her student teaching and unit planning only during her first year of teaching:

Mrs. Cassidy: Yeah, I learned by jumping in. My CT said, "this is the unit you're going to teach on, so here, what kind of assessment do you want to do?" He let it be up to me.

Researcher: And you tried it =

Mrs. Cassidy: = Right, and I realized it took hours and hours to create, and I realized that you can't have the same type of question, like the first ten I gave was all short answers, which is easy to create. I think I have thirty-five short answer questions in total. To grade that took days and days. When you're trying to create the lesson plans and do the writing, to have a test like that, you just physically cannot do it. It's impossible. So I learned how to do good multiple choice questions from him.

Researcher: So it sounds like you learned how to do this only in practice in your student teaching semester =

Mrs. Cassidy: = Absolutely. And I looked at, the one unit I remember creating [for one of her university TEP courses]. I did either *Romeo and Juliet* or *Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of those two, and no one even said, "by the way, this test would take a million years to grade"! And my professor was like, um, "create an aspect that addresses all of these different objectives" and you know what? It was completely impractical! It wasn't designed for the kids who don't like Shakespeare. It wasn't designed for the kids that struggled. According to [the university], every kid is creative and let's act it out and let's blah blah. And it didn't involve anything but Shakespeare. That was one thing I didn't learn until my first year of teaching, that supplemental materials make your unit, because all of a sudden they [the students] connect to everything else.

Mrs. Cassidy came to value “learning by doing” because that was how she discovered useful considerations regarding assessments, grading, and unit planning for diverse learners. She credited her learning to actual hands-on experience with practice and a CT who allowed her to do so independently. Not surprisingly, she thought this would be the best way for her ST, Grace, to learn too. For example, during Grace’s second post-observation meeting which she attended, she reflected on how she intervened when one of the students was caught eating a cookie in class, and decided that it would have been better for Grace to experience that alone and learn to manage that by herself:

I think I need to leave more. Like today, with eating cookie, I shouted across the classroom. That’s something you [Grace] need to experience on your own, taking a cookie away from a child. That’s my goal for the next couple of weeks. I want to let her [Grace] get her feet wet with the tenth graders, but I’m going to leave more.
(Mrs. Cassidy)

As discussed in the previous section on the *sink or swim* storyline, Mrs. Cassidy not only believed that one learns to teach via practice, but that one learns best when left to “figure things out” alone. She reiterates this belief again in her end-of-term interview:

...they’ll [student teachers] figure those things out on their own...they need to learn a lot of things on their own...they need to really feel out what was successful, as opposed to me saying why wasn’t that successful. They should try to do that more themselves.

Expectedly, this approach compounded Grace’s *studenting* and *sink or swim* fears, but this is a typical example of how these storylines interact to reinforce one another in these triad relationships.

Her colleague, Mr. Yates, also recalled a CT who allowed him to “pretty much do what [he] wanted” and “work through things” himself:

She [his CT] just allowed me to pretty much do what I wanted, because she saw that I was excited about it and she was trying to make sure I figured out, knowing what I was doing. It was very positive in that sense in that she just allowed me to work through things, so yeah, that was the positive part.

Since he appreciated the experience and believed he learned to teach better through practice, he not only recommended the same for his ST, Edith, but also fell back on the *practice makes perfect* storyline to explain how she might eventually work through her difficulties. For instance, during his end of term interview, he rationalized that Edith persistent problems with managing time for classroom discussions was just part of the learning process and will be resolved with more practice:

Researcher: I noticed you focused on two things with her [Edith]. One was with discussion, and how to conduct one, and then the other was timing, time management =

Mr. Yates: = Oh yes yes yes yes! Cause time was way out of distribution and planning was way out of the reality of the classroom... Yeah, the timing thing, especially sometimes later in the year, when she knew some of the classes better.

Researcher: What happened?

Mr. Yates: It's just figuring out, figuring out. Another things she has to learn is, after a while, when you answer enough questions, you have to stop answering questions. You say, "we have to move on." A couple of boys will keep wanting to talk about individual ideas or complaints, and take over the show. You got to shut them and say, "you got to stay after class, cause it's irrelevant to the rest of the class."

Researcher: But how does she decide, know when [to

Mr. Yates: [She's still figuring that out. Cause she's got to learn to be tough with them, shut them down and stop certain things.

Researcher: How did you learn to do that? Or did it come naturally to you?

Mr. Yates: Oh no, you figure that out. And you start realizing that when there are other things you want to get to and you're discerning certain behaviors, certain questions, and you decided on what to do. She's still figuring that out, which is what she will be doing more of, and she'll get to that stage.

Mr. Yates positioned Edith as a student of teaching who was just going through the typical learning process of "figuring" things out. His assumption is that time and practice will help her

develop the necessary teaching skills. Despite the fact that Edith continued to face the same difficulties even up till the end of the semester, Mr. Yates still thought it was a teething problem that would eventually be resolved with more practice. He had so much faith in practice that he was certain “she’ll get to that stage” of competence with more experience, much like he did.

He confirmed this view later on in the interview when discussing the challenges of being a CT:

Mr. Yates: There are certain things you want certain ways, the way you do things, the way you organize stuff. And when you try to work someone else’s education into that framework, and when that person will hit on things that really irritate you, because it’s just that person learning, trying to pull back from that is difficult.

Researcher: I can imagine pulling back must be painful, but um, did you let her know it’s [painful

Mr. Yates: [You can’t do that with all the things that possess problems because she’s still learning how to do things, so you can’t make it a problem when it’s a learning process for her.

As Mr. Yates positioned Edith as a novice whose mistakes were just part of the “learning process,” he assumed the position of an understanding elder who should make allowances for her failings. Interestingly, this position of compassion was extended not only to her teaching problems, but also to her inability to keep up with grading because she prioritized other activities in her personal life:

Researcher: So it sounds like you were trying to be supportive... Was it difficult at times?

Mr. Yates: Well, with the essay. Like not being able to grade essays and just, she’s got to figure that out. She took a lot of time. And that’s part of her figuring it out is to take that time and do it. Couple of times we had big essays coming back, we also had them coming back at the same time that some things needed to be done, like grades and parent teacher conferences. And sometimes some things at home got in the way of getting things done that shouldn’t have gotten in the way. Her [Foreign Language] House stuff.

Researcher: She was committed there.

During her interview, Edith did confess to me her strong commitment to the [Foreign Language] House, of which she used to be a resident. She admitted that she chose to engage in the activities of the House at the expense of some of her student teaching responsibilities. Apparently, Mr. Yates was aware of her misplaced priorities but chose to interpret her behavior as part of a novice's learning process, and was exceptionally accommodating about it:

Mr. Yates: Well, that got in the way sometimes. So instead of being in the twelfth grade class and seeing what's going on there, she was sitting in the English office grading essays. And that shouldn't have happened.

Researcher: Did you tell her that?

Mr. Yates: Uh huh. She knew. But that sort of, um, it is learning how to do it and it is also prioritizing and figuring out what you can do in certain amounts of time, so that was a place where the time management clashed with the inability to make a good decision. So two things hitting together. Both of which are learning, but both of which were potentially very disruptive at the time when, when you got parents coming in and grades due and things that have to be taken care of.

Despite the problems Edith might have caused by not grading essays on time, Mr. Yates persisted in his belief that she was just going through a learning phase and would somehow "figure" out her priorities and time management through practice. Such an interpretation allowed Edith to pursue her own agenda, which was to make time for her private interests, because Mr. Yates did not think it was a problem that necessitated the involvement of FI-Nina. In actual fact, Edith had also been missing many of Nina's deadlines but had told the latter she was busy with her CT's demands. Nina also did not know that Mr. Yates could not entrust Edith with teaching the twelfth grade class because she was using the time to grade essays for her eleventh grade class. She thought Mr. Yates was too controlling and unwilling to let Edith take over that class. Conveniently, Edith never corrected her erroneous judgment. Essentially, Mr. Yates' assumptions about the learning process of novice teachers, based on the *practice makes perfect*

storyline, permitted Edith to get away with fewer responsibilities than what the TEP had intended for her, which was a teaching load equivalent to two preparations.

As previously discussed in the *Sink or Swim* storyline section, the belief in practice as a “cure” for most learning to teach problems is shared by the FIs also. Like the CTs, both Nina and Ben credited their own expertise to years of “learning by doing” and intuitively figuring out what worked in and from practice. Consequently, they recommend the same for their STs, both as a method for improvement as well as an assurance to counter any sense of discouragement the STs may feel.

Believing that novices need time to improve, FIs also tend to be compassionate in their approach to mentoring. For instance, when ST-Andy complained about a seventh hour class that remained persistently disinterested despite efforts by both him and his CT, Ben’s response was, “You learn to roll with that. You learn to adjust to the different energy levels of different classes.” Andy was clearly frustrated and looking for ways to better engage his seventh hour class but Ben, bound by the confines of the *practice makes perfect* storyline, interpreted his complaints as expressions of a frustrated novice in need of encouragement and assurance. Instead of engaging Andy in a conversation about the specific problems he was experiencing with seventh hour and working out possible strategies to address those issues, Ben assured him that his problems would be resolved when he learned to “adjust” to the varying energy levels of students, something that would take place with more practice.

When his other ST, Neil, expressed uncertainties about his teaching after his second observation, Ben was also quick to invoke the *practice makes perfect* storyline to comfort him by saying, “But you’re much better now, and by the next couple of times I come in, you’re going to be fine.” Considering that Neil’s lesson that day was not problem-free, Ben’s generous praise

and assurance were issued with more faith in what he believed practice would do for a novice than in Neil's actual abilities. Certain that more time and practice would lead to improvement, Ben remained hopeful throughout the semester, even when Neil continued to delay arrangements for subsequent observations. Consequently, Ben experienced both shock and disappointment when he finally found out, in the last week of term during Neil's final two observations, that the latter's struggles actually grew worse with time.

The other FI, Nina, also put much faith in the educational effects of practice and was as kind and generous in her post- lesson observation feedback. Expressions like "it's going to take time," "experience makes you grow," "it takes a little practice," "don't expect it to happen tomorrow," "you'll only get stronger," and "I think you need more time" are peppered throughout her post-observation feedback and seminar comments. In addition to communicating assurance, these statements also reflect her strong belief that one learns to teach by "doing" teaching and that improvement is certain with more practice. Since CTs also share the same beliefs about practice, FI-CT conversations often flow seamlessly around the topic, even when the meanings are implied.

For instance, during a discussion about Grace's difficulties with classroom observation during the mid-term three way meeting, both Mrs. Cassidy and Nina were quick to interpret the problem as one that would be resolved with more "experience":

Mrs. Cassidy: I think one of the skills that's really hard to teach is classroom discussion. So she's [ST-Grace] great about having the objective in mind, how they're [students are] gonna get there, but a lot of times, when the students will ask a question or have suggestions, she gets a little thrown off. But it's hard to think on your feet. I was saying that's not something I can teach [her

Nina: [Its' experience.

Mrs. Cassidy: Yes! So I tell her there's no point getting frustrated when she can't fix it for the next class, cause you can't. It's going to take time.

Evident in this exchange is their shared assumption that one learns to conduct classroom discussion well only through practice. In fact, it is this shared belief that allows them to make sense of each other's implied meanings. Such a dependence on the *practice makes perfect* script not only enables the FI and CT to comfort the ST, but also to shift (at least some of) the burden of helping Grace "think on her feet" during classroom discussions from their shoulders. If only experience can teach Grace to "think on her feet," then none of the triad members can be blamed for Grace's current difficulties, nor can they do more to help her overcome them. Apparently, invoking the *practice makes perfect* storyline helps all parties find solace in such a potentially difficult situation.

Like the other CTs and FI, Nina believes that STs learn best by "doing" teaching and prescribes it generously. She consistently recommends that the program work in more "classroom time" for the STs and strongly urges her STs to engage in as much practice as they can handle. When she did not see much growth in ST-Edith at the end of the semester, she concluded that it was because her CT, Mr. Yates, was "too controlling" and did not give her more opportunities for practice with the twelfth grade class. During my end of term interview when reflecting on Grace's performance, which she thought was not very strong compared to the other STs, she concluded, with more hope than conviction, "I think with practice she'll be really good, you know..." When preparing Grace for future job interviews, Nina advised,

Go in confident. You tell them you have a lot to offer. Don't worry about the little things that you didn't get here. Like we said, it's practice. The whole thing is about gaining experience and practicing.

Mrs. Cassidy agreed and together, they tried to allay the ST's uncertainties with the promise that practice and experience will lead to mastery.

The influence of such repeated use of the *practice makes perfect* maxim on the STs become apparent in their reflections during my interviews, particularly for Grace.

Researcher: What are your fears entering teaching? What are you worried about?

Grace: The difficult aspect for me is teaching novels that I'm unfamiliar with, trying to process it, learn it, understanding it myself, and then communicating it to my students. So, like, that's difficult.

Researcher: What are you confident about?

Grace: I think I'll always go into class prepared because I'll freak out if I don't. I know it'll come with more experience, but focusing more on meaning as well and having students successfully understanding the importance of the novel is going to be difficult at first. In the final meeting, in response to that, Mrs. Cassidy had said, "that's just something that comes with time, and more experience, and your recognition of that is a good step that you always want to gear towards."

Grace was prepared to work hard as a beginning teacher but still worried about being able to pedagogically process a text in a way that would promote student learning. Earlier during the interview, she had revealed that she was still uncertain about important aspects of unit and lesson planning. While she mentioned the need to create a final assessment for a unit plan, she expressed confusion regarding the use of standards and objectives, admitted to retro-fitting them for the unit plan project she had submitted, and confessed to not knowing how to fill in the "day to day" steps. To cope with those uncertainties, she quoted what had been repeated to her often and said, "I know it'll come with more experience." Apparently, she had accepted, unquestioningly, the ubiquitous *practice makes perfect* promise that has been repeated to her by her CT and FI, as a matter of fact. According to this narrative, her current uncertainties and confusion are only temporary, and will be resolved "with more experience." Exactly what and how she will learn through experience is never discussed, neither is the possibility that effective learning may not take place at all. According to the *practice makes perfect* storyline, it is

assumed that learning will definitely follow practice, if somewhat intuitively. Despite Grace's optimism, faith in her CT's and FI's assurances, and laudable work ethic, I find myself worrying about how she will eventually learn to plan and teach texts to high school students.

Overarching Storyline 5: Natural Teaching Personality

The belief that good teachers naturally possess a “teaching personality” is another shared assumption observed in this study, particularly among the FIs. Although they use the term frequently, FIs do not define its meaning explicitly. However, they seem to use the term to refer to those who possess the following qualities: one who can engage students effectively; one who is dramatic in the classroom and can capture the students' attention; one who cares about and respects the students, and one who has a passion and drive for teaching.

According to the triad members in this study, good teachers possess these qualities innately and hence, demonstrate them “naturally.” As one member (FI-Nina) puts it, “you either have it [a teaching personality] or you don't.” Given such an assumption, student teaching is perceived to be a time for STs to discover whether they possess “it” or not. Those who do not demonstrate these qualities either have to develop them through persistent practice (for those who adhere strongly in the *practice makes perfect* storyline), or realize that teaching is not a good career “fit” for them. In any case, FIs put a high premium on these qualities and constantly associate them with a natural teaching personality.

FI-Nina, for example, frequently spoke of her student teachers in terms of whether they have the “natural teaching personality” or not, although not in front of them. On four separate occasions, thrice after she had observed Grace teach and once during her interview, she observed

to me, “I don’t think she has a natural teaching personality.” During one of my interviews with her, she elaborated,

I think Grace still has far to go. She does. She doesn’t have the confidence, she doesn’t. I don’t think she has a natural teaching personality. Edith probably has a little more of it, but then, Christopher! Exactly! He gets into the classroom, he’s so animated, he makes learning so much fun. Humor, drama, the works. You got to love doing it. If you don’t, it’s going to be a chore, for you and the students. I think it’s a bit of a chore for Grace.

According to Nina, STs who have a “natural teaching personality” are confident, animated, makes learning fun through the use of humor and drama, and hence, demonstrate a love for teaching. During her post-lesson conferences, she often commented on the importance of being enthusiastic and dramatic in the classroom and recommended that her STs act so. For instance, she had witnessed Mrs. Cassidy talking to her class animatedly just five minutes before Grace began to teach for her third observation. During the post-observation thereafter, she made it a point to draw Grace’s attention to it:

Did you see what Mrs. Cassidy did? She’s a good example. When you have a chance to watch her, you can see she’s very dramatic, and not everyone is going to be able to be like that. It’s part of her personality. But I think you’re finding your own teaching personality, which is really good.

By “finding your own personality,” Nina meant that Grace was becoming more confident and expressive in the classroom. For Nina, this was an important part of good teaching and she repeatedly encouraged Grace to be more animated and energetic throughout the semester, particularly because she thought Grace was too reserved. In her end-of-term interview with me, she continued to focus on Grace’s lack of a “natural teaching personality” and even expressed surprise that Mrs. Cassidy had written Grace a “glowing” letter of recommendation:

Nina: Did you read Mrs. Cassidy’s letter about Grace? It was glowing. Glowing! Much better than I thought she would have written.

Researcher: How come?

Nina: Because Grace doesn't have the natural teaching personality. She has to develop it.

Researcher: But the students do listen to her, in her own quiet [way

Nina: [I think she going to really develop. She's really into the job stuff, she's going to every job fair, she's really looking hard, she knows she's capable, she just – I think with practice she'll be really good, you know, but she's not as – I just want to push her hair out of her face. I hate – half of the pictures I took I couldn't use because her hair was hanging in her face. But um, I just think in a way she uses that as a little bit of a curtain, because she isn't as open as some people are.

Researcher: You mean shy?

Nina: Uh-huh. She has a little protection from that [shyness].

Nina sometimes takes pictures of her STs while they are teaching so that they may include the photographs in their teaching portfolio, should they prefer. Grace had long bangs that fell across her face at times, but since Nina commented on them during the second observation, Grace was careful to pin her hair up. Despite that and other improvements she had noticed in Grace's teaching, Nina still positioned her as one without "the natural teaching personality." While she acknowledged that Grace was "capable" and will improve and "be really good," "with practice," she was still focused on Grace's "shy" demeanor and compared her with others who were more "open," that is, expressive and dramatic - qualities which Nina associated with good teachers. The fact that Nina continued to talk about her STs in terms of their "natural teaching personality," even at the end of the semester after witnessing how each one had developed, shows how much she valued the idea and how entrenched the storyline was in her beliefs about good teaching.

Just as she connected Mrs. Cassidy's dramatic expressions with her personality and good teaching, so she observed the same with Mr. Yates. During a conversation with me, she noted:

Nina: He's a really good teacher. I can tell.

Researcher: How can you tell?

Nina: He opens the class, and all eyes are on him. He's animated, he's full of energy. He loves what he's doing. He's just a natural.

Researcher: A "natural" as in?

Nina: He's got it all, and his ideas work for him.

Again, Nina seems to define a "good teacher" as one who possesses the ability to be animated and energetic, and one who can capture the students' attention. Also, she automatically assumes that such abilities are innate, and positioned Mr. Yates as "a natural" and "a really good teacher," despite seeing him teach only briefly, for about five minutes.

Ben, the other FI, holds similar notions with regards to "personality" and good teaching. In fact, he often says to his STs, "one of the things I'm always watching for is your personality to come through." Like Nina, he never actually defines "personality" for his STs but would use the term frequently and when he does, he would invariably connect it to passion for the subject area, love for teaching, concern for students, humor, and use of drama. For instance, he would often tell them "drama helps" and "we're doing five shows a day," and "use your personality." Just as he associates all these qualities with good teaching, he also assumes they are innate qualities. Hence, peppered throughout all the transcripts of his post-observation conferences, especially with Andy, are remarks like, "you're a natural" and "you use your personality." This is a typical example of his feedback (to Andy), which not only illustrates his conception of a teaching personality, but also his high regard for it:

Everything you did, you did very well. You gave examples. They were very clear. There's no question about it. You're a natural! Your personality in the classroom is the absolute key to all this. You're dynamic, you're animated, you move around. The group presentations were excellent. You are the reason. Kids will not do what they did today for everybody. If they do not care for their teacher, they'll just sit there and would not move.

It's not the method, part of it is; it's not the subject, part of it is; it's the teacher! And if you can get up there and you perform – yes, we are actors. We do five shows a day! And if you engage them with performance, you can teach them anything!

Ben attributed Andy's success in the classroom to his ability to be dynamic, animated, and dramatic, all of which he thought were demonstrations of his “natural” teaching “personality.” Evident in this excerpt is also his belief that the personality of the teacher is more central to student engagement than the “method” or subject matter – a point that harkens back to the *ivory tower* storyline. After all, he thought the university TEP focused too much on “theories” and “methods” but not on what was more “practical.”

Interestingly, although Ben emphasized “personality” and repeatedly urged his STs to “use” theirs, he found the concept difficult to explain. When I asked him to define what he meant by “personality” during his end-of-term interview, he responded,

Oh geez, I don't know how to answer that. No, no, it's a good question and I should know but, I don't know how you quantify that. I guess it's a person who truly likes other people and who wants to share what they have with others. Umm, and you've got to have enthusiasm and you've got to like what you're doing and like who you're with. If you don't like kids, you're in the wrong job – period. You've really got to enjoy what kids, middle school or high school, do. And their little quiriness and their fun. You have to enjoy that. You've got to enjoy their odd ball sense of humor and enjoy the fact that they can be terrible smart alecks, but they just having fun. And they do that. They joke and they horse around, you've just got to love that because if you don't, you're in the wrong business. And you've got to see their enthusiasm and you've got to be enthusiastic about the subject matter that you teach. And that's another thing too. If you don't think that English, and all its facets, are pretty cool, then why are you teaching it? Yeah...you have to be passionate about it... If you don't really like what you do, get out, leave, go, run, fly away! ...

In addition to the love for students, subject matter, and teaching, Ben also associates “personality” with the ability to connect with people, particularly the students. Hence, he describes his objective as so:

... That's what I want to get these kids [his STs] to do. I want them to be able to use their personality. I was telling them the other day, “You've got friends, right? People like you, right? How did that happen? Just be you! I mean, really, that's how it happens.

Apparently, Ben's conception of "personality" also includes relational skills. He likens one's ability to maintain friendships to making connections with students in the classroom – a process that connotes both ease and sincerity.

Yet, despite the apparent ease of the "just be you" recommendation, Ben, like Nina, believes that not everyone possesses the teaching personality. He explains during one interview:

Not everybody has it [teaching personality]. Because there's just some people who don't have that that empathy, that ability to, to, you know, back off and laugh at themselves a little bit, you know. They're, they're too uptight and they just can't do it. And, and that's another thing too. You better be able to laugh at yourself because, oh my, you'll need it!

When I asked if his current group of STs have "it," he began to compare them, one at a time, according to how much "personality" he thought they each possessed:

I think they all have it, and I think that Andy has it the best. Erin has it too, she's right up there. Susan is learning how to do it, and Karen is learning and Neil needs to let it go! Coz he's just a little too uptight at times. Once he's able to let things go, cause I've seen him one on one and in small groups. He knows how to do this; he just needs to bring that to a bigger stage.

Ben's conception of a teaching personality is that one can possess it but at different levels of mastery. He thought Andy and Erin had it "the best" whereas Susan and Karen were still learning "how" to develop the qualities that would enable them to teach well. Surprisingly, Ben thought Neil possessed "it" too but was "too uptight" to be able to connect with his students. During his lesson observations, he had seen Neil, who was fraught with anxiety over his problematic lesson plans, being too authoritarian with some students and not building rapport with his classes. Because Ben had seen Neil relating well with individual or small groups of students before, he deduced that the latter had the necessary relational skills (as aspect of "personality") but only needed to "let go," and "just be" himself, in order to be a more successful teacher.

Evidently, Ben, like Nina, interprets and even assesses his STs' abilities in terms of how much teaching personality they each had, or how well they could exercise it. Those who do well are deemed to have an innate "teaching personality" and need only to be encouraged to "tap" into "it." Those who are less engaging in the classroom are thought to have less "personality" or none at all, or they just needed to learn to develop certain aspects of it (like Neil). In any case, the *natural teaching personality* storyline appears to provide a useful frame of reference, if not assessment, for the FIs in their practice.

Most of the CTs in this study were not observed to employ the *natural teaching personality* storyline as much as the FIs, but that could partly be due to limited data collected on their work since they were not the main focus of this study. However, the data do show that CTs ascribe certain qualities to "personality" and expect them to be present in teachers, which is similar to the FI's assumptions. For example, Mr. Yates expected a teacher to be dynamic and dramatic in the classroom in order to engage the students. He complained that Edith's "personality" was "not dramatic enough," causing some students to fall asleep in her classes initially. He explained his views as such:

As a teacher, you got to be excited about it [subject] to sell it to a ninth grade class and she's got some excitement issues. She's not very excitable...It's a European mentality, just more stoic in the classroom, more get down to business. And a very adult, mature presence."

Interestingly, when I asked if he thought Edith could change to become "more dramatic," he confidently stated, "No, no, she'll grow...cause it's just little adjustments along the way." When I asked how she would learn, he stated, as a matter of fact, "just the realization of when she runs her own show, and things have to change and 'I have to start doing this'." Apparently, Mr. Yates believes that encountering practical demands in classroom practice will eventually cause Grace to become more "dynamic" and engaging, even if it is not in her personality to be so for now.

Nonetheless, dynamism is a necessary quality for teachers if they want to be successful in the classroom.

While Mr. Yates thinks practice can override some personality traits, Mrs. Cassidy and Mr. Scott believe that some personality traits necessary for good teaching cannot be taught. For example, when commenting on Grace's "strengths" during a three way meeting, Mrs. Cassidy revealed:

But the strength I'm most pleased with is her ability to not only take my criticism, but being able to criticize herself, and see what needs to be changed and change it within the same day. I think that's a skill you can't teach because its something you have to have in your personality to be able to say, "ooh, that wasn't very good, let me fix it" and actually fix it.

To me, Rachel's "strength" sounded like a professional habit of mind instilled by the TEP's focus on reflexive practice. However, to Mrs. Cassidy, it was a personality feature that one cannot "teach."

Mr. Scott, too, held a similar belief about passion and "drive." During my interview, he explained his stance on the nature versus nurture debate and where he thought his ST, Andy, stood:

Mr. Scott: Andy, I believe, was my best student teacher I've had. I've had a few over the years but he's been the best by far. I had two that were pretty good, another that was pretty good, and one I thought was mediocre, not awful, but mediocre.

Researcher: Do you think it's a matter of talent? Like nature versus nurture when it comes to who makes a good teacher?

Mr. Scott: That's an excellent question. Um, I think if I have to go on one side or the other, and as a parent it's starting to feel this way too, is that there's more nature than nurture. I think Andy is just a kid who is driven and passionate about what he does. The one student teacher that I thought was not great, he was a personable guy. He was a great guy but he was not driven. He was not passionate. He was lazy, basically. And that was hard to manage. You [referring to himself] can't teach. You know, you can't encourage someone not to be lazy if their heart's not in it, if they are just sort of

making time. And again, he was personable and the kids liked him, but he just wasn't driven...Andy was a fast learner. He was a self-modifier. He was very reflective of his own stuff.

Mr. Scott not only associated qualities like passion and drive with good teachers, he also thought those qualities were innate and immutable because "you can't encourage someone not to be lazy if their heart's not in it." Like the FIs, he too thought about relational skills as part of the "nature" of good teachers and reflected on how "personable" and likable his previous ST was, although he was "lazy." Like Mrs. Cassidy, he appreciated Andy's adaptability, and his willingness and ability to reflect on his own teaching. He saw these traits as part of Andy's "nature," rather than what the TEP encouraged.

It appears that FIs and CTs vary in their conceptions about which innate qualities, associated with a teaching personality, are immutable depending on whether they think change is possible, whether by their influence or by the influence of extended practice.

The STs in this study may not talk specifically about a "natural teaching personality" but many entered the program thinking they already "naturally" possessed the ability to teach. With the exception of Grace, who confessed to an initial uncertainty about the choice of a major, all three of the other STs felt they chose teaching because it came "naturally" to them. During their interviews, they shared the following reasons for choosing teaching as a career:

The reason I want to be a teacher is because I know how to do that. I thought I know how to teach.

(Edith)

I feel like I've always been on the path to being a teacher, since I was very young. I used to play with action figures, little toys, and um, turned one of them into a teacher, the rest into a class... I actually taught lessons to action figures, taught solar cartography, sci-fi, and astronomy... The semesters of pre-student teaching, it's the learning to use what I've naturally been prepared to do.

(Neil)

We got a teaching family...I always feel I'm a natural for it [teaching].
(Andy)

The belief that teaching comes naturally for them had profound effects on how they each handled the student teaching experience, especially when they realized teaching was not as easy as they had presumed. Edith, for example, decided on a *studenting* strategy in order to clear the semester successfully. During my interview, she confessed:

I'm not a very humble person. I went into student teaching knowing that I could do it, and knowing that I was capable of being a teacher, so my approach was, in order to work well with Mr. Yates, I have to meet my deadlines, follow the requirements.

Yet, despite her confident claims of teaching and subject matter knowledge, she also complained about not receiving enough "guidance" from her CT and how-tos from the TEP. Several times during her interview, she repeated these grievances: "no one taught me how to grade" and "no one taught me how to write homework assignments!" Clearly, she found these areas challenging. Ultimately, her coping strategy was to hide her weakness from whom she thought would be evaluating her – FI-Nina. She admitted to this during her end-of-term interview:

I feel like you guys [Nina and researcher] didn't see all my weaknesses because I knew what those weaknesses were, and I was very good at covering them up while you were in the classroom.

My conversation later with her CT, Mr. Yates, revealed at least one area of the "weaknesses" she hid from her FI and me– she did not feel capable of teaching a second class and convinced her CT to take away that responsibility. I uncovered this "arrangement" during my interview with Mr. Yates after the semester ended:

Researcher: The university suggested two preps for the semester but you couldn't abide by that?

Mr. Yates: We couldn't abide by that. She was not capable of doing that. She wasn't capable of running two classes because she – it was everything she could do to keep up with the one. She was never to a point where she could have – I tried to move it in. But she didn't feel capable with the AP class because of their intellectual level.

Researcher: She articulated that?

Mr. Yates: Yes. And their age intimidated her too. But it's very different coming into – You can't walk in as a twenty-two year-old to an AP class in this school, with these kids...well read, very intelligent, so it would be, um, very intimidating for her.

Researcher: Unless she was strong in her content area?

Mr. Yates: If she were then maybe she would have been okay. She would have been eager and energized for that.

Mr. Yates' revelations were a stark contrast to what Grace had told Nina and me. She had claimed that Mr. Yates did not want to give up his AP class, allowing Nina to conclude that he was "controlling." Her admittance of intimidation to Mr. Yates also contradicted her boast to me, during her end-of-term interview, about her subject area expertise, of which she had confidently professed,

I'm an expert in both my fields. I'm fluent in [a foreign language], I've studied linguistics, I've done composition, I've studied all sorts of literature, critical theory, literary theory, um, I've done everything in literature and language.

Granted, Edith might have manipulated the situation to suit her agenda to make time for her out-of-school activities (at the Foreign Language House, for example) but given her complaints about not getting enough guidance from her CT and "how-to" methods from the TEP, her confession to hiding "weaknesses," and her rather similar lesson plan strategies for all four observations, one can see that she did encounter difficulties with teaching and took pains to navigate around that. Apparently, teaching was not as easy as she had anticipated and she coped by employing "studenting" strategies that would allow her to clear the program smoothly and successfully.

For student teachers expecting teaching to come "naturally," the actual difficulties they encounter in the classroom can be quite jarring. Like Edith, Neil chose to hide his "weaknesses"

although they crept up on him at the end, culminating in the two problematic lessons which FI-Ben observed in the last week of term. The devastation he felt when he realized that teaching did not come naturally or easily to him was apparent during his end-of-term interview when he repeatedly uttered, “I just don’t know why I’m not able to get the kids excited” and “I wish I could figure out a way to get them excited, get them thinking,” sometimes tearfully. At one point, he elaborated:

I think a great teacher is able to look at an idea and just be able to say, I can do this and this and this with my students, and here’s the way I can spin it. I don’t anticipate that being a new teacher that I would have that ability instantly but I just don’t feel like, I’m able – I just don’t know why I’m not able to get the kids excited.

For Neil, teaching proved much more difficult than he had anticipated. If he had wanted to be a teacher because he thought it came naturally to him, the actual challenges he encountered in a real classroom must be hard to comprehend, if not disturbing. His genuine bewilderment at the end shows that he neither anticipated nor understood the complexities of teaching, despite the extended practice of a full semester. It also shows that he still thought effective teaching ought to be easy for “great teachers.” Perhaps this explains why, in the end, he decided not to pursue a teaching certificate any more. According to the *natural teaching personality* storyline he subscribed to, if teaching did not come naturally to him, it must be because he was not meant to be a teacher.

Out of the four STs in this study, Andy was the only one who consistently exhibited competence in the classroom. He worked hard to be well prepared, planned his lessons thoughtfully, eagerly sought feedback, incorporated suggestions, and cared deeply about helping his students learn. Interestingly, when I asked if he actually applied anything he learned from the TEP courses, he said, “I didn’t use any of them.” He attributed his success instead to “instincts,” “intuition,” “common sense,” and practical tips from his FI and CT, whom he said were

“excellent to model after” When I asked if he used anything he learned from his practicum experience (when STs regularly observed an experienced teacher’s classroom and helped facilitate small group activities as an induction to teaching), he responded as such:

Andy: It was a twice a week, fly-on-the-wall experience. I took matters into my own hands.

Researcher: How did you do that?

Andy: I taught summer camp at [a Big Ten university] for kids who needed college credit. I taught a class on the history of *Rock and Roll*... Best experience of my life! I was nervous at first, felt that way for about three days, but I was in it every day, no matter what, and it was a job. I got paid for it, and I got over it like that (snaps his fingers). And it became empowering for student teaching.

Researcher: Sounds like you had two student teaching experiences.

Andy: I did, except one was not monitored by the School of Ed.

Researcher: Did you apply anything you learned from the courses at the School of Ed to your summer camp stint?

Andy: No, no. To be honest, I used my instincts and intuition about teaching. Also, considering that I’m still a student, so I can still relate to them, and I didn’t have a problem. Never had one.

Researcher: Let’s deconstruct those “instincts”?

Andy: I have three readings I can give [my class, for example]. I don’t need a literacy class to tell me what’s too difficult for an “X”-level stage students for reading. So I chose one and they did fine. I did not need a class on- this could be personal to me- I didn’t need a class on teaching in diverse environment to understand I have kids from seven different countries in one of my classes and two of them did not speak English and they had translators. It wasn’t like- I didn’t need a class to – these classes were long huge burdensome extensions of common sense. I didn’t use any of them.

On more than one occasion, Andy expressed that he was glad that teaching came “naturally” to him. What I had witnessed was that he was attentive to student learning, was very open to criticism, was hungry for feedback, and was generally reflective about his practice. Even his CT noted that he was “a self-modifier” and that “he was very reflective of his own stuff.”

However, like some of the other triad members, Andy felt that his success was more a product of “nature” and “intuition” than engagement in specific professional habits. A result of this belief, shared by both his FI and CT, was that praise about Andy’s teaching flowed freely and so did suggestions for improvement but there was little inquiry about why things worked. There was little reflection on certain aspects of his teaching, especially in the areas that were not immediately problematic. For example, when I asked Andy why he thought his students were engaged in a particular task, he would often shrug, admit he did not know but was glad they responded, and explain that the idea just came to him naturally. One time, I broke down for him the steps he had intuitively taken – gathering knowledge about his students, establishing good rapport with them, selecting material that catered to their interests, and setting clear expectations – and asked if he remembered these points from previous courses. He admitted he never made the connection since he did not remember much from the courses. I asked if his CT or FI ever asked him to take apart the thinking process behind his decisions for ideas that worked; he shook his head. Disappointingly, my observation of their interactions confirmed this view. I wonder about the effects of such mentoring experiences on Andy’s development as a teacher and on his practice should he decide to become a CT or FI in the future. Would he be able to take apart and critically reflect on his own teaching moves and those of his student teachers? Or would he subscribe to the “natural teaching personality” storyline that both he and his CT and FI never challenged?

The tendency to interpret good professional habits of mind or practice within the “natural teaching personality” storyline is observed in many participants of this study. When members attribute certain qualities to “nature” or “intuition,” they tend to not see the need to pursue further inquiry into practices they assume are mere manifestations of innate abilities.

Focused Question 3: How do these interpretations influence field instructor practice?

In the previous sections, I described the five main storylines that were observed to dominate triad members' interpretations of program elements and their interactions with one another. Exactly how these interpretations influence field instructor practice will be explored in this section, one case at a time.

Case A: FI-Ben

Ben joined the university teacher education program as a field instructor in secondary English two years before this study was conducted, just after he retired from teaching high school. As a thirty-six year veteran teacher, he had previously participated as a subject in a research study conducted by a member of the university who wanted to examine his work as a classroom teacher. He had also been invited to participate in an English methods class (for a semester prior to his work as a field instructor) during which he contributed his perspectives as a practitioner and was exposed to the content of that class. Ben is also a proud alumnus of the university and feels as passionately about being a teacher as he does a university field instructor. He explains his dedication in one of our conversations this way:

Ben: A good friend who passed away recently, I regard him as one of my mentors. He was a teacher and a principal. We always talked about teaching. He told me years ago, twenty years ago, one day, "you have a responsibility to the profession to pass it on. You are a good teacher, and you pass that on to another." And I never forgot that. I always felt the obligation. I felt obligated to the profession to continue it... I've had a lot of good mentors, I've got to tell you. A lot of them!

Researcher: So you then become a mentor?

Ben: Well, that's what I'm trying to do...

Researcher: Passing on the torch?

Ben: Yeah. There's no other way to do it. I'm going to make some good teachers before I retire.

This commitment to help others become successful teachers is evident throughout the semester in his practice as a field instructor. He speaks about teaching and his students with a passion and takes great delight in working with his student teachers. He looks forward to seminars and observations and is very generous with his advice, stories, and time whenever his STs ask for them. He explained that he is determined to develop a good relationship with each one of them because “that is how you get things done” and “cause buy-in by everybody.” He reasons: “It’s all about building relationships... I look back at all my teachers who were influential and I remember every one of them had a relationship with students.” Ben credits his teaching success to having developed good relationships with his students whom he said were able to appreciate even “blunt” feedback when they understood his care for them. (Indeed, Ben was always meeting up with his ex-students during the semester, some of whom were enrolled in the university, some were working in town, and some from thirty years ago.)

More than just a strategy, Ben’s care for his STs is heartfelt and genuine. He agonizes over their struggles, eagerly shares with them strategies that worked for him, and tries hard to encourage them. He constantly repeats to me, “someone needs to show them how” or “nobody showed them how,” blames the TEP for not teaching them the “more practical stuff,” and tries to meet STs’ needs like providing handouts on topics they have identified as areas of need, arranging for an ex-ST to present a session on job search skills, and organizing a seminar with Special Education teachers (ex-colleagues) at the school where he had taught, which the university did not require. His STs appreciate his personable and kind approach, recognize his genuine care for them, and credit him for their learning. When I asked them about the role of

Ben in their lives during student teaching, their grateful responses ranged from, “He’s great!” to “Incredibly helpful!” to “I wouldn’t have made it this far if not for [Ben].”

However, despite Ben’s dedication, diligence, and noble intentions, his practice was heavily influenced by the five storylines uncovered in this study. Ironically, these tacit beliefs and assumptions, frequently shared by other triad members, were observed to produce unintended consequences, many of which actually hindered what Ben wanted to promote: ST learning.

Influence of the Ivory Tower Storyline on Ben’s Practice

As previously discussed, Ben’s interpretation of university paperwork and requirements is heavily influenced by the *ivory tower* storyline, which positions the university as an elite academic institution that is largely out of touch with the practical realities of the classroom. Although he is proud to be an alumnus and likes to remind his STs that there are in a “fine institution,” his interpretation of university paperwork and requirements reflect the caution of a practitioner who must guard against the unnecessary and the impractical, both of which he believes to be tendencies of an ivory tower. In other words, he is attentive to what the TEP requires but selectively implements only that which he deems meaningful.

This arbitrary interpretation of university elements is especially evident in the way he handles the Unit Plan Project (UPP), the main assignment of the student teaching semester. The TEP expects student teachers to prepare and execute a full unit in their CTs’ classrooms, document their lesson plans, reflections, adjustments, and analyses of student assessments, and

submit all these material in a folder at the end of term (see Appendix G for details). Essentially, the UPP consists of three major components, or steps:

- 1) **Teaching Plan:** a formal, typed, fully detailed unit plan, of approximately 2-5 weeks, enacted during the “lead teaching” portion of the student teaching experience
 - 2) **Annotations:** handwritten comments and reflections written on a daily basis within the teaching plan
 - 3) **Analysis of Students’ Work:** a study of students’ final products resulting from the unit plan, including a close reading of three representative products, reflective writing, and an end-of-term conversation with the field instructor
- (Student Teaching Handbook, p. 23)

According to the TEP guidelines, an ST must consult with the CT and FI through the process of preparation and enactment of the unit plan. The student teaching handbook spells out the TEP expectations and steps as such:

To begin the project, the cooperating teacher and student teacher identify 2-4 focal students to help the student teacher ground her or his planning in a flexible and developing sense of the strengths, needs, and interests of the actual learners in her or his care. Focal students should be chosen with respect to racial, socio-economic, gender, and academic diversity.

The student teacher and cooperating teacher should identify the topic or area for study, using state and district curriculum guidelines as appropriate, as well as the knowledge and experience of the cooperating teacher. Over the course of the initial weeks, the student teacher should utilize time when not actively engaged in instruction to investigate resources, develop unit purposes, goals and daily objectives, and identify ways of assessing student learning, all the while using the sample group of focal students as a reference for the range of learners in the classroom.

Significant guidance for the Unit Plan Project will be provided in the student teaching seminar, and no later than the seventh week, a draft of the complete plan will be shared with the CT, as well as with the field instructor and fellow student teachers. This will happen prior to the enactment of the plan and in time for revision.

All three participants should be mindful of the opportunity the Unit Plan provides to both plan instruction for, and reflect upon, a particular subject matter area and therefore should construct the student teacher’s teaching responsibilities in such a way as to allow her or him to fully engage in this project by scheduling implementation with ample time for completion before the end of the term.

(Student Teaching Handbook, p. 22)

Essentially, the FI is expected to oversee the completion of each step, from focal student selection, to submission and revision of teaching plan draft, to the successful fulfillment of all three components of the UPP. FIs are advised by the program coordinator to structure deadlines to ensure the completion of each step and provide “significant guidance” during the weekly seminars (a two-hour meeting conducted by the FI for his or her group of STs). While FIs appear to adopt such procedures and deadlines in their seminar syllabus, the actual implementation is likely to vary according to their interpretation of such program requirements, as premised and observed in this study.

Although Ben acknowledged the usefulness of such an assignment, he did not implement all the steps faithfully. Rather, he only required that his STs prepare and execute a plan, with the permission of the CT, and submit a folder capturing all their work. Preferring to base these simplified requirements on practical needs and trust, he never once went through the handbook with his STs, even though details of the required steps are laid out in six pages there. He emphasized care and quality but when it came to the details like submitting focal student write-ups or an analysis of student work (according to the steps spelled out in the handbook) or even the final reflective write-up, Ben did not require his STs to comply, much to their relief. As for deadlines, Ben chose to be very flexible. Recognizing that each classroom had its own unique schedule and CT preference, he accommodated for the variations by allowing his STs to decide when they would submit the draft of their plan. In fact, he left it up to their discretion to consult him for their plans and did not stipulate the submission of their drafts, although he encouraged them to do so. Ben had a good rapport with his STs and believed they all wanted to be successful teachers and only asked that they keep a journal of their reflections (which he viewed and responded to with friendly remarks that communicated empathy and encouragement) and submit

a completed unit plan at the end of the term. He preferred to “touch base” with them informally and was very generous with his time and ideas when they sought him out. In truth, many of the STs did, repeatedly, for they found his contributions very helpful. As the end of the term drew close, he would remind them more often of the need to give him the paperwork and assignments, and repeatedly print an appeal on the seminar agendas, like this one:

Gentle Reminder #3!!! I must give you a grade in seminar! It should be easy to give you an A... IF you have handed everything in and been diligent! This includes: field notes from your placement, all pre-observation memos and lesson plans, making progress on the UPP's and portfolio, final UPP and portfolio. If I don't have all that stuff, how can I honestly give you an A??

Having seen them work so hard throughout the semester, he promised to give them all an A for the seminar grade as long as they handed in what they were supposed to.

Ben articulated his rationale for interpreting the UPP requirement this way during one of my interviews towards the end of term, when I asked him point blank about it:

Researcher: What do you think about the UPP?

Ben: I really think it's a good idea.

Researcher: What about the different parts of it, like the focal students write-up, the plans, the draft, the assessment analysis steps =

Ben: = I can't do that. I can't function like that, I'm sorry. And I can't spend my seminar doing that. Because there're bigger issues. There's bigger fish to fry. These kids are learning how to teach. There're issues, and they need to learn that first. They're quite capable of putting together a unit plan. They've been trained. All they have to do they know how to do. And, it's their professional responsibility! Why do I have to hold their hand to re-do every lesson plan anyway? Give them some ideas and that's it.

Researcher: What about parts two and three, the annotation and assessment analysis part?

Ben: You know what? That's not real world anyway. It's just not the real world! And who's going to see this UPP? Me. Me! They've got to satisfy me, which isn't hard to do. If it's a piece of junk, I'll tell them it's a piece of junk. But I'll guarantee it's not going to be.

- Researcher: When you say you “can’t function” like this, what do you mean?
- Ben: I just can’t – I don’t know what they (the university) expect – it’s not real. Look at Penny (an ST in his group). She could not start doing her unit plan until March because of the trimester (her school functioned on a different schedule). Look at Neil, he got thrown into it before he was even ready. He didn’t even have a chance to turn around one time and all of a sudden he has to do this (Ben makes a gagging sound). It does not make practical sense to me. And as we’ve gone along, they have emailed me, “Ben, Ben,” looking for suggestions. So they’re putting it all together. I’ve seen bits and pieces of all their UPPs. Now, I haven’t sat down like the other field instructors and have little conferences – I can’t do that =
- Researcher: = Why not?
- Ben: I’m busy doing the other things – the bigger fish. They need to learn how to teach. Look at all these issues we’ve tried to discuss. Look at the personal things that have come up. That’s what you need to do.
- Researcher: You’re distinguishing between what you see as important versus university requirements?
- Ben: Yeah. I’m not into the requirement thing.
- Researcher: Does that mean you don’t think the requirements are useful?
- Ben: I think it’s [UPP’s] a useful tool. I think it’s useful to put together a unit ‘cause they’re going to need that. But when I observe, I’m more worried about how they’re interacting with kids and are they doing a dynamic lesson... But the idea of the UPP is very practical. I think it gives them something to build on. It’s wonderful if they can go to an interview and present this. I think it puts something in their cabinet right from the get go. They can go back to it...

In this excerpt, as in his practice, Ben reveals that he was not opposed to the UPP requirement per se. He sees its value in practical terms – the ability to design and implement a unit is an essential teaching skill and both the experience and the product will serve as a useful reference for his STs for years to come. What he adamantly refuses to do is anything he deems impractical or relevant and some of the details of the UPP assignment seem to fall in that category. Ben neither understood nor saw the need for the some of the steps spelled out in the handbook. His suspicion that the university could be guilty of requiring the irrelevant and unrealistic is evident

in his statement: “I don’t know what they expect – it’s not real.” Separating himself from the institution, he defines his work to be more immediate and “real,” as it focused on the actual interactive dynamics of classroom teaching, or as he calls it: “how they’re interacting with kids.”

Determined to do that which is relevant and helpful, Ben chose to use his limited time with the STs to tackle topics they have requested he cover, topics that have arisen from their immediate needs in the field. Such topics ranged from classroom management techniques, to how to use a video instructively, to effective ways to teach writing or poetry, just to name a few. Many of these were knowledge the STs communicated that they desperately needed but could not get from the courses nor their placements. Their complaints, which often invoked the *ivory tower* narrative, and their encouragement, served to inspire Ben to work harder to ensure he met their needs. Often, that meant not following program requirements and their seemingly pedantic details to a tee and for that, his STs were very grateful:

I read through the handbook, the whole thing...it was very intimidating and confusing... The stuff about the UPP, I wondered how I was going to get all the steps done, and teach, and have a life at the same time... I could not be happier with the way Ben handled it.
(Andy, end-of-term interview)

The handbook? This is what I have to say about the handbook. I got the handbook at the beginning of the semester, and the handbook completely went with the other things I got into a pile in my room somewhere. I couldn’t find it... I just couldn’t find it... Ben was very understanding and helpful.
(Neil, end-of-term interview)

Ben handled three-way meetings, much like how he handled the UPP, and for similar reasons. The university expects FIs to conduct three-way meetings with their STs and CTs at least three times during the semester (once at the beginning, once in the middle, once at the end, and more if necessary). These meetings are the main channels by which the program, via the FI, can maintain “an open line of communication between the university and the cooperating school,” “ensure that program expectations are met,” communicate about “required forms and

evaluations,” and problem-solve “issues that may arise during the student teaching experience” (Student Teaching Handbook, p. 8). Mostly, FIs meet with the CTs and STs to discuss ST progress, plans for further development, and paperwork requirements. Ben, however, chose to interpret these requirements loosely.

As discussed previously in the section that dealt with the *ivory tower* storyline, Ben believed in the practical purposes of such regular meetings but did not feel the need to implement them according to university directions. Instead, he saw them more as “guidelines” and thought he could achieve the same objectives via more realistic and less intrusive ways. Driven by practical considerations of his CTs’ busy schedule, Ben preferred to “check in” informally, whenever an opportunity arose in the corridor or in between observations, or whenever a CT seemed willing to chat. He rarely made formal appointments to meet with them and relied on casual, ad hoc invitations instead. He believed that he could tell if there were issues from regular conversations with his STs and from what he observed in the classrooms. Occasionally, he communicated with the CTs by email, especially with regard to paperwork, and always invited them to contact him whenever they like. Mostly, he treated them with professional respect and consideration and they reciprocated. The CTs, much in agreement with Ben, indicated to me that they did not think more meetings were necessary unless something “drastic” happened. Wary of unnecessary ivory tower requirements themselves, they both liked that Ben did not adhere to the meeting schedule “by the book” because there was “no need to.”

Ben’s approach to program elements reflected his desire to help student teachers in their quest to become effective teachers. Positioning himself as one who must guard against ivory tower tendencies for his STs’ sake, he weeded out what he thought did not contribute to their learning and focused, instead, on aspects which he felt were useful. In fact, he went beyond

institutional stipulations at times for areas he deemed beneficial for them. For example, he would meet with his STs for hours to discuss their teaching ideas or problems outside of the regular seminar and meeting times, search out notes and resources for them from his old folders or contacts, and write very detailed post-observation memos that offered many suggestions and encouragement.

This was in contrast to the way he would tackle other program paperwork which he did not think were as useful. For instance, the university had specific assessment forms for the FIs and CTs to document their STs' progress over time. These forms list all the capabilities and dispositions under the "Five Domains of Professional Learning" which the program identified as essential areas for student teacher development. Intended also as a framework for FIs and CTs "as they plan and do their work of guiding, supporting, and evaluating student teachers" (Student Teaching Handbook, p. 3), the forms are to be filled out three times during the semester, to correspond with the three triad meetings, during which they would be used as a guide for discussion. In all the triads I observed, the forms were never used during the meetings as intended by the program, except in the context of paperwork that needed to be completed and submitted. Like the other triad members, Ben completed the forms but admitted to not using them or their content as prescribed, "because they're quite jargon." He elaborates later during an interview:

Oh I think it's very important to give feedback immediately to the students [STs] but I think it should be done in a way that they will understand exactly what they did and done in a way that they can read and make sense of it. Um, if it gets too technical, they're not going to get it. Yeah, there's technical stuff but it's got to be digestible.

Much like his rationale for the UPP, Ben confesses to interpreting the forms according to what he thinks is useful for the STs. The language of the forms, deemed too "jargon," alludes to the obscure language favored by academicians who have a tendency to over-complicate matters – an

aspect of the ivory tower storyline. As a practitioner, he positions himself as one better able to gauge what the STs would find accessible.

Ben's selective interpretation of institutional requirements, heavily influenced by how he positioned himself and the university within the *ivory tower* narrative, might have won approval from his CTs and STs. However, it could also have contributed to some undesirable consequences which were detrimental to ST-growth.

Ben's approach worked out well for a strong candidate like Andy who was also well matched with his CT, but not so for Neil. Despite earning an "A" in his methods class, Neil displayed less competence in his ability to plan for unfamiliar texts. His chronically absent CT, who also appeared to be rather disorganized in his teaching plans and materials, did not offer the structure and close mentoring a candidate like Neil needed. Since Ben did not impose strict deadlines regarding the submission of the UPP draft, Neil's struggles with planning were hidden from view until it was too late to intervene. Week after week, Neil talked about ideas for his UPP but could not provide a coherent plan with specific teaching points. Ben would listen patiently, encourage him to keep working on it, and invite Neil to contact him if he needed his help. While the other STs were more proactive about seeking Ben's help, Neil chose to struggle privately. Ben did not see Neil's teaching plan until the last week of term, when he also observed him teach two of its lessons – poorly. At the end, the program coordinator and Ben decided to offer Neil another semester of student teaching, with a different CT, but Neil was so traumatized by his experience that he decided not to pursue certification anymore.

Reflecting on what I had observed, I found myself wondering about what might have happened if Ben were not under the influence of the ivory tower storyline. Had he insisted on seeing and reviewing Neil's teaching plans earlier, as the program intended, the latter's problems

might have been exposed when there was still time for intervention. Had Ben followed program guidelines for conducting regular three-way meetings and engaged both Neil and his CT to talk about university expectations and plans regarding Neil's learning needs, he might have been able to persuade Mr. Mills to be more supportive. The situation was also compounded by the fact that neither Neil nor Mr. Mills paid much attention to the details of university requirements.

Of course, the flow of events in this particular case was not only influenced by Ben's adherence to one storyline. As in the other cases, the prevalence of the other storylines in all the triad member interpretations interacted to produce consequences which, sometimes, hindered ST-learning. The subsequent paragraphs will explore the influences of these interactions.

Influence of the Studenting Storyline on Ben's Practice

As previously discussed, getting certified as teachers and securing good letters of recommendations were the chief priorities of the student teachers in this study. Positioning the FIs and CTs as evaluators, they worked hard to ensure they leave a good impression on their assessors, even if that would cost them a learning opportunity or if they had to hide the truth. Unfortunately, the FIs and CTs in this study did not appear to be aware of such studenting strategies among their STs, as was the case with Ben. While this did not produce much adverse consequences for a more capable ST like Andy, it was quite different for one who struggled as Neil did.

As discussed in the previous section on the *studenting* storyline, Neil experienced difficulties in his student teaching placement from the get-go. His CT, Mr. Mills, adopted a hands-off approach to mentoring and did not provide Neil with much guidance, structure, plans,

or resources. In addition, he was frequently absent, even on Neil's first day, and expected Neil to launch into teaching, much like his previous STs had done. Unfortunately, Neil lacked the confidence and skills to cope, much less thrive, in such an environment. He also subscribed strongly to a *studenting* storyline that rendered him powerless in such a situation, for he reasoned, "how is it going to assist you to get the grade you need in order to pass if you make any kind of problem for the teacher?" Positioning both his CT and FI as teachers and graders in this storyline, Neil chose to hide most of his problems from Ben while he worked hard to please Mr. Mills. This meant that he graded and "taught" whatever Mr. Mills required of him and tried to manage the confusing situation the best he could. Since Mr. Mills was mostly "unavailable" and too "distracted" (Mr. Mills' own words), he too did not alert FI-Ben of any problems. In fact, he put the onus on Ben to initiate action in such a case, as was revealed during his end-of-term interview, when I asked him to reflect on what he thought might have helped Neil:

If Ben was feeling like there was a concern, and he would bring that back to me, and we closed that circle a little bit earlier, and if there was a little bit more communication... Potentially we could have gotten some help, but I don't know.

Sadly for Neil, Ben did not intervene earlier because he did not know how serious the problem was. This was due, in part, to Neil downplaying or hiding his struggles from Ben deliberately. During weekly seminars when the STs were invited to talk about their experiences in the field, Neil did share about having to grade a lot of papers, a frequently absent CT, and an uncertain syllabus. However, he would be quick to follow up every complaint with the assurance that Mr. Mills and he had plans to work things out. As the term wore on and so did his struggles, he began a tactic of delays and evasion – avoiding Ben's emails or phone calls, delaying deadlines, and postponing FI-observations. When Ben successfully caught up with him, he would apologize, offer assurances, and continue his evasive strategies. Later, during his end-of

term interview, Neil confessed to using those studenting strategies and explained that he did not want to be graded poorly. He admitted that he did not ask Ben to intervene for the same reason:

I definitely did not want to appear not capable...I really wanted to trust him [Ben] as my mentor, but I also saw him as the person who's going to grade me, you know?

Unaware that Neil was employing such strategies, Ben took his explanations at face value and accommodated all adjustments with patience and understanding. He never suspected the latter of hiding such deep problems, until the end of the semester, when it became apparent that Neil could neither plan nor teach adequately. Ben's shock at this revelation was captured in his conversation with me, after Neil's last observation, when he tried to come to terms with what he had witnessed:

I'm frustrated because I think that, that he [Neil] hasn't been given any direction. I feel that I should have done more, but I never heard from him throughout the course of the semester, not really. So I can't help what I don't know. It's very frustrating for me, at this point.

Genuinely disturbed because he cared about Neil's learning, he would have tried to help had he known about Neil's struggles earlier.

If Ben had been more aware of the *studenting* storyline and the studenting strategies that STs might employ just to appear capable in the eyes of their CTs and FIs, perhaps he might have been able to see through Neil's façade or at least been more suspicious about the evasions and intervened sooner. However, Ben's naivety regarding these strategies, combined with his assumptions about the ivory tower, permitted him to interpret Neil's words and actions to mean he merely needed more time and accommodation – an inference which was also fueled by his assumptions about the learning to teach process, as revealed in the other storylines to which he subscribed.

Influence of the Sink or Swim Storyline on Ben's Practice

As described earlier, the FIs and CTs in this study seem to subscribe to the view that one learns to teach via immersion in practice and through trial and error. The CTs and FIs recall learning to teach that way and seem to prescribe the same for their STs. This version of teacher education, which Ben subscribes to, positions the ST as a novice who must pass through the crucible of independent practice in order to develop the necessary knowledge and skills of a professional. Recognizing that this necessary journey can be both risky and stressful, FIs and CTs try to be encouraging and positive as they cheer their STs on. To support ST-learning, they avail opportunities for independent practice, offer advice, and promote perseverance but the burden of success or failure rests mainly on the shoulders of the ST. This approach causes the STs much anxiety, which also inspires them to engage in more studenting strategies, as was the case with Neil.

Although Ben desired to help his STs learn, his conception of support unwittingly perpetuated the *sink or swim* storyline among his STs, especially Neil. For example, Ben ensured that he was approachable and repeatedly encouraged his STs to contact him should they need to talk. When they did, he was very generous with his time and advice, taking care to be very supportive and encouraging. However, his approach presupposed initiative on the part of the ST whom he expected to be “professional,” that is, they possess both the drive and responsibility to seek help when they need it. This is evident in his reaction when he realized that, in the second last week of term, Neil still had not handed in any part of the UPP, despite countless reminders:

I'm going to talk to him about professionalism. It's not professional to not hand in what you're supposed to. It's a learning experience for me too. You can't trust everybody. I just assume that everybody I meet at this level is going to be dedicated.

Ben's conception of "professionalism" was a level of independence and dedication that did not require any "hand holding"; an expectation he communicated to me during an interview when explaining his hands-off approach regarding the UPP:

You [student teachers] learn about teaching goals, lesson planning, you learn about all this stuff in both practicum and methods, and now is the time to show me what you can do. And they're twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three year olds, they're young adults, they need to be treated like professionals. And if I were department chair, which I was, and I give them [teachers] something to do, and I say I want this product by such and such, I don't want to see it, if it's not done properly, they'll know it. If it's done properly, it'll be fine.

In Ben's narrative of how an STs should behave if they were serious about teaching as a career choice, Neil's inability to deliver was interpreted as a dispositional problem, one that reflected a lack of dedication, rather than a lack of adequate knowledge and skills. This was apparent when he confronted the latter about his UPP at his final post-observation meeting:

Ben: I have to ask this: what does your UPP look like?

Neil: It's all about Macbeth.

Ben: Am I going to see it by next week? What do you think of your experience right now? Where do you think you're at in relation to teaching?

Neil: I know I want to teach. But the part that's been horrible is the stress. This sixth hour was probably the worst.

Ben: Do you want to pursue this as a career?

Neil: I think so.

Ben: You need to face that at this point: what is it that I want to do? What do I need to do to be successful at this?

It is interesting that Ben did not pursue the UPP issue any further than when Neil was going to hand it in. He could have checked to see if Neil was experiencing any problems or ask him to verbally explain his conception of the teaching plan since that would revealing of Neil's understanding. Instead, he jumped straight to asking the latter about his career choice,

questioning his seriousness about teaching. When Neil, who was quite disturbed by this point, answered in the affirmative, Ben proceeded to focus on the incongruence between his expressed desire and effort (or the lack thereof), suggesting a lack of certainty towards teaching with the question “what do I want to do?” or a lack of deliberate effort with the question “what do I need to do to be successful at this?” In this excerpt, Ben put the responsibility of being “successful” squarely on his ST’s shoulders, which is in line with his beliefs about independent practice and “professionalism.” Such beliefs about the student teaching process not only perpetuates the *sink or swim* storyline, it also blinds the FI to other possible reasons for an ST’s lack of adequate performance.

Had Ben not subscribed to such assumptions about independent practice and “professionalism,” he might also have interpreted Neil’s complaints and evasions throughout the semester as signs of trouble and cries for help, and intervened appropriately. Instead, he tended to respond to Neil’s sharing with general maxims and words of encouragement, meant primarily to promote perseverance. For example, when Neil complained, yet again, about a lot of grading and an absent CT, Ben would say “it’s good practice,” reminding him that he would need to do this, “and more,” when he becomes a real classroom teacher. Entrenched in his assumptions about learning via independent practice and trial and error, Ben did not notice the potential problems lying behind the persistent complaints – the possibility of exploitation and neglect. Although Neil always tried to assure Ben that he was coping well, his inability to talk about his teaching plans or observation dates with certainty ought to warrant further investigation but Ben, who expected STs to act “professionally” and possess the initiative to seek help when needed,

chose to be patient and accommodating because he thought that would help Neil. So entrenched were these assumptions in his view of student teachers that he was truly shocked and disturbed by Neil's poor performance at the end, confessing to me:

I feel that I should have done more, but I never heard from him throughout the course of the semester, not really. So I can't help what I don't know. It's very frustrating for me, at this point... I feel like I could have helped him through this, but I would have needed to start earlier on. And I assumed because he was at this stage that he would be more focused and driven and know what he's doing, much like the other STs... I'm not seeing the same growth that I've seen in the other STs. Um, I have to say though, the other STs sought out more specific help. They would email me things and say, hey, what does this look like?

I noted that Ben had indeed expected Neil to take the initiative to seek help, much like the other STs. When I asked Ben why thought Neil didn't ask for help, he responded, "I don't know. I think it's just because he's unsure of himself, doesn't know how to ask the question? I don't know. It's a mystery." The fact that Ben's was both shocked and mystified by Neil's poor performance at the end showed how unsuspecting he was of the potential problems that lurked in Neil's talk and behavior throughout the semester. Even when he had witnessed obvious problems, like Mr. Mills disorganized classroom, incoherent plans, and the tendency to disrupt Neil's shaky attempt at teaching by randomly carrying out conversations with the students (after the first observation), Ben chose to adopt a very positive outlook:

I think his [Neil's] CT is a good teacher, but he's got a style that you can't teach anybody else. That's kind of a free form structure, and it's got to be in your personality to handle it. And it's not a good way to teach a beginner at all. I think he's [Neil's] in a rough situation. The physical room he's in is not conducive to good experience... but I think he's going to stick it out. I think he's going to be successful... Today, he was successful in that he was getting responses like he really wanted. You have to really look to see it. He was working hard to get to that point... I can see he has a lot of good ideas.

True to his purpose to be supportive to an ST going through the trials of independent practice, Ben focused on being positive, compassionate, and encouraging in his feedback to Neil after the lesson observation:

... All together, the chemistry of the group, all the disruptions caused by your CT, he takes the show, he means to be in the center of attention, but as things went on, they [the students] were responding properly. They were telling you what you wanted them to tell you. In that respect, it's successful. There's a look about the room, it's not your fault, that detracts from your efforts. And I don't know what you're going to do about that going forward because of the room and the atmosphere your CT has already created...but you can use the space creatively... You'll be fine.

Aware that Neil was feeling discouraged by the circumstances and a lesson that was problematic, Ben carefully focused his attention on the positive, empathized with the difficulties, assured Neil that it was not his fault, and urged him to think constructively about the challenges. Afterwards, in a private conversation with me, Ben confided:

He's [Neil's] going to develop it [teaching skills]. It's not the end of the world. The good news is he's facing all this, the bad news is he's facing all this. He's going to have to come through a baptism of fire. There's no question.

The mix of realism and optimism in this observation reflects Ben's belief in the value of independent practice, even under challenging circumstances, because of the learning it affords. Seeing the problems and knowing about the CT's hands-off approach did not seem raise the alarm for Ben to intervene beyond encouraging Neil to get creative and persevere. In fact, Ben interpreted the trying circumstances to be potentially valuable for Neil's learning and chose to be positive and hopeful. He continued to maintain a hopeful and compassionate approach throughout the semester, even when Neil repeatedly delayed committing to a third observation weeks past mid-term. I reminded Ben several times that time was running out but he would say, "it'll be all right" and patiently approached Neil again, choosing to "trust" that Neil would meet "professional" expectations. This was why both the third and fourth observation occurred on the same day, in the second last week of the semester. Under Ben's assumptions of how novices learn to teach, a FI's role is to be encouraging, comforting, and hopeful while an ST goes through the "baptism of fire." It is no wonder that STs feel like they are in a *sink or swim* model

of learning. Interestingly, when I asked Neil at his end-of-term interview to explain why he chose to suffer through the semester without seeking more help, he invoked a metaphor similar to Ben's "baptism of fire" when he said, "The trial by fire thing was going through my head the whole time."

The *sink or swim* storyline might not dramatically affect more confident and capable STs like Andy who can manage more independently. Neil, however, clearly was one who needed more structure and support, something neither his FI nor CT could provide because they both subscribed to learning by independent practice and trial and error. This was, after all, how they had learned to teach. Their hand-off approach, combined with Neil's own studenting fears, drove him deeper and deeper into isolation and despair as the term wore on. More confident STs like Andy were able to seek help aggressively but Neil strongly adhered to the *sink or swim* narrative and was entrapped in the notion that he had to "make it work" or "drop out of the program." The UPP deadlines and the three-way meetings required by the university might have afforded useful avenues to expose such problems before it was too late but Ben did not employ them due to his ivory tower assumptions. Ironically, some of Ben's efforts to help his ST contributed to the latter's problems, largely because of the underlying assumptions of the storylines that drove triad member interpretations and interactions.

Influence of the Practice Makes Perfect Storyline on Ben's Practice

Another storyline that heavily influenced Ben's practice is belief that extended and repeated practice over time will ultimately lead to improvement and mastery. As elaborated earlier, the CTs and FIs recalled learning to teach via independent practice, mostly through a trial

and error process of imitation and intuition. Hence, they assume this is how one learns to teach and recommend the same for their STs. Recognizing that it is likely to be a stressful and uncertain process of discovery learning, FIs and CTs try to be compassionate and urge endurance. After all, they presume that STs will improve, if they persevere over time to acquire enough experience. The problem with these assumptions is that more practice, or the lack thereof, can become all too easy an answer to, and an explanation for, the problems STs encounter or exhibit during the semester. As the cases in this study reveal, adhering to the assumptions behind the practice makes perfect storyline tends to limit a FI's ability to help STs develop the professional habits of mind for effective teaching.

Like the other CTs and FI in this study, Ben attested to learning to teach on the job via a mix of imitation and trial and error:

A really neat thing happened to me at Crestfield [where he last taught]. My off hour, I was able to sit in an office, between two classrooms, and I could hear two different people teaching. They just happened to be the best people, so I listened and listened. And I really tried to mimic their style, listen to how they asked questions, and just different techniques that they did, and I just did it. And even when I was in Jefferson [his first teaching job], when I first started, I watched, I watched how other people taught, I did what they did, try it out, and when I found stuff that worked, I continued. If I didn't, I stopped. Just kept doing that. Yeah, there's no other way to do it.

Ben so believed in the practical value of learning to teach this way that he often described the process to his STs during their interaction, usually as a way to assure and encourage them. In response to Neil's query about managing disruptive students at a weekly seminar for example, Ben advised:

. . . you have to feel comfortable enough to put people out or to have consequences for them. Kids, they're going to refuse to listen. Well, you're going to refuse to put up with them. Talk to them after class. See if that works, but if it doesn't, go to the next step. It's kind of an interesting balancing act in the beginning because you're trying to be aware of what you're teaching in your lesson and have to be aware of everybody else. After a while, you get really good at this, because you just do (he chuckles). I don't know how.

You get super hero or something – teacher talent you just get. You get this amazing awareness.

In this response, which is quite typical of Ben’s practice, he not only offers useful tips but also tries to communicate empathy, understanding, and hope. Often, he takes care to assure his STs of certain improvement “after a while...because you just do,” thereby encouraging them to persevere. Unable to explain why or how improvement follows extended practice, he frequently uses metaphors to communicate that mysterious transformative process. Some examples include “magic,” sports, and “jazz”:

. . . And your confidence is growing. That’s what I really want to see ‘cause the more confident you are, you’re just going to do everything better. . . . It kind of just all go together. I don’t know, it’s magic. It’s magic sometimes, it just is.

(Feedback to Neil, during a post-observation conference)

It’s like being an athlete. . . . you learn the game so well you don’t have to think anymore. You just react.

(During a weekly seminar session and during my interview)

A lot of teaching is confidence. It’s confidence in yourself and your knowledge and everything else. . . . the more you teach something, the more confident you become in it. . . . Then you just get in the zone. . . . it’s like improvisational jazz – just letting it flow.

(During a weekly seminar session)

Alternatively, he would tell his STs to “just roll with it,” or “you learn to adjust,” or “just persevere.” While such expressions may sound positive and promising, they do not break down the specific steps STs need to take to improve their practice. When CTs also adopt the same storyline and urge more practice without providing actionable specifics, STs who need more guidance are left to flounder. For example, Neil, whose CT promised improvement with “more experience” as well, experienced increasing anxiety which fed into his studenting fears; he ended up never quite knowing how to gain the “confidence” that was prescribed. Not surprisingly, he performed poorly during his last two observations, leading Ben to conclude to me afterwards:

He [Neil] appears to be very unsure of himself as far as what he’s teaching. . . . he lacks confidence. . . . I didn’t see where he was taking them [students]. . . . I don’t know, he’s

not endearing, he's displaying the truest lack of confidence and they [students] pick up on it.

Sadly, Neil continued to be mystified by his own lack of success, admitting to me during his end-of-term interview:

I don't know why I'm not able to get the kids excited. . . . I'm not sure how to plan it [a lesson] so that people do get excited about it.

Looking back, I could not help but wonder if Neil's fate might have been different if both his FI and CT (or at least one of them) did not subscribe to the *practice makes perfect* storyline or the *sink and swim* model of student teaching.

Although Andy, the other ST, finished successfully and displayed much skill in his teaching generally, he too might have benefitted from more specific guidance in certain challenging areas, like how to manage a very difficult seventh hour class. When he sought help from Ben regarding this, the latter empathized with his situation, offered a few suggestions, but mostly urged perseverance:

Andy: I don't know what to do with them. I can tell them twenty different times to raise their hands or to not shout out. . . . I do not know how to restore order and neither does Mr. Scott.

Ben: Well, what I would do is, I would just jump on those noisy ones with both feet, and a lot of righteous anger would spew forth. I don't recommend that. That's not the best way to do it. But for me it was effective. But then again, you and Mr. Scott have to decide on a strategy. . . . I don't know. Unless you can get a couple of kids removed, you might have to plan a strategy with the administrator too, if you can get an administrator to be sympathetic.

Andy: This is what concerns me. He [Mr. Scott] has told me that, after twenty-some years of teaching, this is the worst he's had in his life.

Ben: You end up with classes like that. It's not like that all the time. There are kids who just decided that "we don't have to care."

Andy: It's hard for me to decide how to discipline them. If I send them to detention, they'll have twelve of them there.

Ben: Sometimes they want you to throw them out. . . . You just have to soldier on. Try not to be as fun. Tell the kids “you do not have the right to disrupt.” It’s just a matter of getting used to it. You’re going to get a mix [of students]... You learn to roll with that. You learn to adjust.

While there is much wisdom and value in Ben’s words, he seems more attentive to being compassionate and encouraging towards the end of the consultation. His advice about “getting used to it” and learning to “roll with that” and “to adjust” may be intended to assure Andy that what he is experiencing is not unusual but they also seem to imply that such teaching problems can be overcome by practice over time. They suggest that solutions, or some kind of resolution, will automatically develop with time and experience, which is congruent with the *practice makes perfect* storyline. This approach may offer some comfort to the ST temporarily, but it does not exploit the opportunity to help him develop the skills and language to explore complexities and develop solutions.

I remember following up on the issue with Andy while waiting for a seminar to begin a week later. Andy was still troubled by the class and confided that his CT had just given up and told him he could take over and do what he liked with them. I offered him a few more suggestions about connecting with students and their interests outside of the classroom and brainstormed with him a variety of options and their caveats. Feeling more empowered, he returned to experiment with a collection of strategies and made every effort to connect with his students individually until he achieved some measure of success towards the end of term. During his end of term interview, he thanked me for my help and said that it was a combination of those suggestions, with Ben’s “righteous anger” tip, that helped him achieve a breakthrough with that class. In this case, Andy seemed to have benefitted from the additional help I offered and I hoped he acquired not only strategies but professional habits of mind from that experience.

Upon reflection, I wondered if Ben might have engaged Andy in a more thorough exploration of the problem and its possible solutions had he not resorted so quickly to the *practice makes perfect* storyline and its assumptions. Considering that he was not aware of these tacit beliefs, he probably could not have exercised a deliberate choice in the matter, despite his wealth of knowledge and strong desire to help Andy.

Influence of the Natural Teaching Personality Storyline on Ben's Practice

In addition to the other storylines, Ben's practice is also significantly influenced by the belief in the existence of a "teaching personality" in all good teachers, who not only possess it innately but are able to use it effectively in the classroom. Hence, student teaching is viewed as a time for novices to either discover and develop their teaching personality, or to realize that teaching is not a suitable career because they do not have "it." Meanwhile, according to Ben, a field instructor is meant to be supportive in this process by being encouraging, providing "positive reinforcement," and helping STs recognize and tap into the strengths "in their personality."

This belief is so central to Ben's practice that he defines the purpose of his supervisory role in its terms:

A lot of it has to do with being able to see the strength in somebody's personality and whether or not they can empathize or connect with students and showing them how to tap into that personality and making those connections so they can effectively transmit ideas about what their subject matter is. And a lot of that has to do with positive reinforcement.

While Ben uses the term often in his practice, he never explicitly defined it for his STs. He would, however, associate it with a passion for teaching, care for the students, an ability to

use humor and drama, and generally, the ability to connect successfully with students. In fact, whenever he sees effective teaching, especially when STs are able to capture and sustain their students' interest, he would attribute it to a demonstration of "personality." The following quotes, collected throughout the semester from his post-observation feedback and seminars, are fairly typical examples of what he has said to his STs regarding "teaching personality":

You're a natural. You use your personality!

I want you to be able to use your personality.

Everything you did, you did very well. You gave examples, they were very clear. There's no question about it. You're a natural! Your personality in the classroom is the absolutely key to all this. You're dynamic, you're animated, you move around. . . .

You are really using your personality to make it real. You vary your voice, you move around, you act a little bit, you're getting them enthusiastic about things. You do what I think is extremely important. All good teachers do that.

I noticed your body language. You're animated, you're enthusiastic, it's just excellent. . . . I would hire you right away. You're a natural at this.

Remember this: There is no activity, or method that is a "magic bullet" and will engage kids automatically. There is no one method or activity that will work for everyone. If there were, we'd all have been doing it forever and teachers' lives would be easy! YOU are the key to success! YOU!!!! Not the methods! You control everything! Use your personality to achieve the goals you want for your class!

When I asked Ben, point blank, to define personality in an interview, he reiterated a similar perspective, putting a premium on care, connection, and enthusiasm:

I guess it's just a person who truly likes other people and who wants to share what they have with others. Umm, and you've got to have enthusiasm and you've got to like what you're doing and like who you're with. If you don't like kids, you're in the wrong job – period.

Ben not only relies on the *natural teaching personality* storyline when explaining and describing good teaching to his STs, he also invokes the storyline when assessing his STs' teaching abilities. STs who are able to demonstrate effective teaching are described as being "a natural" and having the ability to "use" their personality, whereas those who were less successful

are instructed to “use [their] personality more” or to “let it go.” Additionally, STs can be compared in terms of their “personality,” or their mastery level of it, as Ben opines during his end-of-term interview:

I think they all have it, and I think that Andy has it the best. Erin has it too, she’s right up there. Susan is learning how to do it, and Karen is learning and Neil needs to let it go! Coz he’s just a little too uptight at times. Once he’s able to let things go, cause I’ve seen him one on one and in small groups. He knows how to do this; he just needs to bring that to a bigger stage.

As he compares his STs according to how much personality they possess or have developed, he also deduces that Neil is “too uptight” and should “let things go” in order to improve. For example, after his first two observations, Ben did urge Neil to be more “confident,” “animated,” and enthusiastic:

You definitely appear more confident in front of the group. . . . your enthusiasm is good, just crank it up and do a little shtick, and feel more comfortable with that. . . . Be animated; that’s going to engage them more.

However, Neil’s problems were more complicated and could not be easily resolved by mere confidence, animation, or enthusiasm. My observation was that Neil was unfamiliar with the content of what he had to teach. This lack of mastery over the material was compounded by a lack of guidance and resources from an inattentive CT, who also did not provide a structured syllabus for Neil to follow. Instead, he appeared to randomly assign work, made up his mind in the last minute which text to teach, and for the days when he was absent (which were many) surfaced worksheets and activities which he had not prepared Neil for. During his interview, Neil revealed that Mr. Mills would call him the night before to briefly describe the activity or work he was to conduct the following day in his absence. Often, Neil would scramble to make sense of his brief instructions and having done all that was described the next day, found that he completed the activity in fifteen minutes and had to fill up the rest of the hour with either silent reading or read-aloud sessions. These last-minute scrambles were not only unnerving and

disorienting, they also robbed Neil of the time he could have used to study and plan the texts he had to teach. The demands eventually took a toll on his confidence and nerves, which worsened his studenting anxieties and perpetuated his studenting strategies of deception and evasion.

Throughout the semester, Ben tried to help by being positive, understanding, accommodating, and encouraging. However, like his prescription of more independent practice, his urging of Neil to “show your personality,” “let it go,” and be more confident, enthusiastic, and animated did little to help Neil grow professionally. After the semester ended, Neil admitted to me during his interview:

I think a great teacher is able to look at an idea and just be able to say, I can do this and this and this with my students, and here’s the way I can spin it. I don’t anticipate that being a new teacher that I would have that ability instantly but I just don’t feel like, I’m able – I just don’t know why I’m not able to get the kids excited. . . . I’m not sure how to plan it so that people do get excited about it. . . . I wish I could figure out a way to get them excited, to get them thinking.

Despite a full semester of extended independent practice and all of Ben’s dedicated help, it was apparent that Neil still did not understand the complexities of teaching nor how to plan. Since he also expected teaching to come more easily to a good teacher (which is an assumption of the natural teaching personality storyline), he concluded in the end that teaching was not a good career fit for him.

Compared to Neil, Andy demonstrated more competence in the classroom; he planned well and could engage his students in learning. Both his CT and FI were forthcoming with praises, which although well-deserved, rang of the *natural teaching personality* storyline. For example, Mr. Scott regarded Andy as “a natural” and urged him to “follow his instincts” while comments like the following abound in Ben’s post-observation feedback to Andy:

You’re a natural! You use your personality! You’re showing enthusiasm for what you’re doing; you’re showing enthusiasm for them [the students]! What you’re doing is what I’d

like to see more people do. You're being you! It's you that's interesting! You're acting if you will, but it's engaging them, it's interesting them, they're listening more.

Everything you did, you did very well. You gave examples, they were very clear. There's no question about it. You're a natural! Your personality in the classroom is the absolutely key to all this. You're dynamic, you're animated, you move around. . . .

You dramatize everything, you walk around the room, you use your personality; these are part of the shtick you need to be good at this and you're doing it! You're a natural! You'll hit homerun every day!

While Ben noted, acknowledged, and celebrated Andy's successes in the classroom, he did not lead his ST into a deeper inquiry about why things work, especially when they do. Rather, he tended to credit them to Andy's natural abilities and personality. This quickness to resort to the natural teaching personality storyline to explain what worked in Andy's teaching certainly served to affirm his efforts but it did not promote metacognitive inquiry into his practice. It is no wonder that right to the very end, Andy still could not explain how or why certain parts of his lesson worked beyond the notion that ideas came to him "naturally." During my interviews, he observed,

I used my instinct and intuition about teaching... I always feel I'm a natural for it [teaching]. . . . I feel lucky it [teaching] comes naturally for me.

Andy is an exceptionally hardworking and promising novice who displayed much skill and knowledge. However, he did not appear to acquire the fluency to engage in metacognition about certain aspects of his teaching, especially the parts that were successful. Learning to teach well ought to be a career-long quest and should not be merely dependent on nature, instincts, intuition, or luck. I fear that this dependence on the natural teaching personality storyline, perpetuated by his FI and CT, might hinder the development of professional habits of mind that would serve both him, and his future STs, well.

Case B: FI-Nina

Just as Ben's practice is heavily influenced by the storylines identified in this study, so too was FI-Nina's.

After a "rewarding" thirty-one year career as a high school English teacher, Nina took on the job of a field instructor after retirement, when she realized she "needed something more to challenge [her] intellectually." At the time of the study, she had been with the program for three years and enjoyed the work tremendously. When I asked her to describe her work during an interview, she passionately began listing the multiple roles she has had to play:

Researcher: If your husband or someone else who doesn't understand field instruction at all come to you and ask you to describe the work that you do, how would you describe it?

Nina: I have answered this question for him and friends! I think of a field instructor almost as a guide. Uh, sometimes as a referee, um, somebody who's - and I look at myself as an advocate for the student teachers, I do! I always use the term I'm a positive re-enforcer, so I will try to help them to become better teachers and there's many facets to how you can do this. Sometimes it takes extra meetings with them. Sometimes it just take a long meeting after class and asking the right questions, and then asking them to ask the right questions. Um, sometimes it's helping them to become more independent, be on their own cause they're afraid. Um, sometimes it means to be actually a liaison with the university and dealing with matters that need to be dealt with, Um, sometimes you're almost like a parent, helping them to do the right thing when they are questioning what the right thing is and they don't know. Um, that type of thing, like one of my students recently moved out of the place she was staying because she was being treated poorly, and I think I pointed out to her that no one should be treated that way. She was staying with somebody in the city of her placement. It was a relative that was just - she used to be treating her as a slave and I said no one should be treated like that, and she told me some examples and I tried to give her some counseling. So, I guess in a way I'm a counselor as well [chuckles].

Her description reveals not only the multi-faceted nature of the practice, but also her dedication to the cause of being "an advocate" for her student teachers. Whether it is being a "guide," a "referee," a "liaison," or even a "parent," she expresses a strong desire to help her student

teachers become “better teachers,” which, in her experience, sometimes includes aspects of their personal life outside of the classroom. This care for the whole person is manifested in the way she lends her time and attention to the STs outside of the stipulated meetings and seminars. Like the other FI, Nina too spend long hours counseling STs when needed. Sometimes, those needs are of a personal nature that may not be directly related to teaching, but will definitely affect the student teaching experience, like an ST’s stressful living condition. The thoughtful and generous way with which she handles each case is as much a testament to her caring nature as it is her commitment to helping them be “better teachers.” As such, many of her STs respond to her “warmth” and maintain close contact with her even after graduation. Some even come to the weekly seminars to share their resumes or job-search experiences when she asks.

Despite her diligence and strong desire to help her STs become better teachers, some of her deeply held assumptions about the university and learning to teach process, uncovered in this study as storylines which not only she but her STs and CTs share, may, in fact, hinder their learning. Like in the case of Ben and his triad members, these narratives were mostly tacit but no less influential in the way they affect field instruction and the student teaching experience. The following sections will present the nature and effects of these storylines in Nina’s practice.

Influence of the Ivory Tower Storyline on Nina’s Practice

While Nina was very careful to follow TEP requirements when it came to paperwork, meetings, and UPP assignments, her interpretation of their use was laced with assumptions based on the ivory tower storyline. Like Ben and the other triad members, she regarded the university

as being out of touch with reality, resistant to change, and not meeting the practical needs of the student teachers.

Over the years, however, Nina seemed to have worked out a way to meet program requirements while still fulfilling her agenda of helping her STs “become better teachers,” as the following excerpt from her interview reveals:

Researcher: What have you learned about being a field instructor over the years? How different is that from teaching?

Nina: Um, it’s different than teaching ‘cause in teaching, you get to decide the curriculum. I’m still going by what the university wants me to do – so I kind of do that. In teaching, you have a lot more autonomy to do what you want to do. Maybe now I do feel more autonomous. At the beginning, remember how many questions I had for you – what I was supposed to do, what I was allowed to do? Now I do a little bit of what I want to do.

Researcher: How come?

Nina: I think I know what they [STs] need a little bit more. Having experienced so many kids [STs], I can sense they need a little bit more in certain areas, so I think I can spend more time on those areas.

Apparent in this revelation is the distinction she makes between “what the university wants [her] to do” and what she wants to do. Her focus on “autonomy” is not only indicative of the tension she experiences between the two seemingly conflicting objectives, but also her impression that the university does not always cater to the best interest of the STs. She makes this clear subsequently in the same interview:

Researcher: What does the university need?

Nina: I think the university needs to listen to some of the people giving feedback. They don’t really listen well.

Nina explained that FIs, CTs, and STs often provide feedback to the program via exit surveys and meetings but little has changed over the years. When I asked what she thought needed to change, she listed views similar to those expressed by other triad members in this study:

Nina: I think classroom management is really lacking. Almost everyone of my student teachers thought maybe there should be another semester to get some of these things we keep hearing is that all we have is three semesters, well maybe they should add a fourth semester. Maybe they should have student teach after four years, I don't think they need five, I think they need one more semester.

Researcher: That'll mean the kids [STs] have to pay more fees=

Nina: = But you know what? How badly do you want these kids to be trained well? I mean they're coming from [this university]! When I get a teacher from [this university], I expect them to be trained well, and I'm not sure that's totally happening. First of all, they don't know how to deal with time management. They don't know how to deal with grading... So I do spend a whole hour on rubrics with them, talking about what works and what doesn't, but that's important... Um, what I think they need is classroom time. . . . I know they spend some- a couple pre-student teaching experiences- but maybe they need to have four or five days, maybe one week of teaching. Let them try it for a week...

Like the other triad members, Nina strongly believes that the university does not meet the practical needs of the STs, especially in the areas of classroom management, time management, and classroom practice. Often, these shared views become points of solidarity among triad members who share them openly with one another during meetings. As previously discussed, members would even latch onto each other's views and reinforce each other's views about the university, which are usually based on the ivory tower storyline. An example is the following excerpt taken from a three-way meeting, during which Nina asked Mr. Yates if he had any feedback for the university:

Mr. Yates: Comments of the program – from my own experience, not that long ago, the way that teacher education programs are run in universities is that they tend to be more theoretical than material or practical. And I really think that needs to change because you set up, um, adults who are entering the profession with so many things that they need to learn that they should have learned earlier on.

Nina: It's true. I do try to make this semester practical and I deal with those types of things but you're right, it should come sooner =

- Mr. Yates: = it's the classes, and what they teach, time management, classroom management, um, changing up lessons, those sort of things. And I know some of the theoretical stuff can support them and help them to know but I don't think it's all that necessary, all of that in a BA program, and so I wrote a comment about that in there too. All the kids that come out of the university have similar problems too=
- Nina: =I know. I agree. It's all very frustrating. Just the other day, they [the university TEP] asked us for ideas and all of us were like, we know you're not going to do anything about them, you know what I mean, after all these years. And I talked to this other field instructor[
- Mr. Yates: [Us, ask us! What they need to do is ask us – people who are in it who are still doing teaching[
- Nina: [well we agree with you, those of us who are teachers, teachers, not just instructors, but field instructors who were former teachers, we have the same ideas you have[
- Mr. Yates: [Ask us to come in to give some ideas. We're very busy but there are a number of us who would not mind, um, taking a day and coming in and and that kind of thing[
- Nina: [Many of us are just recently retired and and some of them very recently so , they've been in the trenches and they do know, but somehow, there's no room for change. And it was so frustrating for us the other day, you have no idea! We're looking at each other and we came up with so many great ideas and we were given reasons why this can't be done and this can't be done, and we'll put that forward but you know, every year it's the same ideas and nothing ever changes and we're very frustrated!
- Edith: Some of us were actually talking about setting up a website where students can post their feedback because last semester, almost everyone from the undergraduate program was incredibly frustrated that we're not learning what we needed to learn. We meet up regularly with students from the cohort to get projects done and overwhelmingly, everyone we met with has so many complaints about the program.
- Researcher: For example?
- Edith: There's a disconnect between what we were learning and what was expected of us. There were a lot theory, a lot of articles, and reading research and responding to it but the work wasn't practical. And so everything we wrote was packed with theory, but we didn't know how to create a unit, we didn't have those practical experiences and we weren't given them.

Nina: It's very frustrating. These teachers [field instructors] were really frustrated the other day, you can tell, 'cause we'd break up into groups and give all these great ideas but every year, nothing changes.

As Mr. Yates began to offer suggestions about what the university ought to teach the STs, Nina was quick to agree, positioning herself and the other field instructors in alliance with him as practitioners who had been in the "trenches" and made similar observations. According to her, the problem was not a lack of good ideas or feedback from practitioners; rather, it was the TEP's resistance to change – an ivory tower feature. As Edith joined in to represent a similar perspective from the student teachers, the FI and CT both shook their heads in sympathy and joint frustration.

A similar exchange occurred later in another three-way meeting, this time with Mrs.

Cassidy:

Nina: And I was showing my frustration. . . . we [all the FIs] were all so frustrated the other day [at the monthly FI meeting with the TEP coordinator] – we gave a bunch of great ideas based on what you guys [the CTs and STs] have told us, based on being teachers, and yet they keep telling us there's no way we [the program] can make these changes, and yeah, it's very frustrating.

Mrs. Cassidy: Why can't they [the university teacher education program] look at some of the courses that they have, and see that they're not useful? That should be enough to make them say let's change.

FI-Nina: Do more of the practical stuff that everyone wanted to see.

Researcher: Like classroom management and all that kind of stuff?

Nina: Exactly, exactly.

Mrs. Cassidy: Here's the bottom line. If I didn't have the experience like what I did with Grace, I don't want to take in a student teacher again... There's so much that the CT needs to do and it shouldn't be at that time, it shouldn't be the day before you teach.

Nina: Like what? Give us the specifics.

Mrs. Cassidy Well, like learning how to create an objective test, learning simple things like how much time do kids really need to read this novel, or how do you take a work like *Pride and Prejudice* and decide, what's most important? How do you take *Romeo and Juliet*, kids' first year experience with Shakespeare? Do you really teach them the language and the plot and the themes and all this? You can't! Unless you're going to teach that for one whole semester. The nitty gritty stuff of everyday teaching, they don't know how to do!

...

Nina: I like how you said ... ask them to come up with discussion questions because they might teach that novel one day, and if they did =

Researcher: = It's so amazing to me that the practitioners all agree =

Nina: =And we can't get it done.

Mrs. Cassidy: I wish they would let us- those of us who are interested in working with students, I wish they would let us come in and even just do a lecture or something where the kids can have an assignment, bring in this book, so that they can really understand what they have to do in the classroom.

Nina: And if I ever get you to be a teacher of mine again, I'm going to ask you to come into one of my seminars.

Not surprisingly, both the FI and CT agree and identify with each other's grievances against the university, hence positioning themselves as practitioners who are more in touch with reality than the university. Influenced by their ivory tower assumptions, they speak of the university courses as if they know first-hand what goes on in them, certain that they do not help the STs "really understand what they have to do in the classroom." In actual fact, neither knew much about the courses, except for what they observe of their STs and what they might have heard from them. Yet, more evidence was not needed to implicate the university when the ivory tower storyline was so compelling in triad members' interpretative repertoires.

Despite Nina's frustration with the university, Nina was conscientious about meeting university requirements, careful to go by "what the university [wanted] [her] to do." She would carefully schedule and conduct the stipulated number of meetings, submit all the required

paperwork, and require her CTs and STs to do the same. At the weekly seminars, as in the meetings, she would always take time to update and remind CTs and STs about which document or assignments were due, and how they should look like, as prescribed by the university. So constant, and dominant, are those administrative reminders that her STs complained about them to me during their interviews. Here is an excerpt from Grace's:

Grace: I think the seminar classes – I felt like – I don't know, in our section, a lot of keeping all the requirements that we had to meet, organize, scheduling, this form is due, a lot of logistics. We could have done more.

Researcher: Like what?

Grace: We could have done mini sessions, drawing on [Nina's] experiences on how to teach writing, how to teach grammar. Really "this is what I have done," "in your first week of school, do this or that" – practical stuff.

Prior to this, Grace had communicated her appreciation for Nina's warmth and "useful" "presence." However, she felt that the two-hour weekly seminars were mostly about "logistics" – a view shared by many others in her group, including Edith. In fact, Edith thought that the seminars were such a "waste of [her] time" that she was rarely punctual for them, sometimes showing up only for the last hour, much to the chagrin of Nina.

Another complaint Nina's STs made about her practice was the lack of explanation regarding the UPP requirements. Although Nina was thorough when it came to paperwork and deadlines, she was less so when it came to describing their rationale. This was likely because the UPP assignments had been in the program for many years and pre-existed the program coordinator and all the field instructors in the School of Education. This meant that FIs needed to make sense of the requirements in a backward fashion, and many of them remained uncertain about the logic of their design. While FIs might be familiar with high school curriculum, they were much less certain and confident about the curriculum for teacher education. Hence, many of the FIs,

including Nina and Ben, were more comfortable implementing and administrating the requirements rather than teaching it. While Ben chose to be lenient and overlooked some of the details and deadlines, much to the relief of his STs, Nina was more vigilant about all parts of the UPP. However, like Ben, she was not able to explain in detail the pedagogical rationale for parts like the focal student paper or the assessment analyses portion. When her STs asked about those, she would tell them the program required them and referred them to the handbook. This happened so frequently that it became a source of frustration for her STs, who observed in their interviews:

It almost felt like, if we were supposed to gather everything from the handbook, why do we need to go to the instructor? Don't we have an instructor for a reason, to explain these things? . . . If you don't tell me about something, how can you say it's important?
(Grace)

Know your goals! Why are you assigning the students [STs] to write a focal student paper? Is the goal of it to write a good paper? Is the goal to make stuff up about your students because you forgot about it during the observations? Why the UPP? Why? Every aspect of it [UPP] they should know because they're telling us to do these things. . . . Know your goals. When I ask why I'm doing this assignment, don't tell me because someone told you "you have to do this"!
(Edith)

While Nina's way of dealing with UPP requirements is not ideal, it is congruent with her approach of "going by what the university wants [her] to do" while "[doing] a little bit of what [she] [wants] to do." She administrates and "requires" the assignments on behalf of the university even though she does not fully comprehend their rationale but she also makes time to help her STs become "better teachers." For the latter cause, she would assume the roles of guide, advocate, counselor, and sometimes parent. Most importantly to her STs, she was "warm" and "encouraging," and gave practical advice, especially during post-observation conferences. Even Edith, who was rather critical about many aspects of the program and Nina's approach to paperwork, admitted (to me) that Nina's feedback was helpful:

She [Nina] was coming from a different perspective . . . and in all honesty, that's what I needed. . . . I am a college kid, who until last semester had not worked that closely with high schoolers . . . and so I wasn't in the high school head, and she has been for thirty years? Something like that? And so when a kid in my class – I explain a thing five times and they still don't get it, I'm clueless. I've explained it the best I know how and they don't get it. She can come in and say, from a different approach to the material, "this is how I would have done it," and I'm sitting there going, "oh, that kid might have gotten it if I had done that!" . . . So hearing her process for the design, the carryout, and the student reaction, it was the thought process that helped because I got to see, oh, had I thought about it that way, maybe that approach will suit that kid, still meets my goals, it's just a different angle. . . . I was definitely glad for it.

Grace made similar observations during her interview, telling me she "appreciated [Nina] a lot" and would have liked for her to "come in more" because she gave her "practical, useful, simple" advice. She, too, respected Nina's many years of teaching experience:

I really liked her a lot. . . . I think she has a lot of wisdom as an educator and she knows what works and what doesn't.

It is interesting that both STs assumed it was Nina's extended experience as a teacher that enabled her to offer useful advice – an assumption that alludes to the *practice makes perfect* storyline. In any case, they placed a high value on Nina's feedback, heeded many of her suggestions, and found them to be valuable.

Nina is proud of her ability to help her STs and she made this clear to me during her interview:

You know what's really funny is that I don't know all the new words that they [university faculty] use, the buzz words. I don't always know what's the newest ones, maybe I don't read enough about the philosophy part, but my idea is that I want to give them [STs] the practical part. I want to help them in the classroom to be a better teacher and I think that's what comes naturally to me. . . . [Initially,] I wasn't sure that I could explain it [teaching] but I can explain it, I can see where they're deficient, I can see where they are really floundering and it shows up right away for me, it's like a light goes off in my head so I think I can share that with them and most of my teachers have appreciated my input.

Noteworthy in this account is Nina's acute awareness of what she perceives to be university expectations. Even when taking pride in her work, she makes a distinction between her

“practical” wisdom and the “buzz words” and “philosophy” she assumes to be sanctioned by the university – word choices which connote ivory tower elitism and divorce from reality. Despite being part of the university TEP for so many years, it is unfortunate that such ivory tower assumptions still persist and FIs like Nina and Ben continue to feel somewhat alienated by the institution they serve.

Influence of the Studenting Storyline on Nina’s Practice

Both Grace and Edith may have appreciated Nina’s warmth and practical feedback but they did not fully exploit Nina’s availability because of their studenting concerns. As college students and student teachers whose first priorities are to graduate and get certified, they were mindful of being evaluated and were careful to put up an appearance of competence in front of their evaluators – namely, their FI and CT.

As previously discussed, Grace hid her struggles from her CT and FI for fear of jeopardizing their assessment of her. When she found the grading load to be overwhelming and more than what her peers were doing in the first weeks of term, she chose to speak to me about it rather than Nina. Despite my assurances that FIs tackle such issues regularly and that she could invite Nina to talk to Mrs. Cassidy about it, she decided not to take the risk. Instead, she preferred my other idea of her seeking her CT’s input on grading as a show of her interest in learning from her CT’s thinking. This way, she benefitted from the guidance and got some learning from the hard work she was willing to put in, all without marring her FI’s and CT’s opinion of her.

Although Grace found Nina to be “very reassuring” and “really liked her a lot” because “she would always try to find something positive to say,” she was still very cautious about what she revealed to her. For example, when Nina observed some aspects of her teaching that could be improved, Grace would be willing to engage with her in a conversation about alternative steps or ideas. In fact, she would follow Nina’s suggestions to a tee as she found them to be very useful. Even Mrs. Cassidy noticed it and commented to me during her interview: “she [Grace] very much valued her [Nina’s] opinion.” Yet, when she experienced grave difficulties planning her teaching unit, she approached neither her CT nor FI. From her weekly sharing about her plans to teach *Romeo and Juliet*, I detected uncertainty and increasing anxiety. Although Nina repeatedly invited her STs to seek her help whenever they needed it, Grace decided again that this was a “weakness” she was not willing to expose to either of her evaluators. In the end, she accepted and was grateful my help and resources (a sample *Romeo and Juliet* teaching plan) but never spoke about her initial difficulties with Nina, despite my assurances that it would be all right to do so since she was a novice. I wondered what would have happened if I was not involved and thought of the potential learning opportunities lost through an ST’s unwillingness to seek help for fear being poorly evaluated.

Edith was a more confident ST than Grace in terms of both content knowledge and classroom instruction. She was also a very confident and self-directed learner, one who took pride in being able to decipher between what she needed to do to “get [her] certification” and what promised “learning.” As she proclaimed during her interview:

I’m probably not a normal student. . . . I was well known in my [high]school . . . I ended getting the English Department award for Outstanding English Student, one out of three to get 5 in AP English. My English teacher said, “I was warned before you came in. Your English teacher form last semester told me if you think the work is dumb, you’re not going to do it.” Well, not quite. If I think the work is dumb and I have work I care about, I will do the work I care about. And I did the same at the School of Ed. . . . I came in and

said, okay, this is what I need to get my certification, this is learning, I'll fulfill all their requirements, but put all my attention into learning.

True to her statement, she did produce work of uneven quality. For example, her classroom teaching and her final unit plan were impressive but her focal student paper and some of the other paperwork, which she deemed "busywork," were brief and she submitted them very late. Yet, despite her claim that learning to teach was her priority, she was very selective about what she showed Nina in terms of her teaching. Even though she found Nina's post-observation feedback to be encouraging and "helpful," she showcased mostly a teacher-led discussion for all four observations, leading Nina to conclude to me during her interview: "I never saw a huge change in her from beginning to end." Apparently, she did not want to risk a poor evaluation and stuck closely to what had worked before: the discussion that impressed both her FI and CT greatly from that first observation. When I asked Edith about this during her interview, she admitted,

I definitely planned differently for those days when I wasn't being observed. . . . When you don't know when you're going to be observed, you're going to get a more honest evaluation. I feel like you guys didn't see all my weaknesses because I knew what those weaknesses were, and I was very good at covering them up while you were in the classroom. . . . I didn't take as many risks as she [Nina] was there.

Even a confident and self-assured ST deemed it necessary to hide her "weaknesses" from an FI whose feedback she knew would be beneficial. Like the other STs, her concerns about being positively assessed superceded her desire to learn. After all, an ST's job prospect is dependent not only on her grades and certification, but on her CT's and FI's letters of recommendation and future references.

As noted before, I was not surprised by the studenting strategies uncovered in this study although I was taken aback by the extent to which STs would go in order to appear competent to their FI and CT, whom they position as their assessors. Crucial areas of "weakness" were hidden

from Ben and Nina, hence limiting their ability to provide assistance. Sadly, these were understandable problems of practice which might have led to much learning had the mentors been enlisted to help. (Then again, given their penchant for the *practice makes perfect* storyline, FIs and CTs might just have provided sympathy and a recommendation for more practice in some cases.)

Influence of the Sink or Swim Storyline on Nina's Practice

During their interviews with me, the students in this study would use the term “sink or swim” to describe how they felt about the student teaching semester. All of them felt underprepared by the TEP for the demands of their field experience and wished for more guidance from their CTs and FIs. Instead, the CTs expected the STs to “dive in,” apply what they have learned from the university, and “figure things out” as they engage in practice. Because that was how they learned to teach, they assume the same for their STs. So they availed their classes and permitted the STs to assume lead teaching responsibilities with minimal intervention from them, thinking that that was the best way to promote ST-learning. Meanwhile, they would offer feedback and try to be understanding, as well and encouraging, throughout this risky but necessary process. The two FIs in this study also recalled learning to teach the same way and strongly encouraged independent practice. As such, they perpetuated their STs’ sense of isolation, although unwittingly so. Like Ben, Nina was generous with her feedback and advice, especially during post-observation conferences but her belief in the importance of independent practice colored her perception of her STs’ experiences, sometimes in ways that did not help their learning.

During her interview, Nina described her work as a field instructor as one who helped STs “to become more independent, be on their own cause they’re afraid.” True to her belief that STs learn best and gain confidence when CTs allow them to practice independently, she frequently urged her STs to take on lead teaching and ask their CTs to step out of the class whenever possible. She would also remind CTs of this recommendation during the three-way meetings and checked often with her STs if they have been given opportunities for independent practice.

Mrs. Cassidy was like-minded and, in their three-way meeting, agreed with Nina that she “[needed] to leave more” and assured her repeatedly during that meeting of the same:

Mrs. Cassidy: I think I need to leave more. . . . That’s my goal for the next couple of weeks. I want to let her [Grace] get her feet wet with the tenth graders, but I’m going to leave more. . . .

Nina: And the ninth graders? =

Mrs. Cassidy: =Not [leave] as much as I should’ve. I’m a control freak, very difficult time letting go, but that is my personal goal. I need to be out for a whole class period, ‘cause it’s hard to do something you’re unsure of, and have somebody watch and pick apart your mistake backwards. That seems to be a little backwards, so I need to be out more.

As if on cue, Mrs. Cassidy could interpret Nina’s incomplete sentence about the ninth graders as a request for her to leave that class too. Apparently, it was their shared belief about the value of independent practice that afforded such fluidity in the conversation. Ironically, Grace had wanted more guidance from her CT who, from the start, had expected her to plan and teach independently:

I had to [independently prepare lessons]. She [Mrs. Cassidy] had one folder for *Pride and Prejudice* that I can use as a resource but she’s never taught it. So that was all me, and she must have really trusted me. She didn’t even re-read it.

Upon my urging, she did approach Mrs. Cassidy for help but noted, “She was always willing to help me, but it was all coming from me to her.” In fact, during her interview, Grace admitted that

“creating the day-to-day lesson plan was overwhelming” and worried about making mistakes.

When I asked what she would have liked to be different in the semester, she said,

I think it would have been useful in the beginning, actually, to just model her [Mrs. Cassidy’s] teaching, get comfortable in the classroom, get comfortable teaching. . . . more modeling in the classroom.

Contrary to what her FI and CT thought, Grace felt she was left to “sink or swim” and would have preferred more hands-on guidance. Given her expressed uncertainty over some key areas of teaching (like lesson planning and conducting discussions), I would agree that she needed it. Perhaps Nina might have provided more attentive mentoring too had she not been so focused on independent practice.

In the case of ST-Edith, Nina’s assumptions about the value of independent practice led her to quickly assume that Mr. Yates “controlling” nature was to blame for Edith’s lack of significant improvement. As previously discussed, Edith had chosen to showcase similar teaching strategies for all four of her observations. During the final post-observation conference which Mr. Yates attended, Nina suggested a different strategy for eliciting student answers but Mr. Yates interrupted to assume responsibility for Edith’s actions because he had being “doing the class a certain way” and “wanted to get them [his students] back” on how he would have done it.” Although it sounded like an honest explanation to me, Nina interpreted his interjection as evidence of his excessive control over Edith, whom she thought “worshipped” her CT since she always spoke well of him and quoted him often during the weekly seminars. Influenced by her assumptions about independent practice, she concluded that Mr. Yates had prevented Edith from being “independent,” hence stunting her growth:

Until that last class, I thought it [their ST-CT relationship] had developed well, but after that last observation, I felt it was really bad, because that last observation, he’s still telling her, you do exactly what I do in the classroom. By that time, she should be totally independent and doing her own thing. . . . I never saw a huge change in her from

beginning to the end. Did you? A little more confidence, maybe? But other than that, I don't think she was allowed to grow as much as other student teachers were.

In actual fact, Edith's lessons for those observations were calculated moves on her part to "[cover] up" her "weaknesses" in order to ensure Nina thought well of her competence. Since she had managed to impress by conducting classroom discussions skillfully the first time, she decided to stick with what worked rather than risk failure. Also, Mr. Yates had given Edith many opportunities for independent practice since the beginning of the semester, so much so that Edith felt like she was in a sink or swim situation and wished she had more guidance:

He [Mr. Yates] gave me a lot of freedom. He threw me into two preps, and said, you're the teacher. Even when we were team teaching, I was doing a lot on my own. . . . I expected a lot more guidance. He didn't guide a lot.

In fact, Edith's second observation was a lesson from a unit plan she had independently designed because it was based on a novel Mr. Yates had not taught before. Nina knew this and was very impressed by the quality of her work, as was Mr. Yates. As such, her implied accusation that he did not allow her to be "totally independent and doing her own thing" seemed harsh and inaccurate. Like Grace, Edith lacked attentive guidance, not more independence. Had Nina not been so focused on the importance of independent practice as a primary way to ensure ST-learning, she might not have been so quick to jump to conclusions and considered other possibilities for Edith's behavior. This example demonstrates, once again, that strong, unquestioning adherence to tacit assumptions could lead FIs to make inaccurate judgments about triad interactions and, ultimately, ST-needs.

Influence of the Practice Makes Perfect Storyline on Nina's Practice

The belief that extended and repeated engagement in practice will automatically result in improvement and mastery is another storyline which Nina unquestioningly abided by, much like Ben and the other CTs. Throughout the semester, she invoked the *practice makes perfect* storyline to encourage her STs and assure them that their current difficulties will dissipate over time, with more practice. Her CTs also believe in the transformative power of practice and together, they were observed to use the storyline as an explanation and solution for most teaching problems encountered by their STs.

Statements like “don’t worry, all you need is more practice,” “it’ll come with experience,” and “the more you teach it, the more you’ll understand it” were used repeatedly all semester by Nina and her CTs to comfort their STs, especially during post-observation conferences and weekly seminars, or whenever an ST experiences difficulties in teaching. When accompanied by an analysis of the problem and a discussion of specific steps as possible solutions, these statements can be very encouraging and fulfill Nina’s desire to be “positive” and helpful. However, the data is also replete with instances when FIs and CTs resort to “all you need is more practice” too quickly, without any exploration of the problem or possible ways of overcoming them. For example, when Edith could not manage time effectively and tended to carry on a discussion with her students for too long, Mr. Yates and Nina would urge her to watch the clock and cut off the discussion when necessary. Yet, Edith continued to exhibit the same problem all semester, an indication that clock-watching might not be the issue. Instead of engaging her in a conversation to reflect on the thought processes behind her actions, they

continued to urge “watch your time-management” and agreed that “she’ll figure it out,” with “time” and “experience.”

My interview with Edith at the end of the semester regarding this very issue revealed that the problem was not about Edith’s inexperience or her inability to “watch the clock.” Indeed, her thinking was far more complex. She shared about Mr. Yates’ “intuitive” ability to lead discussions with “no lesson plan, no script, no nothing, just talked.” He would then hand her notes and expected her to do the same, much to her shock. He would comment on her efforts, tell her she posed “too many leading questions” and should “go bigger” and ask the “hows and whys” instead. Thinking that he wanted her to engage the students in higher order thinking, Edith would try to encourage that in her students but would invariably take too long and incur Mr. Yates’ disapproval. She explained the conflict she experienced to me during her interview this way:

Researcher: Give me an example [of the conflict you experienced].

Edith: ‘Cause the students had a hard time with the ducks and the pond, and so I was asking them why Holden [a protagonist in the novel, *Catcher in the Rye*] so concerned with where the ducks go. . . . [Mr. Yates] liked the question. One of the students was sort of on the right track. . . . The kid is talking, let him talk. But he said I should just say, “Okay! That sounds good!” and round it up for them. The kids are on the right track, let them have the floor, don’t state the answer, let the kid get there first.

Researcher: Allow the kid time to process it? (Edith nodded in agreement.)

Edith: It was hard because he would say, “you have to cover this today, move along, move along.” . . . On the other hand, I’m like, no, this is a difficult complex question. They need time to think it over, but I don’t have time.

Researcher: Do you feel he’s demanding two contradictory things from you sometimes?

Edith: Right! The reason he can pull it off and I can’t? I mean he grades essays in a week, tests in a weekend!

Edith's struggle to accomplish two competing goals is a legitimate professional problem. Working within strict time limits while trying to achieve ambitious teaching goals (like promoting higher order thinking) is a challenging endeavor, even for experts. Had they inquired after Edith's repeated struggles, Mr. Yates and Nina might have acknowledged her laudable goal and led her on an exploration of ways to optimize time usage without compromising student learning. This way, they would also be equipping her with tools to manage such a problem in the future. Instead, they resorted to the *practice makes perfect* storyline as an explanation and a cure, hopeful that she will "figure it out" with more practice. In truth, repeated practice of the same strategy will not resolve such conundrums, which explains why Edith continued to exhibit the same struggle right to the end of term.

Grace, too, encountered difficulties conducting classroom discussions but her struggles were a result of confusion regarding lesson objectives, as well as a weak grasp of content. For example, uncertain about what is important to teach about a specific novel, she would pose questions without much clarity about her instructional objectives or learning outcomes. Hence, when students asked questions or made comments which she had not thought of, she would be at a loss for words and direction, asking me during an interview, "but how do you get it [the discussion] back [on track]?" I was able to diagnose Grace's problems as such because I got her to talk about her confusion and explain the thinking behind her plans during her interview. Nina and Mrs. Cassidy might have done that during post-observation conferences but when they noticed her struggles, they were more inclined to comfort her and invoked the *practice makes perfect* storyline to do so:

Mrs. Cassidy: I think one of the skills that's really hard to teach is classroom discussion. So she's [ST-Grace] great about having the objective in mind, . . . but a lot of times, when the students will ask a question or have suggestions, she

gets a little thrown off. But it's hard to think on your feet. I was saying that's not something I can teach [her

Nina: [Its' experience.

Mrs. Cassidy: Yes! So I tell her there's no point getting frustrated when she can't fix it for the next class, 'cause you can't. It's going to take time.

[. . .]

Nina: We talked about discussion being a learned process, as well as learning how to understand the novel. The more you teach it, the more you understand it. . . . it's your own discovery of what works best.

Sharing the same assumptions about the educational benefits of extended practice, Nina and Mrs. Cassidy played off each other's words as they sought encouragement for Grace and, perhaps, also relief from having to resolve a seemingly intractable problem. They adopted the same approach again on another occasion when they noted uncertainties in Grace's teaching and confidence:

Mrs. Cassidy: I was telling her, I was nervous coming into school every day for two or three years after I started teaching, so unfortunately, that doesn't go away for a while. Now, I can come in without a lesson plan and be fine, I'm good to go, but for a long time I would be rehearsing in the car. . . . That [nervousness] doesn't go away. That means you care enough to do a good job, so it's good.

Nina: I think preparing for literature . . . is tough because like you said, once you've taught something over and over again, you can predict what kind of questions are coming. And I think you learn more by teaching a subject than any other way. You do . . . I think I did *To Kill a Mockingbird* about fourteen times, and by the end, I almost knew the book by heart. . . . I understood so much more by the end. I've always loved it, it was one of my favorites to teach, kids just grabbed on to it, you know? I think it talks so much about morality, family and other things . . . maybe in the first time I taught it, I wasn't getting so much, and experience makes you grow in literature, it really does. And the more experience you have teaching, the better you'll be with it. So the first time is always the hardest, and you've done a lot of first ones this semester, including being a teacher for the first time.

Grace: Yeah.

Nina: So there's so much learning going on as you teach. The next time you teach one of these novels, you'll have that much going for you. . . . I think you just need more time.

Eager to comfort and encourage Grace, both FI and CT, once again, resorted to practice and experience as an explanation and solution to the ST's problems, leading her to believe that teaching something "over and over again" will indeed resolve her issues with anxiety, content knowledge, and planning. Unfortunately, Grace needed more than just practice and experience. My observation and talk with Grace revealed uncertainties regarding her content area and the fundamentals of planning. For example, she did not know how to interpret the contents of a play or novel for teaching. She had trouble identifying learning outcomes in any given literary text and was retro-fitting standards and objectives because the UPP assignment required her to do so. She confused instructional objectives with instructional activities and so was worried about looking for activities to fill each class. While such difficulties are not uncommon among novices, they will not be resolved with more experience or repeated practice of the same attempts.

If Nina and Mrs. Cassidy did not fall back so quickly on the *practice makes perfect* maxim and assumed improvement will automatically follow extended practice, perhaps they might be better positioned to guide Grace through her confusion about literary genres and planning them for instruction. However, this would mean that they need to be aware of such assumptions and question their validity. They would also need to be well versed in taking apart the technicalities of planning, deciphering ST-thinking, and explaining the steps in ways that will promote ST-learning. More "modeling," as Grace noted, might have helped but given the sink or swim model of learning they experienced, STs had little else to go on besides their existing knowledge.

Notably, Grace picked up and eventually adopted, unquestioningly, her FI's and CT's assumptions about the transformative power of practice. During her end of term interview, she spoke of her future as such,

I think I'll always go into class prepared because I'll freak out if I don't. I know it'll come with more experience, but focusing more on meaning as well and having students successfully understanding the importance of the novel is going to be difficult at first. In the final meeting, in response to that, Mrs. Cassidy had said, "that's just something that comes with time, and more experience, and your recognition of that is a good step that you always want to gear towards."

Nina had, oftentimes, told her the same about time and experience too and she had internalized the refrain. While she sounded hopeful, I knew she would need more than time, experience, and hope to teach effectively. Demonstrably, the socializing effect of this and other storylines, when left unquestioned and invoked so frequently by FIs and CTs during triad interactions, cannot be underestimated.

Influence of the Natural Teaching Personality Storyline on Nina's Practice

The belief that teachers possess a "natural teaching personality" is another storyline that influences Nina's field instruction. Based on this storyline, student teaching is a time for student teachers to discover if they have the teaching personality or not; and the field instructor is there to help them through the discovery process. If they do, the field instructor is there to identify and confirm it, as well as to encourage them to develop it further. If they don't, and cannot develop it, the FI will be understanding and supportive in their choice of an alternate career. Nina's view regarding this is evident in her interview, when she described her work as a field instructor as one who "inspires the love of teaching" but quickly added:

But you can't teach the love of teaching. All you can do is help them [STs] to decide if they're in the right place, um, and if this is for them. Sometimes it is and maybe it isn't, you know. Sometimes you just need to guide them along the way but you also have to make them understand that they're good even though they don't understand it, um, if they don't have the confidence in it [teaching] you have to try and help them get it [confidence].

To her, those who possess a “natural teaching personality” will have the “love of teaching,” although these STs may not always recognize their natural abilities and may lack confidence as a result. Her way of helping them “get it,” that is, gain confidence, is by being positive and encouraging, helping them “understand they're good” and helping them to “become more independent” because “they're afraid.” During the interview, she also shared with me stories about a few of her STs in the past who had struggled because they were not “in the right place” and how she counseled them through the difficult “discovery” process, mostly assuring them that their decision to seek a different career path is legitimate and “good.” Nina understands that student teaching can be a particularly challenging and frightening time for those who are not “in the right place” as well as for those who lack confidence. This is why she places a high premium on being positive and kind, describing her role as being a “positive reinforcer” while recalling her own novice experience, “I remember when I first started I always appreciated those who were kind.”

True to her conviction, Nina always spoke kindly to her STs and praised their efforts generously. However, she would often frame her comments within the *natural teaching personality* storyline. Below are some examples:

I loved your animation! I really did. You would keep your class interested. You have that teaching personality. I wasn't sure because you sounded so nervous about it [the day before when they spoke after a seminar]. I wasn't sure you were going to be natural but you are.

Overall, I thought the class was so successful. You're very natural. You have that natural teaching personality. It seems like you belong here

And I hope you'll now stop worrying. You do have so many natural abilities that you should start getting comfortable with them, and trusting yourself.

As observed before, Nina often spoke about her STs in terms of the *natural teaching personality* storyline. Like FI-Ben, she even assessed and compared them according to how much *natural teaching personality* they possess, as this excerpt from her interview shows:

I think Grace still has far to go. She does. She doesn't have the confidence, she doesn't. I don't think she has a natural teaching personality. Edith probably has a little more of it, but then, Christopher! Exactly! He gets into the classroom, he's so animated, he makes learning so much fun. Humor, drama, the works. You got to love doing it. If you don't, it's going to be a chore, for you and the students. I think it's a bit of a chore for Grace.

Nina seemed to interpret confidence, expressiveness, and the use of drama and humor in the classroom as manifestations of a *teaching personality* and frequently urged her STs to be more “animated” and “energetic” in the classroom, especially Grace, whom she thought was too shy. In her quest to help Grace, Nina would urge her to “watch” and emulate Mrs. Cassidy, whose “dramatic” teaching she had witnessed briefly:

Did you see what Mrs. Cassidy did? She's a good example. When you have a chance to watch her, you can see she's very dramatic, and not everyone is going to be able to be like that. It's part of her personality. But I think you're finding your own teaching personality, which is really good.

While Nina talked about “finding [her] own teaching personality” here, she actually meant that Grace should learn to become more “dramatic” and dynamic in the classroom, much like Mrs. Cassidy. In a subsequent lesson observation, Nina noted Grace's responsiveness to her students' comments and praised her for it. However, she still focused on her lack of expressiveness, which she thought was “a personality thing” which Grace should “develop”:

You did give them good comments, that was very good. . . . In some cases you repeated their answers, and that was good also, because that meant – it gives it value. Um, but I still didn't see the excitement in you as to when they come up with [an answer] – you say it [praise], but I don't see excitement in you. So you need to be more expressive I believe. Um, that is something I think is a personality thing, so you develop that.

Beyond telling her to be more expressive and to show more excitement, Nina never clarified how Grace could “develop” her personality; she just assumed Grace would eventually “develop” it if she kept trying. While being dramatic, expressive, and enthusiastic may make for a more exciting classroom, I noted in my field notes then that Grace had good rapport with her students and that they responded well to her. I thought if she adjusted her lesson plan to incorporate more substantial learning objectives and catered more to student interests, the lesson would be more effective. Nina did not advise her on these points except to read more about the text and assured her that she would know more when she taught more. Nina commented to me after that observation (when we were walking to the car) that she did not think Grace had a natural teaching personality, unlike her CT, Mrs. Cassidy. The fact that Grace was not expressive and dramatic seemed to bother Nina quite a bit, for I would hear this observation from her repeatedly throughout the semester.

From my observation, Grace had a relatively placid disposition but she was able to command respect and sustain student attention in the classroom. She was also very organized and managed group activities very efficiently. Her lesson plan needed to be improved to promote more student engagement and learning but classroom management was not an issue in her classes. With each observation, Grace grew in confidence and skill, leading Nina to say, “I’ve seen so much improvement” several times during the last two post-observation and three-way meetings. Yet, after the final three-way meeting, Nina still told me, in private, that she thought Grace lacked a teaching personality. In fact, she even expressed surprise when she learned that Mrs. Cassidy had written Grace a “glowing” letter of recommendation:

Nina: Did you read Mrs. Cassidy’s letter about Grace? It was glowing. Glowing!
Much better than I thought she would have written.

Researcher: How come?

Nina: Because Grace doesn't have the natural teaching personality. She has to develop it.

Researcher: But the students do listen to her, in her own quiet [way

Nina: [I think she going to really develop. She's really into the job stuff, she's going to every job fair, she's really looking hard, she knows she's capable, she just – I think with practice she'll be really good, you know, but she's not as – I just want to push her hair out of her face. I hate – half of the pictures I took I couldn't use because her hair was hanging in her face. But um, I just think in a way she uses that as a little bit of a curtain, because she isn't as open as some people are.

Researcher: You mean shy?

Nina: Uh-huh. She has a little protection from that [shyness].

Despite the improvements she had witnessed in Grace's teaching, Nina still seemed fixated with her gentle demeanor and interpreted that as a lack of a natural teaching personality. Given what I had observed all semester, lesson planning and content mastery were more pertinent issues affecting Grace's effectiveness as a teacher but Nina, under the influence of the *natural teaching personality* storyline, focused on her demeanor instead. Interestingly, she still held out hope for Grace to eventually develop a "teaching personality" because of her belief in the transformative power of extended practice.

Perhaps Nina noted that Grace was not as effective as the other student teachers in her ability to promote learning or student engagement and attributed that to the lack of a natural teaching personality. Her tendency to describe, assess, and compare her STs according to how much natural teaching personality they possess seems to suggest that is a possibility. What is disturbing, however, is that other important reasons for problems in an ST's teaching might be overshadowed, or neglected, if FIs and CTs remain fixated by the narrative of a *natural teaching personality*, and depend on it to assess teaching or mentor student teachers.

Conclusion

The five storylines uncovered by this study reveal that triad members do make sense of program elements and their interactions with one another in ways unintended by the university. The findings also reveal that these tacit beliefs are commonly held by the triad members with surprising familiarity and affinity, which facilitated their communication and interactions. Implicit and unquestioned, these assumptions were observed to guide member interpretations and choices in powerful ways, often unbeknownst to them.

Field instructor practice is heavily influenced by these storylines not only because the FIs themselves abide by them but also because the CTs and STs they work with subscribe to them too. For example, shared assumptions about the university as an ivory tower enabled members to deal with university requirements as a formality – paperwork to be submitted rather than instruments to be exploited for their instructional value – without challenge. In fact, triad members seemed to reinforce one another's views about the university which further served to entrench them. Similarly, shared beliefs about the value of independent and extended practice afforded FIs and CTs much affinity and ease in their diagnoses of, and prescriptions for, ST learning needs, again without question or further inquiry into practice. (Ironically, FIs wanted to help STs “think critically about their own practice” and so did the TEP.) They also reinforced the *sink or swim* storyline among the STs and fueled their studenting anxieties. The *studenting* storyline, familiar and important to the STs, powerfully affected how they interacted with their FIs and CTs and what they revealed to them. Being unaware of it and subjected to their STs' studenting agenda, FIs and CTs were not able to get an accurate view of their STs' learning, hence limiting their ability to lend support. The belief in the existence of a natural teaching personality among the FIs led them to assess and talk about their STs' practice in terms of how

much personality they possessed, sometimes at the expense of more productive inquiry into practice.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that the prevalence and influence of these storylines resulted in triad relationships which compromised ST-learning, despite the FIs' diligence and sincere desire to help them "become better teachers."

Embedded in these pervasive storylines are problematic assumptions about university teacher education, teaching, and the learning to teach process that need to be questioned and confronted if university teacher education programs and teacher educators (including FIs and CTs) want to promote student teacher-learning.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This study posited that university field instructors and the triad members they work with are likely to be making sense of program elements and their interactions with one another in subjective ways, ways that are yet to be systematically uncovered and examined by scholars. These meaning-making processes could influence the dynamics of triadic relationships as well as the practice of field instructors – teacher educators whom the university depend on to supervise and support the field experiences of student teachers. A qualitative inquiry, driven by the main question, *How do triad member interpretations of program elements and their interactions with one another influence field instructor practice?*, and guided by the following three interrelated focused questions was conducted to uncover these interpretative ways:

- (1) How do triad members interpret program elements?
- (2) How do triad members interpret their interactions with one another?
- (3) How do these interpretations influence field instructor practice?

Following the logic of a multiple embedded case study design, I investigated the work of two well-reputed English field instructors and their work with two student teachers each within a secondary undergraduate teacher education program at a mid-western university. Using a variety of data collection methods, which included prolonged engagement with participants, semi-structured interview protocols, participant-observation, and key written artifacts of participants' work, I tracked the interactive dynamics of these ten participants as they engaged in activities

associated with university field instruction during a student teaching semester. Via the use of Positioning Theory as an analytical tool, data-analyses revealed that the triad members drew upon five predominant storylines as they made sense of their interactions with program elements and one another. These five storylines, which I titled *Ivory Tower*, *Studenting*, *Sink or Swim*, *Practice Makes Perfect*, and *Natural Teaching Personality*, were observed to produce interrelated influences on triad member interactions, student-teacher learning, and field instructor practice.

In this chapter, I will revisit my initial assumptions and discuss the implications of the findings in relation to the literature, to university field instructor practice, and to field-based teacher education. I will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Revisiting Initial Assumptions

At the inception of this study, I selected to examine field instruction and student teaching triad member interactions through the lens of social constructionism, which posits the view that that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed by participants as they interact with the environment and with one another. According to the social constructionist framework, participants derive their ways of knowing not from an objective reality but from existing conceptual frameworks and categories they have inherited, both past and present. Based on these assumptions, I designed the study to uncover the culturally and historically derived meaning-making resources of triad members, with an objective to examine how they influence triad interactions and FI practice. According to the study's findings, these theoretical assumptions about meaning construction and interpretative resources held true.

Members not only interpreted program elements and their interactions with one another predominantly from the frameworks of the five storylines uncovered in this study, they did so without explicit awareness. For example, participants openly share and reinforce their grievances about the irrelevance of university coursework (a feature of the *ivory tower* storyline) with one another, often blending their own varied teacher education experiences together to establish agreement and solidarity even though they graduated from different programs. Another example of how tacit assumptions influence their practice is the CTs' and FIs' tendency to draw upon the *sink or swim* and *practice makes perfect* storylines to prescribe more independent and extended practice as a solution to many of the difficulties their STs are facing, even when the causes of those difficulties are a lack of sufficient knowledge of subject matter and lesson planning which ought to be resolved by guided instruction and better resources. Ironically, they believe they are helping their STs think critically about their practice and feel more confident about being a teacher when, in fact, STs continue to struggle with the same problems and apprehensions.

Additionally, these storylines are culturally and historically familiar narratives, existent not only in the culture of teaching and teacher education, but also in the public opinion about teacher education. In fact, scholars of teacher education have addressed them over the years, noting their proverbial persistence as well as the hindrance they pose to novice teacher learning. In the following sections, I will discuss the implications of the findings with regards to existing research and the field of teacher education.

Implications of the Findings

Member-interpretations of program elements: Ivory Tower Storyline

One finding of this study is the surprising unanimity among triad members to characterize the university according to the proverbial ivory tower narrative. “Too much emphasis on theory” and “not practical enough” were common refrains heard among the participants who were both candid and passionate in their charges against the university. Believing that the university is out of touch with reality and bureaucratic, they viewed the requirements and paperwork of the TEP as mostly “busywork,” though administratively necessary. Hence, while members dutifully complied to administer and submit what was required, they often did not take the time to explore and exploit the pedagogical potential of the assessment instruments or assignments, despite what the TEP intended. Members, like the FIs, were also selective and creative in their adaptation of program requirements, choosing to emphasize what they felt was useful (like post-observation feedback and extended meetings with STs) and minimize or disregard what they thought had no practical value (like parts of the UPP and some meetings with the CTs).

Rather than being unique, this view of the university as an elitist institution, divorced from the K-12 school setting and engaging in a “pursuit of irrelevance” (Levine, 2006, p. 23), has been a perennial problem well-documented by scholars for many years (e.g., Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Goodlad, 1990; Labaree, 2004; Vick, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). Featured prominently on the list of “the top 12 slurs” (p. 358) against formal teacher education in Berliner’s (2000) article, *A Personal Response to Those Who Bash Teacher Education*, this

“ivory tower” charge levied against university TE reflects the disconnect between campus and field-based teacher education which teacher educators have been trying to bridge for years. Their efforts have included creating field-based assignments, campus-based laboratory schools, simulated classroom situations, a variety of campus-school partnerships, and even more major overhauls like creation of professional development schools (PDSs) – innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P–12 schools (Zeichner, 2010). Together, they represent the field’s recognition of the problem and its deepening resolve to strengthen the education of prospective teachers, especially field-based teacher education.

As discussed in the first chapter, these efforts are important and promising. However, the findings of this study suggest that the influence of pre-existing assumptions (like the ivory tower storyline) on members’ interpretation of university elements can be quite persistent. FIs and CTs did not hesitate to complain about the program’s over-emphasis on “theory” at the expense of “practice” even though they had little evidence to base their argument, besides what their STs had said. In fact, their frustrations seemed to even stem from their own experiences as STs from years ago. Despite the apparent lack of evidence, their frustration and discontent with the university were strong and tenacious. When I asked the participants what changes they thought the university ought to make, they were full of recommendations about extended practice and the inclusion of a more practical curriculum that included the specific day-to-day needs of classroom teaching, like classroom management, grading, and content coverage of high school syllabus. When I asked if they would be open to the university reaching out to explain the rationale and the scope and sequence of its courses as a way to promote understanding, enlist partnership, and ensure consistency in ST-learning, their response was less enthusiastic. A non-committal but

polite “sure” was the usual answer, followed by the more honest, “I think I got enough.” Members seemed to assume that the university would benefit from the contributions of practitioners, but they were suspicious and resistant to approaches from the university. Judging from the weak attendance at bi-annual CT-seminars conducted by the university as information sessions and how often triad members misplace the student teaching handbook, it would be safe to conclude that the university have much to overcome in order to forge close partnerships with K-12 schools.

Indeed, this apparent distrust that practitioners demonstrate towards the university continues to be a challenge even in PDS settings. In a recent collaborative self-study conducted by three university-based teacher educators working with student teaching partnership schools for example, the authors attested to tensions they had had to navigate around as a result of “ivory tower” conceptions (Martin et al., 2011, p. 305). They conclude that building trusting relationships with mentor teachers took time but was “fundamental to collaborative work with mentor-teachers.” One of the authors commented, ““It has taken three years [at the partnership school] to have earned the trust and have access”” (p. 305). From my own experiences working with cooperating teachers over the years, this observation holds true. Trust building requires not only time, but also respect and kindness, as these authors also observed:

We did not feel comfortable, however, providing unsolicited feedback to teachers who might not be as adept or committed to mentoring as others. We held our tongues when we saw classroom practices with which we disagreed. We dealt with some of these issues with principals and teacher candidates but never in direct interactions with mentors. Instead, we sought to focus on the strengths the mentors brought to their work. . . . As we became experienced in our roles and more comfortable working with one another, collaborative efforts aimed at teacher candidate learning took a life of their own. Mentors began to seek us out: “Working with some of the same people over time definitely earned me the honor of being asked what I thought sometimes” (Jennifer). We were asked to engage in professional development that was once met with disinterest. A mentor teacher working with Susan noted publicly, “I’m always willing to try anything that you suggest!” Furthermore, we began to seek mentor input. (p. 305)

Again, as a university supervisor for many years, I bear witness to these observations. In fact, my prolonged work at the schools with colleagues of the CTs in my study helped me gain both access and trust among them. Similarly, it was my years of collegial relationship with the FIs that permitted such intimate access and insights into their practice. In their study of a failed triad, Bullough and Draper (2004) also noted the importance of trust and respect in triad relationships. At the end of their article, they conclude:

Ultimately, successful models of professional development and we believe of mentoring build on strength . . . ; honor the idiosyncratic and deeply personal nature of human growth and development and recognize the difficulty of unlearning. Knowing a subject area and understanding how students best learn it are necessary for both effective mentoring and skilled supervision, but they need to be grounded in respectful relationships (Oberski, Ford, Higgins, & Fisher, 1999). (p. 419)

Their recommendations would be relevant to relationships affected not only by the ivory tower storyline, but all the other storylines as well.

Member-interpretations of their interactions with one another: Studenting, Sink or Swim, Practice Makes Perfect, and Natural Teaching Personality Storylines

Another set of findings of this study, based on triad member interpretations of their interactions with one another, also revealed member-adherence to familiar and, often proverbial, storylines. With the exception of the *studenting* storyline, this group of storylines, namely, the ones titled *sink or swim*, *practice makes perfect*, and *natural teaching personality*, appears to be congruent with common beliefs about teaching and learning to teach: teaching is a craft and therefore one learns to teach by doing teaching; learning is achieved by experimentation, intuition, and trial and error; and teachers are born, not made (Berliner, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Labaree, 2008; Levine, 2006). Like the ivory tower stereotype, these “myths” have long plagued teacher educators who believe that quality teaching, like other professions,

requires an essential set of knowledge, skills, and understandings which needs to be rigorously taught and learned (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Grossman et al, 2009; Hammerness et al, 2005). Despite the effort of the university to promote such a professional view of teaching, the findings of this study suggest that conventional beliefs about teaching and learning to teach still guided triad member interpretations of practice.

For example, the FIs and CTs tended to diagnose an ST's lack of confidence or skill in a particular area of teaching as the result of a lack of independent and extended practice. "You just need more time" or "you'll get better with practice," and "I [CT] need to leave [the room] more" were common expressions that communicated their beliefs that STs learn best when left alone to discover how to teach via improvisation, intuition, and trial and error. After all, that was how they learned to teach. Mrs. Cassidy summed up this philosophy well when she said,

I think they [student teachers] need to learn a lot of things on their own. They need to really feel out what was successful, as opposed to me saying, why wasn't that successful. They should try to do that more themselves.

Echoing similar sentiments about learning to teach, FI-Ben told his STs,

You just do it. . . . You learn to roll with it . . . you've got to learn it by doing little by little, and eventually, you'll learn to think in multiple ways at the same time.

As previously discussed, such perspectives of ST-learning limited opportunities for critical inquiry and problem solving, which were professional habits of mind the program had hoped to instill in their candidates. The storylines not only afforded the FIs and CTs easy explanations to difficult teaching problems, they also provided convenient answers. If the lack of independent and extended practice was the cause, then more engagement in such practice must be the solution, so that was what the FIs and CTs prescribed. This finding is consistent with the observations of Borko and Mayfield (1995), who, in their study of triad relationships, noted:

One factor that seems to contribute to cooperating teachers' and university supervisors' limited roles is the beliefs about learning to teach held by members of the student teaching triad. When triad members share a belief that teachers learn primarily through experience and practice, it becomes easy for cooperating teachers and university supervisors to offer few suggestions to student teachers and do little to challenge their ideas and practices . . ." (p. 516)

Unfortunately, as scholars have observed, "practice alone does not make perfect, or even good performance" (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005, p. 402). Rather, "learning that involves deep understanding and transfer often is a product of the skillful integration of both inquiry and explanation" (p. 403). Instead of helping their STs integrate inquiry and explanation, the FIs and CTs in this study were more prone to show sympathy and compassion; after all, learning to teach under a sink or swim model is a risky and nerve-wrecking venture. This desire to provide emotional support among FIs and CTs was also observed in Bullough's case study of a mentor teacher (2004). Borrowing Darling's (2001) terms, he concluded that such an approach represented "the values and commitments of a "community of compassion" and not of inquiry" (p. 153). As Loughran (2006) and others have noted, "teaching is reflective and requires an inquiry stance" (p. 129). Despite the TEP's efforts to groom reflective practitioners and the FIs expressed desire to help their STs "think critically" about their teaching, the study suggests that enduring and oft unquestioned assumptions about how one learns to teach tended to stand in the way.

Just as obstructive is the belief that there is a natural teaching personality, "something that an individual either have or do not have: a way with kids, a confident and forceful personality" (Labaree, 2008, p. 299). Both FIs in this study tended to position and assess their STs according to how much natural teaching personality they possessed and, as Labaree (2008) have described, usually based their assessment on the STs' "confident and forceful" show of personality in the classroom. While they believed that those who did not demonstrate much

teaching “personality” will develop it over time with more practice, the tendency to focus on “personality” often distract from a more accurate assessment of an ST’s development, which could have led to more productive and helpful conversations about improving practice.

The isolation and anxieties which some of the STs in this study experienced as a result of the intersecting storylines parallels the observation of some scholars about the lonely struggle of novice teachers (e.g., Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser, 1983). As Rosaen and Florio-Ruane (2008) describe,

. . . beginning teachers . . . personalize problems, hold themselves to unrealistic standards of knowledge and performance, blame themselves when difficulty arises, and make (or abandon) the crossing from student to teacher essentially alone (Britzman, 1991). (p. 712).

The findings suggest that the STs’ struggles are made worse when their studenting anxieties, already enhanced by the FI’s and CTs’ conceptions of the value of independent and extended practice, lead them to hide their weaknesses. For STs like Neil and Edith, the studenting storyline they knew so well and tended to fall back eventually stymied their learning and, in the case of Neil, contributed to the demise of his dream of becoming a teacher.

Recommendations for Field Instructors and Teacher Education Programs

The findings of this study suggest that triad members’ tacit assumptions about the university, teaching, and the learning to teach process could assert much influence over triad interaction, affecting not only the practice of field-based teacher educators but also the learning of student teachers. As teacher education programs explore ways to strengthen the connection between campus and field-based teacher education, they need to attend to the meaning-making processes of their members. What storylines or catalogue of conventions do members draw upon as they make sense of program elements and their interactions with one another? The findings of

this study suggest that these interpretative resources are powerful in their influence on members' interpretations, especially when they are left unchallenged as tacit "frozen" narratives.

If storylines, especially those that are counter to teacher education goals, can be as persistent and influential as this study suggests, field instructors and other field-based teacher educators need to be as aware of them - their own presuppositions as those of the other triad members. I suggest the use of positioning theory as a tool for identifying the positions and storylines among triad members, although field instructors will have to first learn it. As an initial step, field based teacher educators might be encouraged to reflect on their assumptions about teacher education and how they influence their practice. They might also be on the lookout for manifestations of the common storylines- maxims about teaching and novice teacher learning such as those uncovered in this study and the teacher education literature – and critically appraise their influences, whether individually or collectively.

To promote and support such reflective practices among teacher educators, programs need to create a culture that encourages inquiry, metacognition, and collaboration. At the same time, they need to create a learning community (Shulman, 2004) within which members feel safe to surface and question assumptions and discuss problems of practice without fear of being judged incompetent. Field instructors and cooperating teachers need to be equipped and supported in such metacognitive engagements (their own as well as others) because "as part of a circle of learning to teach, . . . their learning is directly connected to future teacher' learning" (Mueller & Skamp, 2003, p. 439). In addition to being more cognizant and critical about underlying assumptions, FIs and CTs also need to be able to talk about teaching in ways that would help a novice better understand and master its constituent parts. Storylines like *practice makes perfect*, *sink or swim*, and *natural teaching personality* persist likely because teaching is

complex and hard to describe, leading many to conclude that it is more an “art” than a science, which can only be learned via intuitive practice. Unless this belief is challenged and replaced by the perspective that teaching practice can indeed be taken apart, specified, taught, and learned, these conventional storylines will likely persist. Promising pedagogies of practice that deconstruct teaching into accessible parts have been developed by scholars (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009) but their implementation may be hampered by prevailing storylines that resist them, such as those uncovered by this study. To achieve success, programs will have to ensure buy-in from all members, a feat that can only be achieved if FIs and CTs are engaged in a collaborative learning community, characterized by trust and respect. This would require university faculty who are respected in both school and academia, and who possess the necessary knowledge and people skills for the task, to assume leadership.

Essentially, field-based teacher educators (FIs and any university faculty working with them and the schools) need the people-skills to build trusting relationships with their STs as well as their school-based colleagues, in order to overcome the prevailing *ivory tower* storyline and other counter-productive narratives such as those identified in this study. As Bullough and Draper (2004) concluded, successful models of professional development and mentoring are “grounded in respectful relationships” that build on the strengths of its members, honor individual differences, and “recognize the difficulty of unlearning” (p. 419). The National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), too, recognizes that clinical faculty ought to possess, among other qualifications, “a complement of personal skills for building trust, rapport, and communication with candidates” (2010, p. 21). They also recommend that a Task Force be set up “to develop rigorous selection criteria to identify the specific skills and attributes

required for working with candidates and new teachers,” along with a certification program for clinical faculty and clinical teachers (p. 21). While the effects of such recommendations are yet unknown, the importance of attending to the learning of field-based teacher educators (which include FIs, CTs, and other variations) is also noted by the findings of this study. Meanwhile, programs will do well look into both the recruitment and professional development of their field-based teacher educators, ensuring that they share convictions which are consistent with program goals.

Given the complexity of human relations and institutional variations, change efforts will have to be sensitive to the local cultures, systems of meanings, and programmatic constraints within each university. For example, the program within which this study was conducted will have to contend with CT-recruitment issues that are complicated by limited school sites and principal cooperation. It is not uncommon for school principals to appoint teachers whom they deem “problematic” as CTs in the hopes that an ST from a respected university will mitigate the effects of that teacher in the classroom. Some busy principals are also known to not take an active role in CT-recruitment, allowing any teacher, some of whom have questionable skills and intentions, to take on an ST at will. Such fundamental challenges will have to be dealt with if the program hopes to achieve coherence and provide its STs with better field experiences.

With determination, sensitivity, and concerted effort, however, programs might be able to generate alternative storylines for teacher education, narratives that affirm collaboration among university and school based teacher educators, well-supported field based learning that involves relevant and deliberate practice, and ultimately, a rigorous teacher education model that takes pride in producing well-trained professionals who are fully equipped to engage students, as well as themselves, in purposeful life-long learning. To do so, they would need to rally all their

teacher educators – CTs, FIs, and university faculty – to co-construct a unified perspective of teaching and teacher education curriculum. Unless a compelling and common set of beliefs and storylines about teaching and the learning to teach experience is shared by all triad members and the other teacher educators STs encounter in the course of their training, persistent stereotypes like those uncovered in this study will likely prevail, just as they have for decades as the literature shows.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings of this study are interesting, and their implications, promising, the size and nature of this exploratory study do present apparent limitations.

First of all, this is a small study involving ten student teaching triad members and focusing on the work of only two university supervisors. Hence, the implications that I have drawn are specific to the experiences of these four student teaching triads. As discussed in Chapter three, the goal of this study was not generalizability but transferability (Linclon and Guba, 1985). In the interpretive tradition, the search is not for abstract universals (statistical generalizations from a sample to a population) but for “concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great details and then comparing it with other cases studies in equally great detail” (Erickson, 1986, p. 130). To enhance transferability and its applicability across contexts, I employed the following strategies: typicality, careful triangulation of multiple data sources, and rich, thick description of details.

Secondly, my own bias as a single researcher who was also colleagues of the FIs in this study must be acknowledged. To minimize this limitation, I engaged in critical reflection through journaling throughout the data collection and analysis process, solicited the help of colleagues

for comparative coding and feedback to ensure inter-rater reliability, and performed member checks to ensure the transcripts were accurate.

Another methodological limitation of this study is the limited amount of data I was able to gather of the cooperating teacher's interactions with the student teachers. Being a single researcher, this is a physically and logistically impossible feat. However, I managed to record and participate in all triadic interactions, collect all written artifacts reflecting their interactions (including CT assessment reports of STs and their letters of recommendations), and conduct multiple interviews with participants whose trust I was fortunate to gain over time. As noted before, such access is very rare, which accounts for the many self-studies in the field. The other study that used positioning theory to study triad relationships admitted to using other sources of data like interviews and mentor-mentor conversations because "the participants were reluctant to record their conversations as they interacted" (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p. 410). Prior to this particular study, I have encountered similar problems as very few FIs and CTs were comfortable about being observed, much less "studied."

Suggestions for Future Research

Since positioning theory, as it is used in this small study, has yielded promising findings, I look forward to its application in a larger study, perhaps one that is department or program wide. Such a study would enable programs to locate the psychological and sociological patterns that shape member interpretations of program elements and their interactions with one another – processes which have otherwise been "hidden and secret" (Billig, 1997; p. 210).

When applied to student teaching triads again, a collection of larger studies would provide a larger database of information from which a deeper understanding of the interpretative

systems of members might be gained. Even if additional or different storylines were uncovered, their implications would be equally informative.

However, this method of inquiry can be used to study social interactions of any kind, especially if one is interested in identifying and classifying the repertoire of meanings from which participants draw. For teacher education, the possibilities of its use are many.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study, I argue that insights gained from examining the work of field instructors will be informative for those interested in teacher education reform, especially in the student-teaching component of university-based programs. Uncovering the sense-making processes of triad members and the catalogue of conventions from which they draw has revealed powerful influences that might contradict program goals. Unless these internal interpretative resources are attended to, the positive effects of prudent changes to program structures or curriculum on student-teacher learning might be diminished. I have recommended ways by which field instructors and teacher education programs can do this, but they imply attention to the professional development of university supervisors and other field-based teacher educators.

Concerning the professional development of teachers, Shulman (2004) has argued,

Efforts at school reform must give as much attention to creating the conditions for teacher learning as for student learning. Any effort at school reform will ultimately fail if it does not ask itself: “As I design this grand plan for improving the quality of learning in students, have I designed with equal care and concern a plan for teacher learning in this setting?” (p. 504)

Perhaps the same considerations can be applied to teacher education reform? As university TEPs focus on plans to improve the quality of learning in their candidates, they might do well to also plan for teacher educator learning.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

Unless otherwise indicated, these interview guides were used for all participants. Additional clarification questions were asked to follow up on points raised by the participants. The naturalistic, inductive, and creative approach to data gathering and inquiry I choose to adopt allows for patterns, categories, and themes to emerge emically from the data (Patton, 2002). Such an emergent design means that specific questions cannot all be given in advance since significant considerations must be allowed to emerge, develop, and unfold as I immerse myself in the details and specifics of the data over time. The questions provided below will serve as a guide; however, participants may be asked to elaborate on relevant topics that surface over the course of the interviews. Additional informal conversational interviews may be conducted to follow-up on interesting topics raised by participants or issues about which I became curious as an observer. Participants knew they possessed the absolute freedom to decline answering any question, to terminate participation, to cease recording, or to ask for their words to be erased.

First Interview Protocol

Background

How and why did you become a field instructor/ cooperating teacher/student-teacher?

Tell me more about your background.

What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences do you think you have that will influence your work this semester?

Views

On teaching:

What do you think the goals of education should be?

What do you think about teaching and being a teacher?

What are the characteristics of an effective or good teacher?

On Teacher Education:

What should a good teacher education program do?

What are your views on student-teaching?

What are your views on field instruction?

What are your views on the role of the cooperative teacher?
What do you think about your role as a FI/CT/ST?
What principles and values guide your practice?
How would you describe the following: an effective FI, an effective CT, an effective ST?
What characteristics must a ST display in order to qualify for certification?
What are your views about elements of this teacher education program, including its requirements (observations, conferences, ST/FI/CT responsibilities) and paperwork?

Objectives and Expectations:

What are your goals and objectives for the semester?
What are your expectations of the CT/FI/ST/high school students this semester?
In what ways do you plan to contribute to your ST's learning this semester? (FI and CT)
In what ways do you plan to contribute to your students' learning this semester? (ST)
Do you have any concerns or foresee any area of difficulties?
What kind of support would you like for this semester?

Program Elements:

What are your views regarding the program and how it is organized?
What are your views regarding its elements, for example, the observations, the documents, the seminars, the requirements, etc.

Reflection on Current Experience:

Describe your experience in this student-teaching arrangement thus far.
Describe your experience of being a FI/CT/ST thus far.

At the end of each interview:

Do you think there is a question I should have asked you which I didn't?
Do you have any more to add?

Follow-up Interviews

What do you think of the semester so far?
Did everything go as you had expected?
What stands out for you?
What worked particularly well for you? What didn't?
If you can turn back the clock, what would you have done differently?
What do you think of the program elements: paperwork, observations, meetings, and other requirements? What has been your experience with them?
Describe your experience with your ST/FI/CT.

What are your views regarding _____ (name of CT/FI/ST in participant's triad group).
Describe your experience with him/her so far.
Any other questions pertaining to significant issues/themes that have arisen.

At the end of each interview:

Do you think there is a question I should have asked you which I didn't?

Do you have any more to add?

APPENDIX B

INITIAL CODE LIST

RQ1: How do members interpret program elements?	Requirement, Hoops, Formality, Busywork, Jargon, Theory versus practical, How-tos, Irrelevance, I Don't Know, OB-useful
RQ2: How do members interpret their interactions with one another?	Personality, Natural, Gatekeeper, Care, (Put on a)Show, Studenting, Interview, Performance, Façade, Experience, Practice makes perfect, Intuition, Charity, Support, Sink/swim, History, Expectation, I know, Powerless, Individualism
RQ3: How do these interpretations influence FI practice?	Compassion, Positive (FI), Shtik, Practical tips, Outsider, Confidence, Assessor, Compliance, Limited, Doubt, Training

APPENDIX C

CROSS-CASE MATRIX OF THEMES (INITIAL INSTANTIATION)

RQ1: How do members interpret program elements?										
Initial Themes	CASE A1			CASE A2		CASE B1			CASE B2	
	FI-Ben	ST-Andy	CT-Mr. Scott	ST-Neil	CT-Mr. Mills	FI-Nina	ST-Grace	CT-Ms. Cassidy	ST-Edith	CT-Mr. Yates
Paperwork assignments are requirements	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Paperwork/assignments are hoops to jump through	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Program assessment forms are a necessary formality though not particularly useful	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
FIs and CTs are not aware of TEP curriculum/what STs are taught in the courses	√		√		√	√		√		√
Coursework is mostly irrelevant busywork		√		√			√		√	
University teaches esoteric theories, not practical how-tos	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Theories are buzzwords/jargon	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
University should teach STs practical how-tos	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Observations and post-observation conferences (by FIs) are useful	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√

RQ2: How do members interpret their interactions with one another?										
Initial Themes	CASE A1			CASE A2		CASE B1			CASE B2	
	FI-Ben	ST-Andy	CT-Mr. Scott	ST-Neil	CT-Mr. Mills	FI-Nina	ST-Grace	CT-Ms. Cassidy	ST-Edith	CT-Mr. Yates
FIs are evaluators / gatekeepers of the	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	√	√

profession										
STs put on a good show for the FIs because they are being assessed		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
STs hide weakness/problems		√		√			√		√	
STs value Post-observation feedback from the FI because it is practical	√	√		√	√	√	√		√	√
FIs are facilitators; needed only if there are serious problems in the CT-ST relationship	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
FIs are positive supporters to help STs gain confidence	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
CTs should guide and mentor STs closely/STs learn to teach from them	√	√		√		√	√		√	
CTs offer their classrooms as places for STs to apply theory to practice (goodwill/charity); CTs' priority is their own students	√		√		√	√		√		√
Sink or swim model of learning / STs will figure it out with more practice	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Teaching is intuitive; one gets better with more experience, practice, and by observing others	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Good teachers possess personality/natural abilities, eg, dramatic flair/love kids. They put on a good "show."	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Field experience is for STs to discover if teaching is the right career-fit	√		√		√	√		√		√
I (ST) already know how to teach		√							√	

RQ3: How do these interpretations influence FI practice?										
Initial Themes	CASE A1			CASE A2		CASE B1			CASE B2	
	FI-Ben	ST-Andy	CT-Mr. Scott	ST-Neil	CT-Mr. Mills	FI-Nina	ST-Grace	CT-Ms. Cassidy	ST-Edith	CT-Mr. Yates
FI is compassionate and encouraging towards ST; offers positive feedback and practical tips because learning-to-teach is a difficult process	√					√				
FI is not privy to daily ST-CT dynamics	√					√				
FI knowledge of CT-ST relationship limited to what he/she directly observes or what ST/CT shares	√					√				
FI has minimal/no influence over CT practice	√					√				
FI and CT are not in a close partnership. They keep a respectful distance from each other	√		√		√	√		√		√
FI is not privy to ST/CT agendas	√					√				
FI expect STs to comply with program requirements as students/ They see it as an indication of professionalism	√					√				
FIs (and CTs) do not know/care for theories (buzzwords/jargon); they are concerned with the practical	√					√				
FI- practice is intuitive; one improves with more experience and practice	√					√				
FIs do not think training (for FI) from the university is needed; they feel confident about their ability to offer practical support	√					√				

FIs, unaware of TEP curriculum/what STs have been taught in the courses, cannot help STs make the link between coursework and practice	√					√					
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APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS (POSITION & STORYLINE)

Transcript: FI-Nina & ST-Grace Post-Observation Conference #1 (Excerpt)

Code	Transcript	Storyline	Position
Positive	Nina: E: Over all, I think you did a fine job.	Encouraging Mentor vs. Uncertain/Scared ST needing assurance and encouragement	FI positions self as a “positive reinforcer”; positions ST as uncertain beginner in need of assurance
Positive	Grace: Thank you.		
Natural	Nina: And I hope you’ll now stop worrying. You do have so many natural abilities that you should start getting comfortable with them. And trusting yourself. You can, you’re bright, you have good rapport with your kids, and you have a VERY nice delivery. You really do. Your voice and expression. And even your body-language, you don’t close up, you’re very open to them. You look so professional, you dress nicely. It separates you from the kids, and that’s important.	Naturally occurring teaching personality.	FI is an experienced elder who identifies the ST’s natural abilities and help her be aware of them so as to build confidence.
Student- ing	Grace: Thank you, it’s good to hear that you think things are going well, coz sometimes you know, it might feel loud to me, out of control, or was it okay.	Studenting	ST positions self as a learner who needs and is appreciative of assurance and guidance; ST positions FI as a knowledgeable mentor/assessor
	Nina: It’s what you’re comfortable with too. You have to find your comfort level with that. . . . everyone has a		

<p>Practice</p> <p>Intuition</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>different quiet level they can handle, don't be afraid to let yourself be comfortable at the level you are comfortable. Sometimes, just a reminder that it's too noisy – “Just a head's up, guys, it's a little too loud in here. I can't hear myself talk” – something like that. But I thought, generally, your classroom management was good. You move around, you got to your students, and overall, I thought it was a really good class!</p>	<p>Intuitive/discovery learning via practice</p> <p>Encouraging Mentor vs. Uncertain/Scared ST needing practical advice, assurance and encouragement</p>	<p>whose opinion matters.</p> <p>FI positions self as a “positive reinforcer”; positions ST as uncertain beginner in need of assurance and practical advice.</p>
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APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT: COVER LETTER & CONSENT FORM

Dear Field Instructor / Cooperating Teacher,

My name is Alison HK Tan and I am a graduate student at [. . .] School of Education who is interested to learn more about the pedagogy and practice of field instruction. My own work as a university field instructor from January 2004 to April 2008 has triggered my curiosity about this prevalent but understudied feature of teacher preparation programs. I am writing to ask you to consider participating in my pilot-study of field instruction, a study which will contribute to scholarly conversations about the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education.

In particular, I seek to deconstruct the roles, practices, and influences of field instruction by examining its actual work. My driving question will be: what influences field instructor practice? Building on previous studies and my own experience as a field instructor, this broad inquiry recognizes the multifaceted nature of the role, the varied environments in which supervision takes place, the complex relationships it involves, and the multiple objectives it serves. I want to understand how the student-teaching triadic set-up shapes and is shaped by the practice of field instruction in this learning to teach and teaching to learn negotiation.

My role as a researcher in this study is not to evaluate or diagnose the work of the student-teacher, cooperating teacher, or field instructor (who make up the student teaching triad). Instead, I want to learn from you and to understand field instruction and student teaching from your point of view.

There are three methods by which I hope to gain an understanding of how field instruction and the triadic roles are constructed. First, I would like to attend and take notes at all three-way meetings, all field instructor observations and their follow-up post-observation conferences, the weekly ED304 student-teaching seminars, and the monthly field instructors' study-group meetings. With your permission and at your discretion, I would like to audiotape and videotape all the meetings, seminars, and conferences to back-up my field notes. Second, I would like to collect a copy of all the paperwork that corresponds with student-teaching and field instruction, which will include but may not be limited to the following: the student teaching handbook, assessment forms, final-evaluation forms, post-observation memos, ED304 assignments, the Unit Plan Project drafts, the teaching portfolio, and letters of recommendation. These artifacts will contribute much to my analysis process. Thirdly, I would like to interview you so that I can get an in-depth understanding of your thoughts about the student-teaching triadic experience. I hope to at least be able to conduct three interviews with you, spread out over the semester. Since detailed note-

taking will not be very feasible during our conversations, I would like to audiotape these interviews so I can study them later on.

In order to minimize any risk you might encounter as a participant in this study, your identity will be protected at all times. I will use pseudonyms for everyone who participates in the study, and I will keep all my notes and tapes locked in my study at home. No one else besides the members of my dissertation committee will see the notes that I write or listen to the interview tapes. If you allow me to interview you, you can ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time, and you can ask that portions of the interview be deleted after the fact. I will not repeat or disclose anything that you say to me privately, and I will not share any of the materials I collect with anyone. When I write my paper, I will not reveal any information that could identify you, your opinions, or this school.

There is no penalty if you choose not to participate in this study. You can agree to participate in just part of the study, for example, by allowing me to take notes on statements you make at meetings but not allowing me to interview you. You can also decide at any time that you no longer want to be part of the study, and in that case I will destroy or delete any data I have collected that involves you. No matter what you decide, there is no penalty to you for not participating in the study.

I have met with the administrators of the SOE teacher education program and they are supportive of this study. I would be happy to talk to you more on the phone or in person about the project at your convenience. Please review the consent form on the next page, and then contact me with questions or concerns, or simply return it indicating your preferences. I look forward to talking with you further, and I thank you for your willingness to consider participating in the study.

Sincerely,

Alison HK Tan
[Contact Information]

Consent Form

Purpose: This research study will investigate the roles, practices, and influences of field instruction; the factors that shape and affect its pedagogy and practice; and how two student-teaching triads (each consisting of a student-teacher, a cooperating teacher, and a field instructor) work to navigate the learning to teach and teaching to learn experience.

Participation: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate or for withdrawing from the study. Any decision on your part regarding this study will not affect your evaluation or grades in ED302/304. To

participate in the study, you will agree to have your statements during meetings, interviews I conduct, seminars, and conferences recorded in field notes, audio taped, and videotaped. You may ask me at any time not to record any portion of the interactions or to erase them. The study will continue until the end of the 2006-07 school year.

Audio and Video taping: I will audio and video tape all meetings, interviews I conduct, seminars, and conferences. Participants may ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time or that particular portions of the interview be erased.

Interviews: I hope to at least be able to conduct three interviews with you, spread out over the semester. Each interview can last from half hour to an hour although you may choose the timing and duration of these interviews, depending on your schedule. In addition to these three interviews, I may request for up to two follow-up conversations in order to clarify what you have previously said. In total, you may spend up to approximately five hours of interviews/conversations with me this semester. Again, participants reserve every right to determine the length and frequency of these interviews.

Collection of ED302/304 Documents: For the purpose of this study, I will need to collect copies of all ED302/304 paperwork. These include all evaluation and assessment forms, all assignments submitted for the ED304 seminar including the portfolio and the Unit Plan Project, grades, reports, letters of recommendation, and any email correspondences related to ED302/304. Again, this is possible only with your consent. You reserve every right to withhold any document from me or request that I not include them in my study. Your generosity, however, will afford the study a more complete data set from which a more comprehensive analysis may be drawn.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be protected at all times. I will use pseudonyms in all data collection and reporting, and I will remove all identifying information about the participants and the school in order to protect participants' privacy. Any identifiers will be coded and stored separately; only I will have access to these materials. Data collected in this study will be available for analysis and sharing only with members of my dissertation committee. Results of the study will be made available to an audience of teacher educators and school reformers. I will keep all data locked in my study or in my possession at all times. I will retain the data throughout my career as an educational researcher because I might re-analyze the data in the future for another paper I might write. All information collected will remain confidential except as may be required by federal, state, or local law.

Risks and Benefits: This study has the potential to benefit individual members of the student-teaching triad by giving them the opportunity to explore in greater depth just what they mean when they talk about teaching, learning, and field instruction. They will also get to reflect on their practice and experience as either a teacher educator or a student-teacher, which may contribute to their work in rich ways.

The risks of this study to participants are very low. While participants risk revealing their thoughts and beliefs about their shared experiences and relationships, they will be assured of strict confidentiality and anonymity. To minimize the risk to participants, all statements made by study participants to me privately will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed or revealed to others outside of my dissertation committee. Even then, pseudonyms will be used on all materials presented to the committee.

IRB Administration: If you have questions about the study's approval or your rights as a research participant, you can contact the IRB Behavioral Sciences Committee at 540 East Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210; phone (734) 936-0933; fax (734) 998-9171; email irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Contact information: Please contact me if you have questions or concerns at any time about this study.

Alison HK Tan (Contact Information)	Prof. Lesley Rex, School of Education; Dissertation Committee Chairperson (Contact Information)
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Please indicate your preferences below:

I, _____, agree to participate in this study.

Please circle the relevant option:

- I consent to being audio taped. Yes / No
- I consent to being video taped. Yes / No
- I consent to being interviewed. Yes / No
- I consent to submitting all paperwork and documents related to the student-teaching semester for research purposes. Yes / No
- I consent to having my data stored securely and be re-analyzed for future studies by Alison HK Tan. Yes / No

Please be assured that you may change your mind regarding any or all of the options above at any time.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Title: Field Instructor / Cooperating Teacher (please circle the relevant option)

APPENDIX F

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT TEACHER, COOPERATING TEACHER, AND UNIVERSITY FIELD INSTRUCTOR (STUDENT TEACHING HANDBOOK, P. 5- 9)

Responsibilities of the Student Teacher

Student teaching affords the opportunity to gain experience practicing the art of teaching while under the guidance and support of an experienced teacher and with interaction of University staff and resources. It should be the forum from which to gain first hand classroom experience, as well as the time to critically reflect upon what is being learned from the practice of teaching.

At the center of student teaching are, of course, the grade 6-12 students. Everything we do should be governed by a desire to provide positive and enriching learning opportunities that help the grade 6-12 students grow academically, socially and personally.

Student teachers are responsible for assuming a professional role in the school academically and socially, knowing students and planning effective and appropriate lessons and activities for them, participating in the school community, and taking advantage of all support systems built into the student teaching experience.

(1) Assuming a professional role in the school, academically and socially includes:

- Becoming acquainted with the school community (students, staff, parents);
- Developing a working relationship with the cooperating teacher by mutually establishing a plan for learning about and assuming an increasing role in the classroom practice;
- Learning about school policies and procedures related to record keeping, classroom management, emergency routines, scheduling, reporting student progress, and the obtaining of equipment and instructional resources;
- Assuming the school's expectations related to the student teaching assignment, including levels of authority and responsibility, participation in school-community events, appropriate dress and interactions with students, and teacher attendance, lateness and preparedness;
- Becoming familiar with relevant state and district curricular guidelines and mandates, as well as for special needs students; and
- Taking opportunities to visit classes of other teachers within and beyond the assigned subject area of grade level.

(2) Knowing students and planning effective and appropriate lessons and activities for students includes:

- Exhibiting knowledge and understanding of instructional material;
- Working with the cooperating teacher to identify a maximum of 6 “Focal Students” to help one’s understanding of students’ strengths and needs as learners;
- Working with the cooperating teacher on a regular basis to help choose and articulate worthwhile purposes for lessons, units, and other classroom activities;
- Attending to individual students’ interests, strengths, prior knowledge and skills to differentiate instruction;
- Create and implement a Unit Plan Project under the tutelage of the CT and FI, as the capstone artifact of the student teaching experience;
- Demonstrating understanding and creating artifacts as evidence of proficiency in the indicators for the special topics courses in “technology in education” and “teaching students with exceptionalities”;
- Enact lessons, units, and classroom activities and structures that elicit, build upon, and make visible authentic student inquiry and student thinking;
- Reflecting on instruction independently, with the cooperating teacher, and with university field instructor to evaluate progress;
- Creating assessments that provide evidence of student learning and basing future instruction upon that evidence;
- Building classroom community through practices that create and sustain opportunities for both individual and collaborative effort and that promote a climate in which all students contribute; and
- Linking learning through the use of interdisciplinary approaches to instruction when meaningful and effective.

(3) Participating in the school community includes:

- Attending faculty/staff meetings, participating in professional development opportunities, and working with small groups of school community members;
- Participating in extra-curricular activities, i.e., field trips, sporting events, etc.; and
- Participating in parent-student conferences and meetings.

(4) Taking advantage of all support systems built into the student teaching experience includes:

- Allowing for daily and weekly protected time with the cooperating teacher for planning and evaluation
- Working collaboratively with the cooperating teacher and the university field instructor, making both aware of any serious problems or concerns as soon as they arise;
- Using the resources of the university for materials and support;

- Participating thoughtfully and reliably in student teaching seminar and special topics courses; and
- Completing and reviewing the baseline, mid-term, and final evaluations with the cooperating teacher and the university field instructor.

Responsibilities of the Cooperating Teacher

Teaching is a complex and challenging profession, and the student teaching term is a critical period in the development of the new teacher. Cooperating teachers are selected because of their understanding and ability to guide student teachers through this important classroom experience. Cooperating teachers are also chosen because of their expertise and knowledge of students and teaching, and their ability to share that knowledge in preparing new teachers.

Teaching is a complex craft and the student teaching experience is especially designed for the student teacher as a learner. As with the induction of any novice, shortcomings and mistakes are to be expected. The cooperating teacher's continual guidance, mentoring, and modeling are essential to making the student teaching term a success.

In order to facilitate this successful learning experience, it is the responsibility of the cooperating teacher to form a mentoring relationship with the student teacher and a working relationship with the University, immerse the student teacher in the art and practice of teaching, and introduce the student teacher to the school community and culture.

(1) Forming a mentoring relationship with the student teacher and a working relationship with the University includes:

- Taking time each day to check in with, and advise, the student teacher and to discuss immediate teaching issues;
- Developing a regular weekly meeting schedule - "protected time" - with the student teacher, to discuss overall progress, long-range plans, and larger teaching goals;
- Making explicit the cooperating teacher's own thought processes as she/he plans for and reflects upon teaching;
- Keeping both the student teacher and the university field instructor aware of any serious problems or concerns as soon as they arise;
- Working collaboratively with the field instructor in guiding the student teacher's learning experience; and
- Completing and discussing periodic assessment tool and final evaluation with the student teacher, and submitting these evaluations in a timely manner; and

(2) Immersing the student teacher in the art and practice of teaching includes:

- Helping guide the learning of student teachers according to the Domains of Professional Learning (see p. 3);
- Making the student teacher aware of the needs of students and any special instructional plans for individuals or groups;
- Identifying, with the student teacher, a maximum of 6 “focal students.” Focal students should be used to help the student teacher see effects of lessons on actual students, think about the development of assessment tools, formulate their unit plans, and reflect upon daily instruction, etc.
- Providing opportunities for the student teacher to participate in the full range of the teacher’s professional activities, including those beyond the classroom;
- Conducting formative evaluations of the student teacher’s work through the review of lesson plans, observation of instruction, monitoring interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, and discussing the assessment and evaluation of student work;
- Encouraging experimentation, which means allowing the student teacher the freedom to try out original ideas, and providing feedback that helps the student teacher to become aware of both the intentions and the results of their teaching;
- Modeling instructional techniques related to the professional and developmental needs of the student teacher; and
- Encouraging and supporting observation of other teachers.

During the student teacher’s “lead teaching,” the cooperating teacher remains an essential part of the learning experience and his/her responsibilities include:

- Helping the student teacher continue to develop her/his evolving teaching philosophy, and to examine how that philosophy is being realized in the classroom;
- Encouraging critical reflection, so that lessons, ideas, and plans, can be revised and refined;
- Continuing to model strategies, approaches, and specific pedagogical techniques for the student teacher’s ongoing learning;
- Maintaining a degree of presence in the classroom in order to provide feedback and to monitor as needed; and
- Assisting the student teacher with individual grade 6-12 students who may need special attention.

(3) Introducing the student teacher to the school community and culture includes:

- Acquainting the student teacher with the school’s policies and procedures related to record keeping, classroom management, emergency routines, scheduling, reporting student progress, and the obtaining of equipment and instructional resources;
- Familiarizing the student teacher with relevant state and district curricular standards, guidelines and mandates, as well as provisions for special needs students;

- Introducing and orienting the student teacher to the faculty, administration, support service personnel, and related school-community agencies;
- Providing opportunities for the student teacher to visit classes of other teachers both within and beyond subject area or grade level; and
- Helping the student teacher understand the school's expectations related to the student teaching assignment, including levels and limits of authority and responsibility, participation in school community events, appropriate dress, interactions with students, and teacher lateness/attendance.

The Responsibilities of the University Field Instructor

Each student teacher is assigned a University Field Instructor. This person is a representative of the University's teacher certification programs and thus guides the student teacher, in conjunction with the cooperating teacher, in field work that reflects and reinforces program themes. The university field instructor observes, advises, and confers with both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Additionally, s/he has responsibility for conducting the weekly student teaching seminar, which provides the setting for critical reflection about the practice of teaching and learning.

University field instructors are chosen because of their strong interest in teacher education and/or issues of grade 6-12 student learning. Frequently, they have extensive teaching experience in the subject areas and/or grade levels in which their student teachers are working.

In order to facilitate a successful learning experience for the student teacher and a worthwhile experience for the cooperating teacher, the field instructor has responsibility for serving as a liaison between the University and the placement sites by facilitating a positive and productive relationship among involved parties, mentoring and observing student teachers, and conducting a weekly student teaching seminar.

(1) Serving as a liaison between the University and placement site by facilitating a positive and productive relationship among involved parties includes:

- Maintaining an open line of communication between the University and the cooperating school by arranging and conducting the initial three-way meeting, outlining of a custom plan the student teacher's teaching responsibilities throughout the term. This also includes initiating and maintaining interaction with building staff and administration;
- Working throughout the term, in conjunction with the cooperating teacher, to ensure that University program expectations are met;
- Communicating with the cooperating teacher and student teacher about site visits, required forms and evaluations, program changes, and special events;

- Problem-solving issues that may arise during the student teaching experience and communicating appropriately with the University about those issues.
- Working with the student teacher and the cooperating teacher to determine the student teacher's readiness for substitute teaching; and
- Completing and discussing periodic assessment tool, writing Exit Report, and submitting grades for student teaching and seminar.

(2) Mentoring and observing the student teacher includes:

- Developing a collegial relationship with the student teacher through openness and availability in an on-going and personal manner;
- Conducting a minimum six site visits during the student teaching term:
 - 1st = "Getting Started Meeting" (see p. 12)
 - 2nd- 5th = Observation of student teacher (may include a co-observation)
 - 6th = Final evaluation meeting
- Arranging to 'debrief' with the student teacher immediately following the observation period or at an agreed upon time within 24 hours. (Debriefing is defined as advising, evaluating, critiquing, communicating, and helping the student teacher think critically about lessons and/or students); and
- Providing at least three written narratives and commentary to the student teacher within an appropriate time frame and completing an Exit Report for each student teacher at the end of the term.

(3) Conducting a weekly student teaching seminar includes:

- Establishing an environment conducive to a fair and equitable exchange of questions and ideas among the student teachers;
- Providing a forum through which student teachers critically reflect upon what they are learning from and about the practice of teaching;
- Incorporating the Domains of Professional Learning (see p. 3) into discussion and content
- Developing seminar meetings around issues that are subject area-specific and drawn from the field instructor's observations of the various placements;
- Creating assignments that reflect the program goals of helping students think critically about teaching and learning; and
- Facilitating the Unit Plan Project and portfolio development; and
- Supporting the student teachers efforts to integrate the special topics areas into the UPP and student teaching experience.

APPENDIX G

UNIT PLAN PROJECT (STUDENT TEACHING HANDBOOK, P. 22-27)

UNIT PLAN PROJECT (UPP)

The purpose of the Unit Plan Project, outlined in the following pages, is to support and stimulate the candidate's continued learning as a teacher by developing the habits of mind, sense of responsibility, initiative, and the intellectual and practical skills needed to design units and lessons that are worthy and responsible uses of students' time and abilities.

This work helps to make explicit each individual part of the planning process such that, as a beginning professional, the candidate has the capacity to make good decisions about what students should know and be able to do. In doing this work, the student teacher is both cognizant of and able to articulate the rationale and purposes for each part of the unit. The deliberative procedure outlined here is not a 'typical' planning process; rather, it is a means of highlighting and integrating each element of pedagogical responsibility in order to help internalize it and make it a natural part of who the student teacher is as a beginning professional. We believe, however, that while not a typical way of planning, this process is a useful one that can be utilized at any point in one's teaching career to help the teacher learn from his or her own practice and to learn more about how to teach his or her subject matter to grade 6-12 students appropriately and effectively.

To begin the project, the cooperating teacher and student teacher identify 2-4 focal students to help the student teacher ground her or his planning in a flexible and developing sense of the strengths, needs, and interests of the actual learners in her or his care. Focal students should be chosen with respect to racial, socio-economic, gender, and academic diversity.

The student teacher and cooperating teacher should identify the topic or area for study, using state and district curriculum guidelines as appropriate, as well as the knowledge and experience of the cooperating teacher. Over the course of the initial weeks, the student teacher should utilize time when not actively engaged in instruction to investigate resources, develop unit purposes, goals and daily objectives, and identify ways of assessing student learning, all the while using the sample group of focal students as a reference for the range of learners in the classroom.

Significant guidance for the Unit Plan Project will be provided in the student teaching seminar, and no later than the seventh week, a draft of the complete plan will be shared with the CT, as well as with the field instructor and fellow student teachers. This will happen prior to the enactment of the plan and in time for revision.

All three participants should be mindful of the opportunity the Unit Plan provides to both plan instruction for, and reflect upon, a particular subject matter area and therefore should construct the student teacher's teaching responsibilities in such a way as to allow her or him to fully engage in this project by scheduling implementation with ample time for completion before the end of the term.

Unit Plan Project (UPP) for Student Teachers

The Unit Plan Project (UPP) provides you with an opportunity for taking responsibility for your students' learning and for developing the habits of mind of teachers with a wealth of professional experience. To make the most of this professional development activity, approach it with a spirit of inquiry, being ready to make discoveries through your successes and frustrations. In the end, the process of planning, teaching, and reflecting on the instructional unit will become even more important than the physical documents that you produce.

The Unit Plan Project will involve three major components, or steps:

- 1) **Teaching Plan:** a formal, typed, fully detailed unit plan, of approximately 2-5 weeks, enacted during the "lead teaching" portion of the student teaching experience
- 2) **Annotations:** handwritten comments and reflections written on a daily basis within the teaching plan
- 3) **Analysis of Students' Work:** a study of students' final products resulting from the unit plan, including a close reading of three representative products, reflective writing, and an end-of-term conversation with the field instructor

Unit Plan Project Step #1: The Teaching Plan

Rationale: This step enables you to gain experience in creating a unified, meaningful unit of instruction in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of your host school; to make explicit your thinking about each step of the planning process so that you can engage in lively, meaningful conversations with mentors and colleagues; and to test your unit from start to finish by enacting it fully during your lead teaching time.

Instructions: In consultation with your cooperating teacher and your field instructor, develop a formal, typed, fully detailed teaching plan for an instructional unit of approximately 2-5 weeks. (You may work within, alongside, or apart from the curriculum used at your host school, according to your cooperating teacher’s direction.) As you plan the unit, carefully consider the strengths, needs, and interests of your focal students, as they should serve as a reference for the range of learners in your classroom. To receive constructive feedback in a timely manner, you must submit a rough draft of this document to your cooperating teacher and field instructor well in advance of its implementation— according to the procedures that the three of you agree upon.

The teaching plan must include the following elements:

- Unit purposes/goals and unit rationale (Why is this unit worth doing? Why this unit, why now, and why for these students?) You may wish to generate a developmentally-appropriate way of sharing the rationale with your students.
- Identification of Michigan/district curriculum standards or benchmarks being addressed in unit
- Daily goals/purposes and instructional sequence (Why this lesson and/or activity, why now, why for these students, and what does it look like?)
- Daily identification of how strengths, needs, and interests of various focal students are being addressed
- Fully developed, intellectually serious, final assessment activity (Although you should design your own assessment activity, you are welcome to use it alongside an assessment activity required by your host school.)
- Rubric for evaluating students’ final assessment activity

*NOTE: You may wish to consult the “Planning Framework” section of this handbook, your cooperating teacher, and your field instructor as you get started on your unit and as you reconsider your plans.

Unit Plan Project Step #2: Annotations

Rationale: By writing annotations within your teaching plan on a daily basis, you will reflect thoughtfully on the effectiveness of each day’s lesson for specific groups of students; generate a lasting record of your impressions, which can be used as a guide for revisions or future iterations of this unit; and develop the habit of regular note-taking on your own teaching—a practice that many educators enact throughout their professional lives.

Instructions: Using a copy of your typed teaching plan, jot down notes on each lesson plan as you implement it. Specifically, you should write down any discoveries, successes, or mistakes

that you want to remember and learn from, using a format and language that will make sense to you when you revisit your notes in months and years to come.

Here are some general ideas to get you started:

- If you had the chance to re-teach this lesson to this group of students, what would you do differently?
- If you had the chance to teach this lesson in your own future classroom, what would you do differently?
- What elements of this lesson went particularly well, and how did your pedagogical decisions lead to these results?
- What elements of the lesson went particularly poorly, and how did your pedagogical decisions lead to these results?

Unit Plan Project Step #3: Analysis of Students' Work

Rationale: Although you are the primary beneficiary of Step #3, your students (both now and in the future) profit as well. By engaging in Step #3, you will strengthen your ability to assess students' work responsibly and fairly; enhance your confidence in making evaluative decisions; thoughtfully gauge the effectiveness of your unit plan; and gain experience in studying students' work as a guide for pedagogical revisions. Ultimately, your students will reap the benefit of receiving grades and evaluative comments that are understandable and fair, as well as learning with a teacher who values and studies students' understanding as a means of informing subsequent teaching and lesson/unit design.

Discovery Conversation: The final result of Step #3 will be an end-of-term conversation in which you and your field instructor discuss the discoveries that you have made through analyzing your students' work. To promote a productive exchange of ideas, you should bring your unit plan, these "Analysis of Students' Work" pages, and the three student products that you analyzed. Depending on the nature of your students' final products, you may need to bring in videotapes or photographs of the student work. (Refer to "Program Policies and Procedures" in the Student Teaching Handbook for information about issues of consent.)

A. Collect students' final products from your unit plan teaching. (Secondary student teachers should work with students' final products from one class period.)

B. Before you begin to evaluate the students' work, respond to the following prompt in the box below: Prior to examining the evidence of your students' final products, how well do you think that the aims and purposes of your unit were met? What is your sense of the students' learning that happened during the unit?

C. Using your rubric, evaluate the final products, providing comments that you can share directly with your students. (At this time, you may want to jot down some notes about the appropriateness of your rubric.)

D. Sort the students' work into three piles:

- Group 1: Students who struggled and did not accomplish the goals and purposes of the unit
- Group 2: Students who accomplished the goals and purposes of the unit
- Group 3: Students who exceeded the goals and purposes of the unit

E. Choose one sample from each pile for further reflection, and respond to the following prompt: What is your specific evidence that the student did not accomplish, accomplished, or exceeded the unit goals and purposes? Use the supplied chart to record your responses.

F. Answer the following question: Into which group(s) did your focal students' assessments fall? Evaluate the effectiveness of your planning and interventions based on the achievements of your focal students.

G. Contemplate the following BIG QUESTION:

What do the strengths and weaknesses of your students' final products tell you about your teaching of the unit and the students' understanding?

As you can see, the BIG QUESTION has been worded very comprehensively in order to invite wide-ranging reflections on the experience of designing and implementing a unit plan. To narrow your focus, with your field instructor's guidance, you should address only the following areas most significant to your results as the lenses for approaching the BIG QUESTION, or broad area of inquiry. Respond in 1-2 pages of thoughtful writing, and be prepared to share your ideas with your field instructor during your end-of-term Discovery Conversation.

- Evaluation/Assessment Tool: How satisfied are you with your evaluation rubric? To what extent did it allow you to assess students' learning fairly and accurately? To what extent could students understand and learn from it?
- Objectives: In the end, how well did your lessons and class activities enable students to achieve the unit objectives set forth? Was the scope of your unit too narrow or too ambitious?
- Organization: How well did the order or sequence of your lessons enable students' learning throughout the unit? To what extent did the pace of your lessons correlate to students' strengths and needs as learners?
- Lessons: Judging by your students' final products, which lesson during your unit plan was the most successful, and how did your

- pedagogical decisions make this lesson especially strong? Conversely, which lesson was the least successful, and why?
- Knowing and Engaging Students: How well did your unit plan accommodate the strengths, needs, and interests of diverse learners? If you haven't already examined your focal students' final products, include them with the three examples of student work that you have analyzed.
- Next Steps: If you had the opportunity to continue working with the Student from Group 1, Student from Group 2, and Student from
- Group 3 (or perhaps alternatively, with your focal students), what steps would you take to enhance their understanding and skills from this unit?
- Flexibility vs. Constraints: Using your students' work as a reference point, in what ways has teaching a unit plan in accordance with certain curricular guidelines (or your cooperating teacher's preferences) heightened your ability to promote students' learning? In what ways has conforming to boundaries hindered your ability to promote students' learning?
- In collaboration with your field instructor, develop your own prompt for approaching the BIG QUESTION.

H. Engage in an end-of-term Discovery Conversation with your field instructor. Be prepared to share and reflect on your thinking at every stage of Step #3—and to identify areas of inquiry that you will continue to consider in your future classroom.

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