“A Good Relationship Between Us”: How English Language Arts Preservice Teachers Navigate Professional Tensions During Student Teaching

by

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Dedication

To Kirah, Bennett, and Owen.

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Table of Contents

Dedication ii

Acknowledgements iii

List of Tables vii

List of Appendices viii

List of Tension Scenes ix

Abstract xi

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 English Language Arts Preservice Teachers Navigating the Middle 1

1.2 Research Questions 2

1.3 Scope and Limitations 3

1.4 Methodology 3

1.5 Dissertation Structure 4

1.6 Significance and Relevance 7

Chapter 2 Literature Review 9

2.1 Introduction 9

2.2 The Multiple Figured Worlds of English Teacher Preparation 10

2.3 Navigating Tensions 23

2.4 Supporting PTs to Navigate Tensions: Problem-Posing & Third Spaces 27

2.5 Finding Footing 33

2.6 Conclusion 34

Chapter 3 Methods 35

3.1 Introduction 35

3.2 Research Design 36

3.3 Researcher Positionality 48

3.4 Context of the Study 53

3.5 Setting and Participants 56

3.6 Data Collection Methods 67

3.7 Data Analysis 73

3.8 Trustworthiness and Credibility 82

3.9 Ethical Considerations 83

3.10 Limitations and Delimitations 84

3.11 Conclusion 86

Chapter 4 "I Will Be By Myself Eventually": Tensions Preservice Teachers Navigated During Student Teaching 88

4.1 Introduction 88

4.2 Research Question 1: What Tensions Do Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers Navigate During Student Teaching? 89

4.3 Research Question 1a: How are These Tensions Reflected in Program and State Policies? 102

4.4 Conclusion 113

Chapter 5 "A Good Relationship Between Us": How Preservice Teachers Navigated Mentor Teacher Relationships 115

5.1 Introduction 115

5.2 Theme 1: Interactive Frameworks 116

5.3 Theme 2: Positions 116

5.4 Theme 3: Figured Worlds and Storylines 117

5.5 Theme 4: Capital-D Discourses 118

5.6 Three Cases of Stepping In: Following in Step, Stepping With, Sidestepping 121

5.7 Conclusion 145

Chapter 6 “It’s Like a Closed Door, Behind a Closed Door": How Preservice Teachers Balanced Privacy and Collaboration to Navigate Professional Tensions 146

6.1 Introduction 146

6.2 Research Question 2: How Did PTs Talk About Navigating Tensions During Student Teaching? 147

6.3 Research Question 3: How Did Participating in a Problem of Practice Protocol Group Support Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers in Navigating Tensions During Student Teaching? 163

6.4 Conclusion 176

Chapter 7 Conclusion 178

7.1 Introduction: Research Problem and Objectives 178

7.2 Summary of Key Findings by Research Question 179

7.3 Discussion of Findings by Research Question 191

7.4 Implications 202

7.5 Limitations of the Study 210

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research 212

7.7 Final Thoughts/Closing Statement 219

Appendices 221

Bibliography 249

List of Tables

Table 1: ELA Curriculum Frameworks, Instructional Goals, and Social Aims 14

Table 2: Heterogeneity in Mentoring Approaches 16

Table 3: Participant Demographics 57

Table 4: Participants' Motivations for Teaching ELA 60

Table 5: Student Teaching Sites 67

Table 6: Data Source Descriptions and Timelines 68

Table 7: Meeting Descriptions 69

Table 8: Data and Analytic Methods by Research Question 73

Table 9: Tensions by Participant (Main Categories) 75

Table 10: Tensions by Participant (All Categories) 90

Table 11: Policies PTs Navigated During Student Teaching 154

Table 12: Tensions Codebook 239

Table 13: Frequency of Tension Codes in Cycle 243

Table 14: Tension Subcodes by Participant 243

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview 1 Questions 221

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview 2 Questions 223

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form: ELA Preservice Teacher 226

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form: Mentor Teacher or Other Adult 229

Appendix E: Group Meeting Slides 232

Appendix F: Tensions Codebook 239

Appendix G: Tables of Tension Codes by Cycle and Tension Codes by Participant 243

Appendix H: (Full Text) "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5) 245

Appendix I: Tension Scene 22: "It felt like it was just boxes" (Charlotte, Meeting 5) 248

List of Tension Scenes

Tension Scene 1: "She has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility" (Charlotte, Meeting 3a) 122

Tension Scene 2: “What can I do to be proactive about this next time it happens?” (Charlotte, Meeting 3a) 123

Tension Scene 3: “I felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out” (Charlotte, Meeting 4) 124

Tension Scene 4: “I’m still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail” (Eva, Meeting 2) 128

Tension Scene 5: “asking about finding more opportunities for me to do my thing” (Eva, Meeting 2) 129

Tension Scene 6: “I do a circle with my hand” (Eva, Meeting 3b) 130

Tension Scene 7: “She constantly refers to them as squirrels and puppies” (Leah, Meeting 2) 135

Tension Scene 8: “not seeing them as puppies and squirrels” (Leah, Meeting 2) 136

Tension Scene 9: “She just speaks from the back of the room” (Leah, Meeting 3a) 137

Tension Scene 10: “a good relationship between us” (Leah, Meeting 3a) 139

Tension Scene 11: "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5, EXCERPT) 148

Tension Scene 12: “I’m really bad at following it, but it’s completely intentional” (Leah, Meeting 5) 154

Tension Scene 13: “I knew what they were just trying to say” (Tracy, Interview 2) 155

Tension Scene 14: “I totally forget it like every single day” (Leah, Meeting 5) 156

Tension Scene 15: “We’re both very different but she gives me that freedom” (Tracy, Meeting 5) 157

Tension Scene 16: "A closed door, behind a closed door" (Tracy, Post-Interview) 159

Tension Scene 17: “To have many players on your team” (Charlotte, Interview 2) 160

Tension Scene 18: from "A Good Relationship Between Us" (Leah, Meeting 3a)..... 166

Tension Scene 19: "You Have to Figure Out All These Ways to Slyly Maneuver" (Charlotte, Meeting 3a)..... 169

Tension Scene Excerpt 20: "Who Will Stop You?" (Chris, Meeting 5)..... 171

Tension Scene 21 (FULL): "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5)..... 245

Appendix I: Tension Scene 22: "It felt like it was just boxes" (Charlotte, Meeting 5) 248

Abstract

Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers must navigate conflicting ideologies and frameworks as they learn to teach. These mediate the experiences of preservice teachers, precipitating tensions across the various contexts of the university, K-12 classrooms, and student teaching. Traditionally, researchers have framed these tensions as resulting from the two-worlds pitfall, resulting in a gap between learning and application in teaching. As a result, teacher educators have developed practices to support preservice teachers in navigating tensions. However, these practices may reinforce hierarchical relationships and obscure underlying structural challenges. Thus, existing research presents an opportunity to examine how ELA preservice teachers discuss navigating tensions in a third space.

To investigate this phenomenon, I studied how five Secondary English Language Arts preservice teachers from a large public university in the Midwest navigated tensions during their student teaching semester. I asked about the tensions preservice teachers navigated during student teaching, how those tensions were reflected in program and state policies, how preservice teachers discussed navigating those tensions, and how participating in the group helped them address those tensions. We met in an inquiry group over Zoom to discuss tensions using a problem of practice protocol. The inquiry group provided a critical setting for participants to identify, address, and reflect on the tensions. Data included recordings and transcripts of (a) inquiry group meetings and (b) initial and post interviews, as well as (c) program and state documents, and (d) analytic memos. I analyzed data using qualitative methods, including open-coding of tensions and a novel framing/positioning framework.

I found that the preservice teachers navigated overlapping tensions related to professional, instructional, and classroom environment practices. Preservice teachers' tensions reflected their diverse student teaching contexts, particularly emphasizing the relationships with their mentor teachers. Their tensions were inconsistently addressed in program and state documents. Significantly, while I anticipated preservice teachers would emphasize curricular tensions, they rarely pursued tensions concerning texts and content. Preservice teachers

employed strategies to maintain their footing within and between multiple frames, often drawing on dominant educational discourses such as individualism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy. Some participants identified the need to maintain a "good relationship" with their mentor teacher and "slyly maneuver" to teach in ways aligned with their values, finding their footing across multiple figured worlds. Others collaborated with their mentors toward shared goals. Additionally, participants reported multiple benefits of participating in the group.

This study highlights the complexity of preservice teachers' experiences navigating tensions during student teaching. Preservice teachers must balance their footing along multiple positions and storylines within and across contexts during student teaching. Preservice teachers' gradual movement from the periphery to the center of the community of practice during student teaching complicates existing perceptions of mentoring as static preferences. These chapters present contextualized, practical strategies that preservice teachers employed to maintain their footing, offering a nuanced understanding of the complex realities of student teaching and implications for various stakeholders, particularly concerning shared governance models for teacher education.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 English Language Arts Preservice Teachers Navigating the Middle

> And I feel bad partially because I feel like I am kind of still prioritizing my relationship with my mentor teacher because I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it. Like, I don't appreciate how you treat this specific student. But I am still to some extent protecting myself in that way and protecting my relationship with her to make sure that she still likes me and… it'll be a good relationship between us because I know that if I say that it won't be. So, I don't know. I still feel like I'm trying my best to not be like that and maybe publicly, publicly defending the student instead of her in those situations, but I don't know. But I appreciate what you said. (Leah, Meeting 3a)

I begin this introduction amid Leah's thoughts, which she shared with the group in media res. During one inquiry group meeting, Leah, an undergraduate Secondary English Language Arts preservice teacher (SecELA PT), reflected on her decision to maintain "a good relationship" with her mentor teacher, Rebecca, instead of defending one of the students in her 10th-grade student teaching placement. To Leah, facilitating a conversation about Rebecca's choice to discipline the student could "put that relationship at risk." Instead, Leah channeled her frustration into other strategies, including having one-on-one conversations with the student and attempting to model for Rebecca positive and caring relationships with students.

Examining this small moment of talk from group meetings illustrates the topic of this dissertation. Preservice teachers like Leah experience a variety of competing frameworks and ideologies as they learn to and teach during student teaching. At the intersections of these competing frameworks and ideologies, preservice teachers experience tensions. These tensions exist in secondary English Language Arts (SecELA), student teaching, and the profession more broadly. There are multiple frameworks for teaching secondary ELA (Beach et al., 2016), mentoring during student teaching (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021), and teacher professionalism

(e.g., Hargreaves, 2000). If I were to ask educators, "What is secondary ELA?" or "What is student teaching?" or "What does it mean to be a teacher?" I would receive many different responses.

If one of the central aims of teacher education programs is to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to practice teaching, how do preservice teachers like Leah navigate these competing and conflicting centers of gravity (Smagorinsky et al., 2013)? Furthermore, how can they be supported? In this study, I investigated how five secondary ELA preservice teachers navigated these tensions during student teaching while participating in a problem of practice protocol inquiry group. While studies about how preservice teachers navigate tensions have become increasingly important with the growing political polarization in the U.S., this focus is often placed on enacting frameworks (e.g., Lillge & Knowles, 2020; Taylor et al., 2019), practices (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2011), or both (e.g., Behizadeh et al., 2021) from the perspective of teacher educators. These studies leave a gap in understanding the frameworks that preservice teachers develop to navigate tensions.

Centering preservice teachers' experiences and frameworks for navigating tensions can provide a middle ground between what commonly appears on one end to be "compliance" or "conformity" in student teaching and the other side of the continuum, where advocacy is explicit in the form of calling in and building community or calling out and challenging inequitable and unjust teaching.

Leah's reflection revealed how these tensions often overlap within and across multiple settings. Leah's attempts to build a positive relationship with a student were stymied by her mentor teacher, Rebecca, who stepped in and disciplined him. Ultimately, Leah chose to maintain "a good relationship" with Rebecca, a professional relationship built on mutual noninterference and niceness because of the power dynamic between herself as a student teacher and Rebecca as a mentor teacher. Nevertheless, she found other ways to "slyly maneuver," a term offered by Charlotte, one of Leah's groupmates, to teach in ways that aligned with her values.

1.2 Research Questions

Drawing on a sociocultural approach, this study examined how preservice teachers' learning to teach was mediated by their multiple, often competing contexts. I explored the following research questions in this study:

Research Question 1: What tensions did Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers navigate during student teaching?

Research Question 1a: How were these tensions reflected in program and state policy documents?

Research Question 2: How did Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching?

Research Question 3: How did participating in a problem of practice inquiry group support PTs in navigating tensions?

These questions examined *what* tensions PTs navigated, *how* they navigated those tensions, and *how* their contexts (e.g., group meetings and program policies) affected their choices.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

This study involved a group of five secondary ELA preservice teachers enrolled in undergraduate and master's programs at a large university in the Midwest U.S. I conducted the study during participants' student teaching semester, which lasted from January through May 2023. All people (preservice teachers, mentor teachers, university instructors, students, and school administrators) and locations (schools, cities, states) are pseudonymized or anonymized to protect confidentiality.

1.4 Methodology

This qualitative study was designed in response to the voiced concerns of secondary ELA preservice teachers I worked with during and after the COVID-19 pandemic who wanted to uphold programmatic goals of equity and justice as teaching interns and future teachers but felt unprepared to navigate the injustices that students faced and schools perpetuated. While I would frame the study differently now (attending less to individualistic framing), I keep this language as-is to highlight the reach of Individualistic Discourse in university and research spaces.

I recruited participants from an English Methods course I taught at a large university in the Midwest. Five of the 19 PTs enrolled in the course volunteered to participate in the study. All five participants identified as white women from the Midwest US (three undergraduate and two master's students). The participants varied greatly in their prior experiences (e.g., Tracy working as a paraprofessional) and other social identities (e.g., (dis)ability, Leah's rural upbringing), with many of those identities proving salient to the perspectives they brought to student teaching and

the tensions they navigated through the semester. Confidentiality is maintained by pseudonymizing or anonymizing all individuals and locations and removing any identifying information.

Situating ELA PTs as experts, I designed an inquiry group for study participants to discuss making curricular and pedagogical changes in response to tensions or "wobbles" (Fecho et al., 2005) they experienced in their student teaching contexts. I invited participants to co-construct the space, our roles, and goals throughout the study. Mainly acting as a meeting facilitator, I shared with PTs when they requested and asked questions to further my understanding of their knowledge-building. Biweekly group meetings, eight in total, were designed for participants to discuss what they "wobbled" about (Fecho et al., 2005), plan changes, and reflect on their efforts to change. These meetings were bookended by initial and post-interviews.

The data collected included audio/video recordings of the eight inquiry group meetings, audio/video recordings of pre/Interview 2s, state documents (clinical expectations, state standards for teacher preparation), program documents (program policy handbook, program standards, evaluation tool), meeting notes, and analytic memos.

1.5 Dissertation Structure

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. In this chapter, I introduce the study, providing an overview of the problem space I investigated, the research questions I posed, the methodologies I used, and the significance and relevance of the research findings.

Chapter two includes a literature review to situate the study within current research on how ELA PTs navigate tensions in the transition from the university to schools. The chapter begins by detailing the multiple figured worlds of English education, including heterogeneous approaches to teaching English, student teaching, and the profession. Then, I define the concept of "tensions," which are imbalances experienced by ELA PTs due to competing ideologies and frameworks, often resulting from the clash between university expectations and K-12 teaching realities. I situate the exploration of tensions within a body of research that explores different strategies for supporting preservice teachers to apply ideas from their university-based teacher education programs in schools. Opportunities in this research area led me to consider the role of third spaces and shared governance for supporting preservice teachers in navigating tensions. The chapter builds toward a conceptual framework (Chapter 3) grounded in sociocultural

theories, emphasizing the importance of discourse, positioning, framing, and figured worlds in understanding how PTs navigate tensions.

Chapter 3 outlines my research methodology for investigating how SecELA PTs navigate tensions during their student teaching experiences. The study employs a qualitative sociocultural framework, emphasizing the significance of context and situating learning within specific cultural and social environments. I detail my conceptual approach through the combined framing/positioning framework. The research design prioritizes listening to PTs' subjective experiences, allowing them to be active contributors to understanding the challenges posed by misalignments within and between figured worlds. I interrogate my positionality as a researcher. This leads to a discussion of the selection and profiles of five participants and the various contexts of the study, including field placements and the university's teacher education program. Data collection methods are detailed, including interviews, inquiry group meetings, and policy documents, while open coding and a combined framing/positioning framework guided data analysis. Strategies to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations are detailed, acknowledging the limitations of relying primarily on PTs' narratives. Ultimately, the chapter portrays a unique approach to examining the experiences of PTs, highlighting their role as knowledge-makers amid the complexities of teaching environments.

Chapter Four is titled "'I Will Be By Myself Eventually': Tensions Preservice Teachers Navigated During Student Teaching." The chapter explores the multiple tensions SecELA PTs experienced and navigated during their student teaching. The chapter draws on transcript data from interviews and group meetings to highlight how PTs managed tensions in professional, instructional, and classroom environments, which were often intertwined. I discuss the complexity of navigating mentor-teacher relationships, school policies, and creating a positive classroom culture, emphasizing that these tensions reflect broader power dynamics and professional frameworks within teaching environments. Furthermore, by examining program and state policy documents, the chapter reveals how these tensions are mirrored in the policies that guide teacher training. The misalignment between the expectations set by policies and PTs' lived experiences underscores the challenge of preparing PTs for a diverse set of professional and instructional realities. Ultimately, the chapter questions the assumptions underlying current teaching practices, particularly teaching as an isolated act, advocating for a more collaborative approach that integrates students, colleagues, and community relationships.

Chapter Five, titled "'A Good Relationship Between Us': How PTs Navigated MT Relationships," inquires into how SecELA PTs navigate their relationships with mentor teachers when MTs "step in" during instruction. This chapter focuses on cases involving three PTs—Charlotte, Eva, and Leah—who each employed unique strategies to manage the tensions arising from these interventions. Eva fostered a collaborative approach by establishing open communication with her MT and co-developing signals to limit interruptions, thus balancing independence and mentorship. In contrast, Charlotte followed her MT's actions and took the initiative without confrontation, maintaining alignment due to shared classroom management philosophies. Leah's case highlights more fundamental professional differences with her MT, leading her to sidestep tensions by discretely advocating for her teaching approach without threatening her professional relationship. By examining these cases, the chapter underscores the complexities PTs face as they operate within the interwoven figured worlds of student teaching and classroom teaching, contending with dominant teaching discourses of individualism, noninterference, niceness, and collegiality.

Chapter Six, "'It's Like a Closed Door, Behind a Closed Door': How Preservice Teachers Balanced Privacy and Collaboration to Navigate Professional Tensions," examines how SecELA PTs balanced privacy and collaboration to navigate professional tensions, particularly focusing on scenarios where policies presented challenges. As their student teaching assignments wound down, PTs reflected on navigating the persistent evaluative scrutiny of their mentor teachers. As a result of this surveillance, they sought privacy as a form of autonomy. These choices reflected the broader theme of "closing the door" to act in the best interests of their students—a strategy advised by experienced educators. However, PTs also recognize that true transformation toward a more diverse and equitable classroom requires broader collaboration, aligning with Charlotte's view of fostering a community-based approach as the ideal.

Chapter Six also explores how PTs reported benefiting from group meetings. During meetings, PTs leveraged collaborative problem-solving to support one another in confronting tensions, emphasizing shared experiences and co-developing solutions to practical challenges faced during student teaching. The insights presented illuminate the delicate balance PTs and educators strike between maintaining professional relationships, exercising autonomy, and fostering inclusive educational environments. I end the chapter by illustrating two cases of how I

attempted to maintain multiple, sometimes conflicting goals as the group facilitator and the speculative possibilities for our group interactions.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, Chapter Seven, I reflect on my study's exploration of the tensions that Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers faced and how they navigated these challenges during student teaching. The research highlights that PTs often experience tensions between professional, instructional, and classroom environments as they balance diverse expectations across university and K-12 contexts. While existing literature centers on the knowledge from university-based programs, my study focuses on PTs' real-world experiences, revealing their strategic navigation to align values with practices. The PTs' strategies often involved balancing independence with collaboration while navigating policies and relationships, particularly with mentor teachers. The study also identifies the critical role of discourse in framing these tensions and suggests that PTs thrive when positioned as collaborative partners in teacher education programs. Finally, I emphasize the value of third space problem of practice groups that provide PTs opportunities for open dialogue and support as they navigate their unique, often conflicting educational contexts. I end with potential implications for the study and a reflection on what I have learned about myself as a researcher and educator through the dissertating process.

1.6 Significance and Relevance

> "It is difficult to give thought to the stars when the ground is swallowing you up" (Becky Chambers, *To Be Taught, If Fortunate*)

At the beginning of this chapter, I examined Leah's choice to maintain "a good relationship" with her mentor teacher grounded in principles of noninterference and niceness. Throughout this monograph, I draw from participants' tensions to illustrate practical strategies that preservice teachers used to maintain alignment within and between multiple frameworks and figured worlds. I intend that these tensions and how preservice teachers navigated them will feel relatable to new and experienced educators alike and attainable to preservice and new teachers. Furthermore, these tensions and the strategies PTs use to navigate them offer preservice teachers, teacher educators, teacher education programs, and educators broadly a mirror that reflects the dominant frameworks and discourses that typify the profession. When teacher education programs call on preservice and new teachers to teach and act in ways different from those the

preservice teachers recognize in schools, how do preservice teachers find a middle ground? Moreover, what opportunities do teacher educators have to support preservice teachers better? These are significant questions as the teaching profession faces increasing top-down legislative challenges and political polarization. Being able to navigate complex and competing tensions is part of what enables new teachers to stay in the profession. It is not something that should be done alone. Ultimately, this dissertation reveals the work that preservice teachers are doing now to illuminate the kinds of work and people we could become.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with the literature in English education that explores how preservice and novice English Language Arts teachers navigate the tensions they experience to teach in ways aligned with their values. I begin by illustrating the heterogeneity of English education. English education offers multiple approaches to ELA as a subject, mentoring (student teaching), and professionalism, although the latter concepts are underexplored in English education. These multiple approaches often conflict, compete, and overlap with one another within and across complex settings, leading PTs to experience tensions (Smagorinsky et al., 2013). Typically, these tensions are characterized as occurring between progressive, student-centered university teacher preparation programs and conservative, teacher-and-test-centered K-12 schools (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). PTs acutely experience these tensions during student teaching, when they are both *students* and *teachers*, learning to teach and teaching (Rubin, 2018).

Navigating tensions is challenging for preservice teachers. They must make sense of their social identities and past experiences in and out of school while navigating multiple contexts (Behizadeh et al., 2021). Nevertheless, acknowledging and dealing with tensions is central to justice-oriented teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Researchers have developed multiple approaches to supporting PTs to navigate tensions, whether focusing on high-leverage practices (TeachingWorks, n.d.; Williamson, 2013) or critical problem-posing (Freire, 1970; Hill et al., 2020). However, much of the small but growing body of research on how PTs navigate the multiple competing centers of gravity of student teaching foregrounds the movement of ideas from university settings into K-12 schools (Zeichner, 2010) and positions PTs as deficit (Pittard, 2015). As universities and teacher educators experience their own tensions with justice-oriented teacher preparation (e.g., Behizadeh et al., 2021; Bickmore et al., 2005; McDonald, 2008; Picower, 2021), co-constructing third spaces (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez et al., 1997) outside of the university/school binary can offer an alternative setting for PTs to **find their footing** as they

wobble through the tensions of multiple worlds. Practical discussions of PTs' professional tensions can support PTs to implement and illustrate effective strategies for finding footing within the confines of their contexts.

2.2 The Multiple Figured Worlds of English Teacher Preparation

English as college and career readiness (CCR) dominated my understanding of the subject as a teacher. I received my single subject teaching credential in English during the 2012-2013 school year. During that time, my program adopted the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The CCSS proposed a curricular shift to emphasize reading more informational texts. According to the CCSS FAQs, the rationale for this shift is that "college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature" (2010). This shift aligned with the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework and the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework, aiming to create coherence between instruction and assessment (p. 5). The ELA CCSS explicitly stated that the expected 30/70 split between literary to informational texts by grade 12 reflected "the sum of student reading, not just reading in ELA settings" (p. 5). However, that minor footnote did not dissuade assessment and curriculum developers and administrators from shifting Secondary ELA from a literature-heavy curriculum (e.g., novels, short stories, and poetry) to one that included more informational texts.

By my third year of teaching, ELA standardized tests had incorporated a wide range of informational texts aligned with the "reading: informational texts" ELA CCSS. Even if the topic of many of these informational texts meant they were read in other secondary courses like Biology or History, the skills assessed on standardized tests *belonged* to English. In my case, school administrators called on the English teachers to teach the "reading: informational texts" standards to other content areas, constructing and delivering professional development.

At the same time, my ELA curriculum more closely resembled the 30/70 split noted by the CCSS. The Title 1 Charter High School where I taught in South Los Angeles focused on college and career readiness. The charter organization determined that the most significant determining factor for college and career readiness was proficiency on national (e.g., SAT) and state tests (e.g., CAASPP). They also invested in developing benchmarks that approximated those exams. With my pay tied to student achievement, I focused on this narrow vision of college

and career readiness characterized by standardized testing proficiency. Students I taught far exceeded other local schools and the state average year after year.

From what I can tell, this narrative is atypical for English educators. Most English teachers I meet love *literary* texts. They would just as likely abandon teaching English as abandon their favorite novels, short stories, and poems. Furthermore, few teachers will be in the same context as me during the mid-to late-2010s. I taught at a small, college and career-focused charter high school in Los Angeles that catered to an almost 100% Latine student population. Every student had a laptop. The school purchased multiple applications and curricula, including Newsela and Achieve3000, enabling teachers and students to change a text's complexity. If students were failing classes, they were assigned mandatory after-school tutoring. At the same time, most students were socially promoted from middle to high school after failing one or more classes. According to standardized testing, most students had reading levels of two or more grades below grade nine when they entered high school.

I do not have a heartening story of how I got students to enjoy reading canonical literary texts such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Great Gatsby,* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Instead, I appreciated reading informational texts with them, like Schlosser's "In Strawberry Fields" (1995) and Tan's "Mother Tongue" (1990), which I selected from an AP English Language and Composition textbook to use with all my students.[1] These shorter texts allowed for "close reading" practices aligned with the CCSS, assessed by standardized tests, and reflective of the new critical analytic tradition in the U.S., wherein readers excavate meaning from complex texts. However, this approach to teaching English represents one of many. As far as I know, it does not reflect the dominant perspective in the U.S. of Secondary English as the site of literary interpretation.

Ultimately, this narrative is reflective of the heterogeneity of English in U.S. schools. Secondary ELA offers multiple figured worlds that approach what is and what could be in English Education. Figured worlds are "socially produced, culturally constructed activities" in which people can trace their participation (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41). The concept of figured worlds is significant when theorizing the various communities of practice (Lave & Wenger,

[1] The CCSS distinguishes between "literary" and "informational" texts and standards in ELA. Despite its publication in a literary magazine and its many literary elements, "Mother Tongue" is considered an "informational" text because of its autobiographical content. In practice, autobiographical essays like Tan's demonstrate the fuzziness of these categories.

1991) that develop in English education and teaching more broadly. Educators like me are recruited or enter into particular figured worlds, further developing that figured world through interactions with and in it. To return to my example, the figured world of teaching college and career readiness that I entered in the mid-2010s contrasted with many of the figured worlds I navigated during graduate school, which often drew on many of the same activities of reading, writing, speaking, and listening for students and planning, instruction, assessment, and professionalism for teachers, although in very different ways. Differences in aims and practices in English education have led to constructing multiple figured worlds, often competing and overlapping in the same settings.

Next, I identify how heterogeneity in approaches to teaching English Language Arts, student teaching, and professionalism contribute to these figured worlds.

2.2.1 Heterogeneity in English Education

The heterogeneity of English Language Arts in the U.S. contributes to divergent and fragmented figured worlds in university teacher education programs and K-12 schools. Disciplinary heterogeneity between settings best characterizes the two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985), and when heterogeneity exists between and within settings, the multiple-worlds pitfalls (Smagorinsky et al., 2013).

Secondary English Language Arts (SecELA) as a subject brings together divergent historical, social, and cultural perspectives, each with its own aims and practices. As a subject, Secondary ELA draws on multiple frameworks, instructional goals, and social aims. It is not one discipline but several with multiple, sometimes overlapping, ways of reading, writing, and reasoning. For example, examining the historical purposes for literacy instruction in ELA, Gere et al. (1992) identified six primary goals for teaching literacy in the US: improving morality, preparing good workers, creating a social elite, producing good citizens, fostering personal growth, and offsetting inequity (pp. 2-3). Despite these various goals, frameworks, and social aims, Secondary ELA is framed as a singular subject in schools.

Currently, the primary approach to SecELA instruction in the US is through a literary studies lens. The particular approach to literary studies employed is new criticism. In a new critical lens, a reader extracts meaning and purpose from the text with little attention to the context or their own co-construction of the text as a reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). Students analyze how authors craft texts, paying particular attention to how specific language and organizational

features contribute to the meaning of the text In a SecELA classroom, the teacher's goal is to prepare students with the knowledge of how literary and rhetorical features contribute to meaning, and the teacher is expected to be an expert in this area.

In my experience, this vision for ELA is evident in the disciplinary tasks assigned to students on standardized tests. For example, the publicly released constructed response questions for Maryland's Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) test for grade eight and grade ten ELA ask students to analyze "how the dialogue in each passage functions to reveal aspects of the characters" (Grade 8) and "how Tennyson uses Homer's *The Odyssey* as a source for his depiction of the goods in *The Lotos-Eaters*" (Grade 10). These constructed response questions are aligned with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for ELA, which derive from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Alongside the need for disciplinary literacy, SecELA must also prepare students to be literate members of society. In other words, students must be able to read and write (in English). While basic literacy skills are often perceived as the purview of elementary ELA in the US, legislators and researchers point to low reading scores on standardized tests as reasoning to incorporate more evidence-based basic and content-area literacy instruction in SecELA.

The table below outlines four main approaches to Secondary ELA instruction in the United States. I have already discussed the two middle focuses, knowledge of literary and rhetorical forms and skills, processes, and procedures. These two approaches are mainly utilitarian, aiming to support students with the tools to be successful citizens—basic literacy skills for jobs and advanced disciplinary literacy for more complex jobs and college.

One of the lesser focuses of the secondary ELA curriculum is privileged cultural knowledge (Beach et al., 2016). For example, cultural critics in the 1980s argued that schools should prepare students with shared cultural knowledge. In the Secondary ELA curriculum, privileged cultural knowledge appears in canonizing particular authors, texts, and genres in ways that persist over time. This canonization has invariably led to many students reading few or no authors of color and only a handful of white female authors. The aim of a privileged cultural knowledge approach to ELA often revolves around creating and maintaining cultural traditions and assimilating cultural outsiders into those traditions.

On the other end of the ELA curriculum framework, the focus is critical inquiry. Rather than taking up a singular way of thinking about great authors and books, a critical inquiry

curriculum focuses on analyzing texts from various perspectives, often reading against the grain and deconstructing texts, to change how students think. Ideally, these changes in thinking lead to social action and change.

Table 1: ELA Curriculum Frameworks, Instructional Goals, and Social Aims

Focus of ELA Curriculum Framework	Instructional Goals	Social Aims
Privileged cultural knowledge (e.g., Hirsch, 1987)	Acquiring knowledge about and valuing specific literary texts	Traditionalist/Assimilationist
Knowledge of literary and rhetorical forms (e.g., National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; Rainey & Moje, 2012)	Analyzing the organization and techniques employed in texts	College and Career Readiness; Disciplinary Literacy
Skills, processes, and procedures (e.g., Science of Reading)	Employing skills, processes, and procedures for comprehending and creating texts	College and Career Readiness
Critical Inquiry (e.g., Beach et al., 2016)	Fostering critical analysis of texts and events from different perspectives, leading to change in thinking and action	Social Transformation

Often, teachers use various bits and pieces from each of these approaches to teaching Secondary ELA based on their own experiences as students, what they learned in their teacher education program, and their experiences as teachers (Brauer & Clark, 2008). For example, Rainey and Storm (2021) found three different interpretive communities for reading in ELA within the same school and district: finding, associating, and questing. Finding most strongly associates with a new critical approach that emphasizes analyzing the organization and techniques employed in texts to "find" the meaning of texts. Alternatively, associating aligns with Rosenblatt's (1978) reader-response theory, focusing on students' associations as they read texts. Lastly, questing practices focus primarily on puzzling through shared questions using shared disciplinary tools, which include elements of both finding and associating (Rainey & Storm, 2021). Ultimately, Rainey and Storm's (2021) work on identifying interpretive reading communities in Secondary ELA highlights the fragmentation in disciplinary approaches to reading in Secondary ELA, even in the same school setting.

Like Rainey and Storm's (2021) research that yielded different interpretive communities in Secondary ELA, Ivanić's (2004) discourses of writing and learning to write demonstrate the range of ways teachers, in this case Secondary ELA teachers, talk about writing. Ivanić (2004) identifies six discourses: skills, creativity, process, genre, social practices, and sociopolitical. These discourses differ in what aspect of language they focus on (i.e., the text, the cognitive process, the event, or the sociocultural and political context), beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, approaches to teaching writing, and what assessment criteria would be used to evaluate writing. Much of the writing assigned in the US focuses on skills and process approaches (Applebee & Langer, 2011). In other words, students learn specific skills, such as writing a thesis statement or the five-paragraph structure. Then, they are assessed on how accurately they demonstrate those skills. The addition of a process includes elements such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing.

2.2.2 Heterogeneity in Student Teaching and Mentoring

In addition to heterogeneity in the secondary discipline of English Language Arts, preservice teachers encounter heterogeneity in approaches to student teaching, particularly the mentoring relationship they have with their mentor teacher (Clarke et al., 2014; Hoffman et al., 2015; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021; Schwille, 2008). Learning to teach in a mentor teacher's classroom has been the culminating experience for teacher education programs for decades (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Research frequently identifies MTs as the most influential mediator of PTs' learning to teach within their teacher education program (Clarke et al., 2014; Wang & Odell, 2002). However, as a field in the US, teacher education does not have a unified approach to preservice teacher mentoring (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Together, this research demonstrates a variety of models, PT perspectives (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016) and MT perspectives (e.g., Kavanagh et al., 2023; Matsko et al., 2024; Stanulis et al., 2019) on mentorship during student teaching. Not only do PTs and MTs often prioritize different aspects of their mentoring relationship (Matsko et al., 2023) but they may also perceive that relationship differently. Misalignment regarding mentorship during student teaching may stem from the variety of approaches to mentoring (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). This heterogeneity in student teaching leads PTs to experience and navigate tensions concerning their professional relationships.

During student teaching, mentor teachers support PTs in a multitude of ways. Mentor teachers support PTs in learning to teach effectively (Clarke et al., 2014) and in connecting and contextualizing what they learn in their program courses with what they do in their placement classrooms (Zeichner, 2010). Additionally, MTs help mediate tensions between program, school, personal, and PT expectations for teaching (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Simultaneously, they must manage the expectations of their school as a teacher, creating and sustaining a learning environment for students. As a result, MTs report themselves as juggling competing expectations for mentoring PTs (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). For example, an MT might "step in" during instruction (Schwille, 2008) to support student learning, taking over an instructional moment if they recognize a student misconception or PT error. Given that classroom teaching is not designed for learning to teach (cross-purposes pitfall, Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) and dominant teaching norms (e.g., noninterference, Kavanagh et al., 2023), the MT and PT dyad may not discuss and reflect on what happened, leaving an unexamined opportunity for PT learning (Valencia et al., 2009).

Within an apprenticeship model, PTs learn to teach through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As PTs learn more, they take on increasing responsibility for participating in the community of practice. The shifting and dynamic expectations for dyad members as PTs take on greater responsibilities during student teaching exacerbate this juggling (and sometimes dropping) of competing expectations. In other words, mentoring relationships are not static, as MTs must collect and respond to multiple forms of data to best support the PT and students (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). However, MTs often do not receive specific mentoring training, leading them to rely on past experiences when responding to emergent situations during student teaching (Becher & and Orland-Barak, 2016).

Orland-Barak and Wang, (2021) identified four divergent yet overlapping approaches to mentoring: personal growth, situated learning, core practices, and critical transformative. These approaches demonstrate what knowledge and approaches to teaching are valued in student teaching and how that epistemological orientation frames the mentoring relationship and student teaching.

Table 2: Heterogeneity in Mentoring Approaches

Mentoring Approach	Focus (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021)	Positions	Description of Approach

Personal Growth Approach	• Based on a humanist tradition that emphasizes psychological well-being (Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1982) • Supporting the emotional needs of the PT	• MT: counselor and/or cheerleader • PT: teacher	• MTs avoid imposing their own ideas about teaching, provide opportunities for PTs to test their own ideas through trial and error and build positive and friendly relationships with PTs (Wang & Odell, 2002).
Situated Learning Approach	• Stresses the importance of context, where learning occurs through legitimate peripheral participation in a professional community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).	• MT: teacher, expert, model • PT: novice, apprentice	• MTs rely on their experiences and expertise to socialize PTs into the cultures and practices of teaching in specific school contexts (Hoffman et al., 2015). • MTs become models for PTs to observe and imitate. Imagine an "I do, you do" model with feedback to follow the proper technique.
Core Practice Approach	• Focuses on the need for PTs to develop practices. • Focus on supporting PTs in developing core teaching practices that are effective in various teaching contexts (Grossman et al., 2009).	• MT: teacher, expert • PT: novice → expert*	• Grounded in the idea that core practices are adaptable to contexts and that teacher education programs can support PTs to adapt these practices through decomposing the practice into its constituent components (Forzani, 2014), engaging in approximations of practice, and rehearsing prior to enactment (Grossman, 2018). • MTs should facilitate increasing opportunities for PTs to take on expert roles* as they develop knowledge of how to enact specific core practices in different teaching contexts.
Critical Transformative Approach	• Focus on taking a critical stance toward teaching, developing professional knowledge and	• MT/PT: co-thinkers and co-learners, critical educator	• Teachers should collaborate to critique and inquire into teaching. • MTs must engage PTs in "teaching against the grain," challenging taken-for-granted

	pedagogical practices to improve student learning and contribute to a more socially just world (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) • Draws from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970).		assumptions of teaching in schools (Cochran-Smith, 1991a). • Support PTs by exposing them and co-creating with them alternative visions of teaching, • An assumption of questioning and challenging traditional practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) can leave PTs frustrated with a lack of certainty about what they *can* do (Sykes et al., 2010).

Importantly, these multiple approaches to mentoring align with ways of enacting social justice in student teaching and teacher education programs more broadly. Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) point out that personal growth mentoring supports teacher retention and meets the perceived needs of PTs, situated learning prepares PTs for the actual demands of schools, core practice attempts to provide PTs with the tools to teach effectively across a wide range of contexts, and critical transformative mentoring focuses directly on criticality, perhaps to the detriment of practice.

Together, personal growth, situated learning, core practice, and critical transformative approaches to mentoring present a wide range of mentoring approaches. From a socialization perspective, Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) identified different roles MTs take up within each approach. MTs may consider themselves cheerleaders, therapists, teachers, and critical collaborators. Similarly, Clarke et al. (2014) found that MTs take on roles as providers of feedback, gatekeepers of the profession, modelers of practice, supporters of reflection, purveyors of content, conveners of relation, agents of socialization, advocates of the practice, gleaners of knowledge, abiders of change, and teachers of children. Rather than think of MTs as taking up these approaches in isolation, it is important to recognize how MTs may assume more than one of these identities throughout student teaching and even within the same situation.

Furthermore, these positions are taken up in a relationship with and to PTs. For example, the situated learning approach to mentoring relies on positions of power and authority for MTs as experts and models. By comparison, PTs in the situated learning approach are novices and apprentices. Knowledge in this approach flows unidirectionally from the MT to the PT. Both the situated learning and core practices approach construct mentoring within this hierarchical

dynamic. In contrast, the personal growth approach largely avoids the question of practice in favor of supporting the development of self-efficacy, often allowing the PT to take full responsibility for the classroom and center their own practices. Rather than avoiding practice, the critical transformative approach relies on flattening the MT/PT power hierarchy in favor of collaboration as co-thinkers. Ultimately, the relational positionality of MTs and PTs during student teaching has consequences for the tensions PTs experience and how they navigate those tensions during student teaching.

While researchers have found that these heterogeneous approaches to mentoring have caused tensions for PTs as they attempt to enact particular practices, studies have yet to explicitly explore how PTs' perceptions of mentoring approaches influence *how* they navigate tensions. The multiple positions and storylines of these mentoring interactions similarly draw on interactive frameworks and Capital-D Discourses within the multiple figured worlds PTs must navigate (See upcoming conceptual framework). Given the variety of mentoring practices and a scarcity of training, understanding how PTs navigate tensions within different mentoring relationships is critical for teacher educators and teacher education programs.

2.2.3 Professional Heterogeneity

Besides heterogeneous approaches to teaching ELA and mentoring, professional heterogeneity in teaching affects how PTs navigate tensions during student teaching. Here, I refer to the concepts of "teacher professionalization" (e.g., Hargreaves, 2000) and teacher professional norms (e.g., Ghousseini et al., 2021; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975), which construct and are constructed by how teachers are socialized into the teaching profession.

Today, in the mid-2020s, teachers and schools face increasing calls for top-down accountability. This top-down accountability takes the form of the national standards movement (e.g., the Common Core State Standards), recommended or required curriculum (e.g., Science of Reading), and tying student achievement to standardized test scores. These and other school contextual factors reflect a more significant shift in teacher professionalization. Hargreaves (2000) described this shift away from individual teacher autonomy toward post-professionalism. Sachs (2016) writes that the external environment shapes teacher professionalism. She points out how educational systems and schools have adopted the culture and language of performance management intending to improve teaching and student learning. Sachs (2016) describes the current environment:

> The development of teacher standards, which are characterized by increased surveillance and measurement of teacher performance, reinforces the development of performance cultures. In these cultures, reporting student outcomes represents the intention and requirement of the government to achieve demonstrated improvement and accountability. This, in turn, impacts on the autonomy of teachers, in particular, how they enact their professional knowledge and judgment. (p. 418)

As a result, teachers experience increased top-down "surveillance" that erodes autonomy in the name of improving student performance on standardized tests. Teachers lose self-accountability in lieu of top-down accountability structures.

Likewise, in their analysis of policy documents and tools, Cochran-Smith et al. (2018) found a "dominant accountability paradigm" in teacher education grounded in market ideology. This dominant accountability discourse deemphasizes the professional knowledge that teachers develop through their teacher education programs and teaching careers.

Furthermore, this proposed view of professionalism focuses on individual rather than collaborative and collective professional practices. As someone who grew up taking standardized tests under NCLB, I took the SAT to assess my college readiness, then the CBEST and CSETs to evaluate my capacity for teaching, the PACT to evaluate my readiness to receive a credential, followed by two years of BTSA evaluations as a beginning teacher, I cannot separate my socialization into teaching from the language and tools of performance management. My success in school and teaching directly aligned with my ability to demonstrate proficiency. New teachers today have similar past experiences with schooling. Even if they do not align with this discourse, it is inseparable from their educational experiences and future students' experiences. For instance, PTs participating in this study had not started kindergarten when Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) into law. Ultimately, a narrow vision of top-down accountability that focuses on standardized tests can offer new and experienced teachers limited autonomy to develop as critical and collaborative professionals.

However, university-based teacher education programs and professional organizations may offer alternative perspectives toward professionalism. Hargreaves (2000) contrasts the post-professional age, which is characterized by top-down accountability, with the age of the collegial professional. Although teacher education programs now encounter many of the same contextual accountability concerns of K-12 schools (e.g., top-down standards, high-stakes assessments;

Cochran-Smith et al., 2018), individual teacher educators appear to maintain some sense of individual autonomy and collegial professionalism unafforded to their K-12 colleagues. Similar exceptions in K-12 settings include members of the National Writing Project (NWP) and local/national groups of educators (e.g., National Council of Teachers of English, NCTE). Teachers can collaborate with colleagues in professional organization settings, learn new teaching strategies, and develop new knowledge through inquiry. These organizations offer promising opportunities for professionalization that differ significantly from those offered by schools.

The call for greater accountability of university-based teacher education programs also exists, especially as alternative programs proliferate (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Early critics criticized the progressive aims of teacher education programs and their limited outcomes (e.g., Hess, 2002; Walsh, 2001). Today, questions of how best to evaluate teacher education programs persist. For example, see Darling-Hammond's (2020) argument for audit-based evaluation systems, and Cochran-Smith, (2021) response focusing on intelligent professional responsibility. These authors highlight the push-pull between locating professional accountability with external regulating bodies or with professionals in local contexts (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, schools (and, to a lesser extent, teacher education programs) remain the dominant socializing force in the profession. As PTs participate in the communities of practice of their schools, they become socialized into cultures of teaching, particular ways of thinking about professionalism and what it means to be a teacher (Little, 1990a). Studies of teaching culture paint an image of the profession where individualism, conservatism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy are dominant (Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Ghousseini et al., 2021; Kavanagh et al., 2023; Little, 1990a; Lortie, 1975). Furthermore, these socializing practices often extend to mentoring relationships during student teaching (e.g., Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Kavanagh et al., 2023; Matsko et al., 2024). For example, the most frequent form of mentoring, the personal growth approach, abstains from critiquing teaching practices in favor of supporting PTs' emotional well-being and perception of growth over time (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Given the top-down managerial discourses dominant in U.S. schools (Sachs, 2016) and the tendency for collaboration to be collegial but not critical (Little, 1990b), this dominant teaching culture leaves new teachers isolated with limited autonomy in how they teach.

The professional culture of schools and that mentor teachers ascribe to within those schools impacts how they teach and mentor and, thus, the kinds of tensions PTs may experience during student teaching. Cochran-Smith (1991a) advocated for partnering with mentor teachers who worked "against the grain" so they could model for PTs what she called "collaborative resonance." Similarly, community-oriented teacher educators advocate for working more closely with those outside of school walls to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (e.g., Haddix, 2020).

While most PTs and MTs may resist the post-professional discourses of top-down managerial accountability, the professional norms that many of us have been socialized into appear primed to construct literal and figurative walls that limit the kind of critical colleagueship called for in teacher education (e.g., Ghousseini et al., 2021; James et al., 2007), instead constructing silos of autonomy that are quickly deteriorating "when shutting the door won't do" because of legislative and community oversight (Ranschaert, 2023). When this critical colleagueship is not present, Preservice and inservice teachers alike struggle and often refrain from engaging in the emerging conflicts and tensions that result from collaboration (Achinstein, 2002). Significantly, while some studies have tied mentor teachers' beliefs and preferences to Capital-D Discourses (e.g., Kavanagh et al., 2023), the inverse of examining PTs' practices is underexplored.

Ultimately, these professional discourses inform the frameworks PTs draw on within and across multiple figured worlds and offer particular positions and storylines for PTs to embrace or challenge. In other words, these discourses shape (and are shaped by) how PTs navigate tensions in university, student teaching, and school settings and are simultaneously informed by those contexts.

2.2.4 Figured Worlds Overlap Within Settings

The metaphor of multiple competing centers of gravity (Smagorinsky et al., 2013) attempts to illustrate how implicit and explicit forces exert a gravitational influence on beginning teachers to teach in particular ways. Building from the two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985), this metaphor of physical worlds exerting influence on beginning teachers connotes an image of an astronaut traveling through space. In this metaphor, the astronaut, having transitioned from the progressive planet of the university-based teacher education program (world one), must travel along a twisting path (Smagorinsky et al., 2003; Vygotsky,

1987) of various school settings (world two) as they learn to teach. While this image is helpful, I worry about how the metaphor displaces the beginning teacher, as if they are not always already in one or more of these worlds.

The space *between* worlds ceases to exist when considering how multiple figured worlds overlap in the same context. These figured worlds are often in tension in a setting like a grade 11 ELA classroom. For example, a figured world of teaching for social reform can co-exist with a figured world of college and career readiness, although the two might be in tension. These multiple worlds do not have to be situated within the traditional binary of the progressive university and the conservative tradition of schools.

Furthermore, PTs' student teaching functions as its own figured world, overlapping the figured worlds that the PT brings of the university, their views of teaching, and their placement classroom. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) referred to how K-12 classrooms were not designed to prepare new teachers as the cross-purposes pitfall. In other words, the authors argue that classrooms are a place of learning, not of learning to teach, and that requisite changes would require cultural shifts to incorporate what has primarily come to be known in teacher education as an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Ultimately, the overlap between multiple figured worlds within the same setting leads PTs to navigate tensions when faced with competing and, at times, conflicting expectations for how to *student* teach during student teaching.

2.3 Navigating Tensions

Despite frequent references to "tension" and in studies involving ELA preservice teachers, the term often remains underexplored. In their literature review of how English educators are preparing preservice teachers to teach for social justice, Fowler-Amato et al. (2019) described tensions as emerging from "competing ideologies and frameworks" between university and school contexts (p. 169). Similarly, in this study, "tension" refers to the imbalance or misalignment experienced by ELA preservice teachers when conflicting ideologies pull them in multiple directions.

Tension has a negative connotation. Tension tends to be synonymous with and causes strain, struggle, pressure, or stress. These are things that most people avoid if they can, especially as they are learning to do something new. In other words, preservice teachers would probably avoid tension (causing it, responding to it, acknowledging it) if they can because they are already

experiencing the stresses and challenges of learning to do something exceedingly complex, not even accounting for taking up justice-oriented stances as an educator and unlearning years of schooling contribute to their own potentially problematic views.

Nevertheless, tensions are part of learning to teach and teaching (Fecho et al., 2005; Hong et al., 2017). In fact, one of the central tensions experienced by social justice-oriented teacher educators is the challenge of putting social justice teaching into practice (Hosseini et al., 2025). Historically, teacher educators have characterized this tension as one of theory and practice (Dewey, 1965; Forzani, 2014); teacher education programs prepare PTs with teaching and learning theories, whereas schools prepare PTs through practice. In English education, Pasternak et al. (2018) described how PTs across various studies struggled to enact equitable teaching practices, referring to this phenomenon as the awareness/application gap. They claimed that while PTs became aware of equitable teaching in coursework, they rarely applied that awareness in their student teaching or beyond.

Furthermore, a variety of factors may contribute to PTs experiencing tension. These include but are not limited to past schooling experiences, personal identities and life experiences, teacher education programs, and school contextual factors (e.g., high-stakes testing, constrictive curriculum, and professional expectations). For example, PTs often teach in the ways they were taught, following what Lortie (1975) described as the "apprenticeship of observation," wherein most teachers' experiences with school come from their time as students. Historically, researchers have framed the apprenticeship of observation as emphasizing experiences with the transmission model of traditional schooling (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Lortie, 1975)--or "someone standing at the front of the classroom explaining things" (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81). In English Language Arts, this apprenticeship emphasizes how many students have experienced literature from a literary canon and curriculum representing specific values and identities as more important and valuable. However, this stock narrative requires reconsideration in the 2020s as new and sometimes critical teaching frameworks contend for centrality in traditional public schools nationwide. Regardless, many PTs are motivated to teach by positive and negative images of past teachers and learning experiences.

Learning to navigate tensions benefits PTs during teacher preparation and into their teaching career. While coherence may be an ideal (Hammerness, 2006), inevitably, PTs will experience tensions as they move between the multiple settings of learning to teach and teaching.

Reflecting on and examining these tensions is a generative process, even if the tensions are messy and unresolved (Dunn et al., 2018). Developing strategies to navigate tensions during student teaching can support PTs to find their footing and stay in the profession (Stewart et al., 2019). Furthermore, PTs who identify tensions can surface and interrogate their own beliefs and preferred practices by talking through them with peers (Lillge & Knowles, 2020). Learning to navigate tensions supports PTs to develop the flexibility to navigate the messy realities of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), a central component of social justice teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Ultimately, learning how to navigate tensions can help PTs enact socially just teaching practices and stay in the profession.

2.3.1 Pose, Wobble, Flow

The particular nomenclature I used for tensions in this study was "wobble." After using *Pose, Wobble, Flow* (2015) in my methods course, I continued using the language of "wobble" with PTs to refer to the tensions they experienced. Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) characterized wobbles as productive for enacting culturally proactive literacy instruction. Fecho et al. (2005) defined "the wobble" as "the authored space of uncertainty that lies between and among figured worlds" and an "unsettling state of vertigo" (p. 175).

In *Pose, Wobble, Flow* (2015), Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen draw on the analogy of yoga to articulate a culturally proactive approach to reflexivity and professional growth for teachers. Educators willingly take up proactive poses in this Pose/Wobble/Flow framework (P/W/F). For example, the authors identify a "culturally proactive teaching pose" as the overarching pose for educators. Educators wobble when something unexpected happens, which is inevitable in the classroom and research, especially as praxis focuses on questioning and challenging existing inequities in schools and society. Wobbles cause us to notice, ask why, and nudge us toward action (Fecho, 2011, p. 53). Wobbling requires recognizing and embracing the "messy realities of teaching," of which ambiguity, uncertainty, and unpredictability are central (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 74). Lastly, flow, a concept from Csikszentmihalyi (2008), refers to the feeling resulting from immersion "in achieving a worthwhile goal that is precisely appropriate for our level of ability" (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015, p. 7). Significantly, flow refers to persisting and growing through the wobble, not necessarily resolving it.

2.3.2 From Identification to Navigation

Few studies of PTs' tensions cyclically examine how PTs respond to tensions. Generally, PTs are characterized as conformists and compliant with the practices and policies of their contexts. Studies have pointed out how PTs feel limited by their contexts to enact best or high-leverage practices (Young et al., 2017). However, when PTs choose to do something, what should their actions be called?

First, a PT identifies a tension they are experiencing. In the P/W/F framework, this identification is recognizing the "wobble." Next, PTs must plan how they will respond to their tension. Here, the exact language for PTs' actions is important: Do they *navigate* or *negotiate* tensions? Both navigate and "negotiate" (Fowler-Amato et al., 2019) convey a sense of traveling or movement. PTs might navigate competing centers of gravity or negotiate a particular obstacle or hurdle. I appreciate how using "navigate" constructs tensions as rooted in the world while "negotiate" focuses more explicitly on interaction and relationality. To me, navigating and negotiating both have value for these purposes. A preservice teacher must negotiate ideologies and frameworks in their interactions with others, but it might be more accurate to say that they navigate figured worlds. Furthermore, as figured worlds are simultaneously figuring and figured by individuals through discourse, they must be both negotiated and navigated. As an example of this both-and approach, Smagorinsky et al. (2013) used "navigate" and "negotiate" in their explanation of how a preservice teacher attempted to resolve "multiple competing centers of gravity" she experienced. They wrote about "how Anita navigated and attempted to resolve the conflicting settings in which she worked…" (p. 148) and how "[Anita] simultaneously negotiated her differences with Will" (p. 177). Navigating also brings the sense of journeying on a path toward something, a dominant metaphor that PTs and teacher educators use to describe PTs' progress toward becoming certain kinds of teaching (e.g., a well-started beginning teacher, a social justice-oriented teacher).

In summary, I use "navigate tensions" to describe the processes of ELA preservice teachers when they encounter competing and often conflicting ideologies and frameworks during their student teaching. These ideologies and frameworks cannot be separated from their contexts. Using this definition of navigating tensions, I will describe the factors contributing to ELA PT tensions.

2.3.3 Tensions: Located Where Towards What?

I have my own tension about how studies in English education depict tensions as occurring in the binary between university and school contexts, even when they depict those contexts as fragmented (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2013). Locating tensions in the different ideologies and frameworks between the figured worlds of university and K-12 school settings (e.g., Fowler-Amato et al., 2019) can reinscribe the hierarchical relationship between the university and K-12 schools. Traditionally, researchers depict knowledge as moving from university settings into schools (Zeichner, 2010). For example, much of the work of Smagorinsky and colleagues frames the tensions of enacting progressive teaching practices in schools (Bickmore et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2003; Smagorinsky et al., 2002, 2007, 2011, 2013). In these studies, school contexts present tensions, supports, and barriers that mediate particular kinds of teaching. In some instances, the tensions, supports, and barriers are reframed to reassign some culpability to programs (Behizadeh et al., 2021; Bickmore et al., 2005).

I wonder in this study about how to decenter the university. Cochran-Smith (1991a) pointed out the problems with a critically dissonant approach to teacher education, where PTs are taught to critique schools while espousing the beliefs and practices of their program. This approach reinforces feelings of isolation for PTs and novice teachers (Lortie, 1975), who feel like they have more examples of what not to do than models of what to do (Stewart et al., 2019). Thus, I transition to describing the numerous ways teacher educators have tried to support PTs in navigating tensions.

2.4 Supporting PTs to Navigate Tensions: Problem-Posing & Third Spaces

This study engages with Paulo Freire's problem-posing (1970) and educational third spaces (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez et al., 1997) to attempt to center PTs' experiences with and knowledge of navigating tensions. However, I should briefly differentiate between teacher educators' different approaches to support PTs in navigating tensions during student teaching and beyond. Teacher education programs have adopted different approaches to supporting PTs to learn to teach. I will refer to these as Practice-Based Teacher Education (PBTE) and Critical Pedagogy. These approaches reflect divergent strategies for navigating tensions. However, each approach encounters the same central tension of often uncritically centering university-based teacher education programs.

2.4.1 Practice-Based Teacher Education (PBTE)

A practice-based teacher education (PBTE) approach to supporting PTs to navigate tensions shifts the focus from knowledge and beliefs to what teachers do (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009). High-leverage practices refer to the core practices of teaching that "can make a demonstrable difference…in the quality of instructional practice" (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 498). For PTs, "High-leverage practices include tasks and activities that are essential for skillful beginning teachers to understand, take responsibility for, and be prepared to carry out in order to enact their core instructional responsibilities" (p. 504). Challenging the contemporary view of teaching as improvisational and context-dependent, teacher educators draw from a set of high-leverage practices that PTs then decompose and approximate in increasing complexity and independence (Grossman et al., 2009). Williamson's (2013) study on how PTs facilitated discussion utilized a high-leverage practices approach.

Although Williamson (2013) did not frame the study as supporting PTs to navigate the tensions of discussion in the ELA classroom, he did highlight the tensions PTs experienced between ideal enactments of discussion and their practice in field placements. Two PTs, Trent and Sara, experienced challenges implementing discussions in their classrooms, each attempting to focus on students leading the discussion rather than the complex facilitation processes they would need to enact as instructors. Trent's fishbowl discussion required him to intervene and manage student behavior. Sara similarly experienced two whole-class discussions with low student participation and disruptive students. Williamson (2013) framed these struggles through the lens of high-leverage practices, particularly how PTs were prepared through the methods course discussion unit.

Significantly, a high-leverage practices approach draws on a power dynamic similar to the critical pedagogy approach. Williamson (2013) expected PTs to enact a literary discussion in their field classrooms. In this approach, knowledge moves from the university into classrooms. Williamson evaluated PTs' enactments on how closely their discussion facilitation matched the ideal practice decomposed, modeled, and approximated in methods. Schools figure into the high-leverage practice approach as passive receptacles that mediate "best" practices.

Furthermore, the Practice-Based Teacher Education (PBTE) model, which builds on the work on high-leverage and core practices, necessitates significant resources to train teacher educators and mentor teachers around the shared language and practices of PBTE (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). However, this training does not always occur. For example, the program under

study utilized high-leverage practices to construct its evaluation tool. However, teacher educators and mentor teachers working with the program were not trained in high-leverage practices.

2.4.2 Critical Pedagogy

From a Critical Pedagogical perspective, teacher educators support PTs by engaging them in problem-posing (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) described problem-posing as a way of learning that departed from the traditional banking model of education. Problem-posing uses dialogic inquiry to develop knowledge about oneself and the world. Hill et al. (2020) and Lillge and Knowles (2020) serve as examples of teacher educators using problem-posing practices within coursework to support ELA PTs in navigating tensions.

For example, Hill et al (2020) conducted a longitudinal study of PTs posing problems they encountered in their student-teaching placements. The authors wanted to know how these problem-posing dialogues could help PTs "develop efficacy, agency, and a clear understanding of the linkages between theory and practice" (p. 362). They followed a discussion model where (a) a PT posed a problem, (b) the seminar asked clarifying questions, (c) led to a "workshop" of the problem, (d) then the PT made plans to implement, and, last (e) the PT reflects on their implementation of proposed solutions to the problem (p. 362). Hill et al.'s (2020) findings suggested that the problem-posing seminars created a setting for PTs to solicit support in applying ideas and practice from their methods courses during student teaching placements. PTs developed emerging voices as professionals and reflected on the "social struggles" (p. 364) they experienced, including repurposing problematic practices, pleasing multiple audiences, and choosing among a multitude of voices. Hill et al. (2020) found that these aspects of problem-posing were important to developing a professional identity among competing centers of gravity.

Likewise, Lillge and Knowles (2020) conducted a multi-site study where they had PTs document "sticking points" in notebooks and then bring those sticking points to discussions during either a methods course or a student teaching seminar. The researchers facilitated discussions to support PTs in understanding and analyzing the relationships between interactions and circulating frameworks for teaching. Drawing on a shared teaching for social justice framework, PTs noted how sticking points connected to the shared framework and then chose issues to discuss. Following discussions, PTs reflected on their takeaways from the conversation. Lillge and Knowles (2020) framed their findings with two telling cases, examining the

commitments, sticking points, and impacts of discussions on two PTs, Martha and Caleb. Their findings showed that these conversations broadened PTs' understandings of the frameworks their mentor teachers drew on in their teaching practice, which ultimately gave PTs like Martha the tools to understand her MT's goals and to identify opportunities for agency. Similarly, PTs like Caleb used conversations to recognize how teachers "enact socially just instruction while balancing the realities of their teaching contexts and livelihoods" (p. 9).

One key finding of research on critical pedagogy discussions is that PTs develop community through dialogue that supports their enactment of critical pedagogy (Behizadeh et al., 2019). Critical discussions offer opportunities for PTs to try out critical professional identities rooted in critical colleagueship (Little, 1990a). These professional relationships are significant for how they present alternative visions for teacher collaboration.

However, there are drawbacks and limitations to a problem-posing approach. Constructing settings within the university to discuss and potentially critique schools has significant drawbacks (Cochran-Smith, 1991a). Cochran-Smith (1991a) referred to this approach to teaching against the grain as "critical dissonance" between the university and school settings (p. 281). She described several tensions: (a) linking theory to practice requires applying a critical perspective to schools, (b) the people applying this perspective are outsiders, (c) teachers' knowledge is something to be "gotten around, exposed, or changed" (p. 282), (d) and the language and frameworks for critiquing are often not familiar to teachers and do not account for their perspectives (p. 282). Cochran-Smith, (1991a) argued that having PTs critique their MTs and schools may contribute to the perceived widening and "irreconcilability" of the two worlds of the university and schools.

Additionally, Lillge and Knowles (2020) pointed out that situating these discussions within coursework was both an affordance and a potential limitation. In university courses, PTs and teacher educators often occupy positions as teachers/students with a power imbalance. This power differential may push PTs to participate primarily as students, performing a social justice-oriented PT identity, even if they do not agree or find the activity helpful.

2.4.3 Third Spaces and Shared Governance

Thus far, I have described how teacher educators have supported PTs in navigating tensions through critical pedagogy (problem-posing) and PBTE. Having pointed out the challenges that each of these approaches presents, I turn to the concepts of third space (Bhabha,

1994) and shared governance (Trepper et al., 2023) as ways of attempting to counteract the centrality of the university and the teacher educator while supporting PTs in navigating tensions. Daza et al. (2021) conceptualized third spaces in teacher education as participatory approaches to professional practices where teacher educators, preservice teachers, and local communities collaborate with one another and co-construct knowledge.

The relationship between teacher education programs and schools is commonly described as a "university-school partnership." However, Zeichner (2010) described the historically dominant model of teacher education in the United States as one of "application of theory" (p. 90). In other words, PTs learn theories and practices at the university that they then apply in schools. This approach mirrors the approach to problem-posing and high-leverage practices I described earlier. I take shared governance to describe the flattening of this power/knowledge hierarchy by inviting and involving teachers and schools in designing, enacting, and evaluating the teacher education program.

In line with shared governance, Zeichner (2010) argued for the creation of new hybrid third spaces to bring together "school and university-based teacher educators and practitioner and academic knowledge in new ways to enhance the learning of prospective teachers" (p. 92). Drawing on feminist scholars, Zeichner advocated for more egalitarian relationships to support boundary crossing, thus challenging the outside-inside model (Zeichner, 1995). Few studies in English education examine how shared governance approaches might support PTs in navigating tensions.

Two studies utilized shared governance approaches that may support PTs in navigating tensions: Weaver and Stanulis (1996) examined a student teacher's, a mentor teacher's, and a university-based field instructor's attempts to negotiate the differences between the program and a middle school language arts classroom; and Trepper et al (2023) studied a third space between a university program and a summer school program that focused on constructing shared settings, roles, and texts. Weaver and Stanulis (1996) highlighted that although messy, the genuine collaboration and collegial relationship between the university and school mentors honored both of their knowledges, creating opportunities for new ways of thinking in a new setting that challenged traditional hierarchies. Likewise, they emphasized that the student teacher having a voice in constructing her experience was influential toward the goals of critical collegiality: engaging in honest conversations, admitting mistakes, and learning together (p. 34). Weaver and

Stanulis (1996) cited Stoddart's (1990) call for a shared vision between university and school mentors.

Trepper et al. (2023) proposed three design principles for developing a university English Language Arts methods course: shared settings, shared roles, and shared texts. Bridging a university-based curriculum and instruction course and four summer school classes, the researchers held the course at one of the middle schools where MTs taught and PTs were placed (shared settings). University and mentor teachers co-designed opportunities for teaching the university and summer school courses (shared roles). However, unlike Weaver and Stanulis (1996), PTs did not share in the flattened hierarchy to the same degree. Lastly, university and mentor teachers used a murder mystery text adapted from *Teaching Argument for 6-12th Graders* (Hillocks, 2011) across courses (shared texts). Trepper et al. (2023) found that shared settings, roles, and texts helped create horizontal expertise, integrate theory and practice, and build knowledge and community. Importantly, having university and school mentors in the same setting enabled these experts to shoulder the role of mediating settings that often falls entirely to student teachers (Zeichner et al., 2015).

Trepper et al. (2023) also acknowledged the challenges of enacting these design principles. These challenges included how team members may convey potentially problematic ideas within shared settings and with shared roles, such as advocating for tools from Lemov's *Teach Like A Champion* (2010). Trepper et al. (2023) explained the tension the university teachers experienced as they wanted to maintain the flattened hierarchy yet still critique the approach. Mentor teachers also experienced tensions with split attention as they attempted to learn the new curriculum of the shared text while supporting the needs of their students and the preservice teachers. Partnering with classroom teachers during the traditional school year would probably exacerbate the challenges of learning a curriculum, supporting PTs, and supporting students.

2.4.4 Shared Governance in a Third Space with PTs During Student Teaching

This study builds and departs from the work of researchers who implemented problem-posing activities into their teacher education coursework (Hill et al., 2020; Lillge & Knowles, 2020). They wondered about the impact of implementing problem-posing protocols in university settings. I, too, questioned how moving critical pedagogy outside of the traditional teacher education setting might disrupt the university-school hierarchical relationship and the positions,

storylines, frameworks, and discourses available to PTs as they navigated the tensions of their multiple figured worlds.

This study explores how PTs (and I) talked about navigating tensions during student teaching. We met over Zoom. Virtual interactions during the worst parts of the COVID-19 pandemic normalized video conferencing for schools and meetings. As PTs ' former instructor, what would it mean for me to try to co-create this new setting with PTs? Like Trepper et al. (2023), what can be learned, and what tensions remain in attempting to navigate shared governance in the third space of a Zoom meeting during PTs' student teaching semester? Thus, the group itself also becomes the subject of the study.

2.5 Finding Footing

A sociocultural approach to learning to teach draws on the metaphor of a "twisting path" PTs journey on toward conceptual development (Smagorinsky et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1987). However, Smagorinsky et al. (2013) questioned toward what ends PTs develop. The repeated findings of researchers who acknowledged that PTs often chose to align with their school environments rather than progressive teacher education programs demonstrated that the expected journey toward progress (i.e., applying social justice-oriented teaching) is a deceptive metaphor that emphasizes the aims of teacher education programs while failing to acknowledge the lived experiences and expertise of PTs in navigating their multiple overlapping and conflicting contexts.

This study addresses the gap in this research area, approaching tensions from a practical perspective that does not privilege the university. While rooted in problem-posing, PTs practically discussing their professional tensions through structured problem-of-practice protocols can both support PTs to enact teaching aligned with their values and illustrate effective strategies for finding footing within the confines of their context (See Ribay, 2024, for an example with inservice science teachers). The combined framing/positioning framework, which I will describe in Chapter 3, draws on Goffman's (1981) concept of "footing" or "alignment" to illustrate how PTs find their footing as they wobble through the tensions of multiple figured worlds.

As a metaphor, finding footing is appealing when considering navigating tensions. Experiencing wobbles, PTs must find their footing, even if they remain misaligned or imbalanced in and between multiple figured worlds. This might sometimes be a less-than-ideal

approach, such as intentional failure or slyly maneuvering, or even perpetual wobbling. Nevertheless, it is important to understand better how PTs work within their multiple figured worlds. Doing this work collaboratively with the support and facilitation of an experienced educator offers new opportunities for studying what tensions Secondary English Language Arts preservice teachers navigate and how to support them better during student teaching and beyond, however messy and imperfect (Cochran-Smith, 2010).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed how English Language Arts preservice teachers must navigate multiple, often competing, figured worlds due to the heterogeneity of English as a subject, student teaching, and the teaching profession. These different overlapping and competing frameworks lead preservice teachers to experience tensions. I define tensions as competing ideologies and frameworks that preservice teachers implicitly and explicitly recognize within and between figured worlds as they learn to teach. Furthermore, I demonstrated the opportunity to study how these tensions tangle and weave during the complex interactions of student teaching. Specifically, I identified the opportunity to support preservice teachers in navigating tensions in a non-university setting where their needs and knowledge-building could be centered as they worked through problems of practice.

In the next chapter, I draw on this literature review to present the methodological approach to this study.

Chapter 3 Methods

3.1 Introduction

> But what I do want to stress is that these meetings are for you. So, looking at these goals and the research question, what I really want you to think about is what are your goals? (Chris, Meeting 1)

During our first inquiry group meeting over Zoom, I shared the goals I developed for our biweekly inquiry group meetings. These goals included identifying wobbles, discussing wobbles with care and criticality, making plans for how to "make changes" (navigate tensions) through talk and actions, practicing strategies for making changes, and reflecting on those decisions. Already, the cyclical structure of identification, planning, practice, enactment, and reflection was present in my intentions. Similarly discernible was my goal for meetings to be *for* the preservice teacher participants. In other words, the group needed immediate utility for participants. To meet that goal, I needed to be flexible as a researcher and respond to their needs by listening to them and then adapting the study.

In this chapter, I outline the research methodology for this study. In this first section, I will introduce the purpose and overview of the chapter. Then, I restate my research questions and aims to contextualize the methodology. In the second section, I describe the research design, including my approach and rationale, my researcher positionality, the research setting and participants, the contexts of the study, and the participants. In the third section, I describe the data collection methods. In the fourth section, I explicate the data analysis process. Lastly, in the fifth section, I explain the strategies used to build trustworthiness and credibility, the ethical considerations that went into the study, and the limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary.

I drew on a qualitative sociocultural methodology to study how participants navigated the resulting tensions during student teaching. In other words, I wanted to understand participants'

experiences and how those experiences were situated within their various contexts during the student teaching semester. I developed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What tensions do secondary English language arts preservice teachers navigate during student teaching?

Research Question 1a: How are these tensions reflected in program and state policies?

Research Question 2: How do secondary English language arts preservice teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching?

Research Question 3: How does participating in a problem of practice protocol support and challenge secondary English language arts preservice teachers' navigation of tensions during student teaching?

3.2 Research Design

From my experiences as a field instructor, I have observed PTs grappling with misalignments between their own ideas about teaching, those they are learning in program coursework, and what is being practiced in the K-12 classrooms. These observations pushed me to adopt an asset-based lens, focusing on understanding PTs' unique contributions and insights to the field rather than evaluating them against predefined standards. This asset-based approach is central to recognizing the value of PTs' knowledge, experiences, and aspirations, particularly as they strive to reconcile the tensions in and between multiple figured worlds.

The rationale behind adopting a qualitative methodological stance is to foreground PTs' subjective experiences and capture the complex realities they face. Through this process, I aim to empower PT voices, highlighting their role as active agents navigating and negotiating their teaching environments and contributing valuable insights to the profession.

To center on PTs' experiences navigating tensions during student teaching, I approached this study through collaborative inquiry group meetings bookended by semi-structured interviews. In the next section, I will describe the conceptual approach I developed for and through this study.

3.2.1 Study Overview

Over the winter break in the 2022-2023 academic year, I recruited ELA preservice teachers entering their student teaching semester at Riverford State University (RSU) to participate in a problem-of-practice inquiry group. The group's central aim was to support

preservice teachers to "identify wobbles" and "make changes" during student teaching to teach in ways that aligned with their values. After emailing back and forth, five preservice teachers volunteered to participate. I met with the five PTs and their mentor teachers as student teaching started, explaining that the study consisted of interviews and problem-of-practice group meetings for the participating preservice teachers.

I conducted initial semi-structured interviews over Zoom with each preservice teacher. For the structure of Interview 1, see Appendix A. PTs answered questions about themselves, their student teaching context, and the kinds of "wobbles" they experienced thus far during student teaching. Their responses provided information about how the preservice teachers perceived their contexts, from the students, school, colleagues, curriculum, and community to their mentor teacher.

In February, the five ELA PTs and I started meeting for the inquiry group. We met eight times during the student teaching semester, roughly every other week, over Zoom, with one exception, Meeting 6. In Meeting 1, I introduced my goals for the group, reviewed examples of what we could do in our time together, and solicited feedback from the PTs about their experiences and how we could revise the group to meet their needs. Meetings 2 through 5 and 7 followed the same general structure. I started the meeting with greetings as PTs joined the Zoom. Then, PTs chose from a list of potential thought questions to respond to. I drafted the thought questions to respond to current events, ideas PTs discussed in previous meetings, and offer PTs choices. Following this initial sharing, PTs could update the group on "wobbles" they shared in prior meetings (reflection). After "wobble updates," two PTs identified a wobble and planned how to navigate that wobble with the group using a modified problem-of-practice protocol. The protocol consisted of a PT sharing narratives (or other artifacts) from their student teaching (identification) and group members asking and responding to each other's questions and comments as the presenter produced a plan (planning). Each meeting closed with a debrief for group members to reflect on what happened during the meeting and what they took away.[2] Each participant presented at least two wobbles to the group.

[2] Meeting 1, already described, and Meeting 6, did not follow this meeting structure or use the problem-of-practice protocol. Additionally, I conducted two meetings in one week (Meeting 3a and Meeting 3b) to accommodate Tracy and Eva's master's program scheduling conflict.

Following the student teaching semester, I interviewed the new teachers again. Building from their Interview 1 responses and what I learned from the inquiry group meetings, I asked PTs about their experiences throughout the semester in their student teaching placement, teacher education program, and the group. These questions focused on what tensions the preservice teachers navigated and how. For a description of the semi-structured Interview 2 questions, see Appendix B.

In addition to the two interviews for each participant and eight group meetings, I collected relevant program and state documents, including standards and expectations for student teaching.

To analyze these data, I tried to capture the importance of the preservice teachers' "wobbles," or tensions within and across multiple contexts. First, I open-coded the interview and meeting transcripts to determine what tensions preservice teachers navigated during student teaching (RQ1). Then, I adapted and used a combined framing/positioning analysis to examine how preservice teachers talked about navigating tensions while maintaining their perspectives and language (RQ2). My findings from RQ1 and RQ2 led me to return to the program and state documents for additional analysis (RQ1a). Lastly, I explored how participating in the group supported preservice teachers in navigating tensions, drawing on the same framing/positioning framework (RQ3).

This study has developed significantly since its inception, going through multiple edits, revisions, and iterations as I worked to support the preservice teachers who volunteered to participate, give them autonomy in the research process, and develop my own understanding of it. In the next section, I lay out the conceptual framework and rationale for this study.

3.2.2 Conceptual Approach and Rationale

In their comprehensive study, Secondary English Teacher Preparation in the United States, Pasternak et al. (2018) invoke the two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) when they argue that the central challenge of enacting equity-oriented teaching practices is the "awareness/application gap" in English education. Drawing on a host of data, including surveys, interviews, syllabi, and literature reviews, the authors point to the consistent challenge of novice teachers applying the teaching practices they learn in their university coursework in real classrooms. This dichotomous conceptualization between university-based teacher education programs and K-12 schools echoes the theory/practice divide that has characterized teacher

education since its inception. Consequently, teacher educators and researchers have developed methodologies and methodological tools to explore how preservice and inservice teachers learn to teach within and across settings (e.g., Grossman et al., 1999). These methodological resources provide a practical starting point from which this study can branch.

The predominant approach to examining how preservice and novice teachers navigate tensions is sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1987). Learning to teach is a social process situated within particular cultural settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Sociocultural research interrogates how social contexts mediate actions. In English Education, exploring how preservice and novice teachers navigate tensions stems from Grossman et al.'s (1999) explication of activity theory (Cole, 1996; Leont'ev, 1981; Tulviste, 1991; Wertsch, 1981) to examine how "a person's frameworks for thinking are developed through problem-solving actions carried out in specific settings whose social structures have been developed through historical, culturally grounded actions" (p. 4). (For examples of how activity theory and cultural historical activity theory [CHAT] have been used, see Ahmed, 2020, 2024; Behizadeh, 2022, 2023; Bickmore et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2003; Land & Rubin, 2020; Smagorinsky et al., 2002, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2013, 2015; Smagorinsky & Long, 2024). In Grossman et al.'s (1999) view, activity theory is helpful for "illuminating how teachers choose pedagogical tools to inform and conduct their teaching," focusing "attention on the predominant value systems and social practices that characterize the settings in which learning to teach occurs (pp. 4-5).

According to Grossman et al. (1999), activity setting analyses can offer insights into the two-worlds pitfall. The authors illustrate how activity settings have specific desired outcomes, otherwise called motives. However, "multiple and competing desired outcomes often coexist within an activity setting" (p. 7). These outcomes encourage or discourage specific ways of thinking or acting. At the same time, multiple activity settings are bounded, typically overlapping in relationships with one another. For example, a teacher education program, student teaching setting, and K-12 classroom may all function as activity settings that overlap, particularly when a student teacher is observed by their field instructor. Furthermore, individuals construct activity settings in particular ways through their internal representation based on their own goals, histories, and activities within the physical environment (p. 8). Individuals take on identities within activity systems through their actions, appropriating conceptual and practical tools to accomplish outcomes. Altogether, this depiction of activity settings offers a way to theoretically

construe the challenge of navigating the two-worlds pitfall, as preservice teachers must navigate multiple bounded activity settings with multiple and competing desired outcomes, settings that are simultaneously constructed by them and existing within a particular cultural history to which they are peripheral.

In English education since the early 2000s, Smagorinsky and various colleagues have drawn on this metaphor of multiple worlds pulling on preservice teachers to analyze what tools PTs appropriate, how they appropriate those tools, and why, over time (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2013). However, constructing two worlds, one of the university and one of the K-12 school (or multiple K-12 schools), may, in my perspective, unintentionally misrepresent and misconstrue Grossman et al.'s (1999) articulation of activity systems. This "pull" of competing centers of gravity does little to suggest that preservice teachers similarly play a part in constructing those worlds. Furthermore, visualizing the metaphor requires situating the worlds in different physical locations. Setting the worlds side-by-side or across space from each other flattens the difference between physical locations, what Lave, (1988) calls "arenas," and settings, which represent a physical space. This visual metaphor would make having feet in both worlds at the same time difficult.

Furthermore, I find that these studies reify the epistemological hierarchy between university and school settings (Zeichner, 2010) by focusing on how novice teachers appropriate particular conceptual and pedagogical tools from their program. This focus obfuscates the advantage of activity theory for decentering the university and instead looks at the importance of field experiences (Grossman et al., 1999). If learning to teach is a "twisting path" (Smagorinsky et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1987) toward socialization into one or more activity systems, it is important to learn how preservice teachers think of that path, especially given the complexity of student teaching.

3.2.2.1 "Making Changes" Inquiry Group Meetings: Embracing the Wobble

To better understand preservice teachers' perspectives, this study's methodological approach engages in embracing and centering the wobbles of preservice teachers (Fecho et al., 2005) within a problem of practice protocol (adapted from Dunne et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2020; Lillge & Knowles, 2020; Youth Development Executives of King County, 2017). Within the Pose, Wobble, Flow framework, preservice teachers determine their teaching poses, wobbling as they try to enact those poses in their teaching (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015). Importantly,

the poses foreground how preservice teachers have their own teaching goals, which do not necessarily correspond to program goals or specific program practices.

To surface and center preservice teachers' goals and wobbles (tensions), I developed an inquiry group structure (outlined in detail below). The meeting design underwent multiple revisions and edits as I solicited feedback from peers, mentors, and participants. Additionally, I responded to participants' implicit and explicit suggestions for how to shape meetings. Ultimately, the resulting Zoom meetings functioned as a third space (Bhabha, 1994), a hybrid of my and participant goals. In this hybrid setting, I, too, wobbled with my self-positioning, opting to play with my group roles as observer/facilitator and participant, adopting a sort of Double-Dutch Methodology (Green, 2014) where I recognized my goals as often in tension with one another. I discuss these tensions in more detail in chapter 6.

3.2.2.2 A Combined Framing/Positioning Framework

Inspired by the existing research in English education on how preservice teachers learn to teach, I present the following conceptual framing/positioning framework in Figure 1. This framework draws on framing (Goffman, 1986; Tannen, 1993), positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), discourse (Gee, 2011, 2014, 2015), and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). The combined framing/positioning framework applies a "garden variety" discourse approach (Bischoping & Gazso, 2016) to discourse analysis in education (Rogers, 2011). This combined framework offers an alternative to activity setting analysis (Grossman et al., 1999) and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT; Engeström, 2001) that more explicitly embraces tension as a central aspect of learning to teach (Cochran-Smith, 2010).

I conceptualize PTs navigating tensions by focusing on how PTs use discourse to identify tensions between competing ideologies and frameworks, make plans to navigate those tensions, enact their plans, and reflect on their decisions. PTs' discourse is situated within particular social settings with cultural expectations and social dynamics. Building from the metaphor of multiple worlds creating competing centers of gravity for PTs, I use Holland et al.'s (1998) concept of figured worlds to represent PTs' experiences of multiple overlapping worlds in the same setting. To navigate the tensions of these multiple worlds, PTs use discourse to position themselves and others along particular storylines as they are simultaneously positioned by others within the world. Using discourse, they draw on frames, or definitions of the situation, to create or challenge alignment. The relationship between alignment, or footing, and tension is central to

this study, as PTs must often face the contradiction of choosing to maintain alignment within one figured world while being misaligned in another.

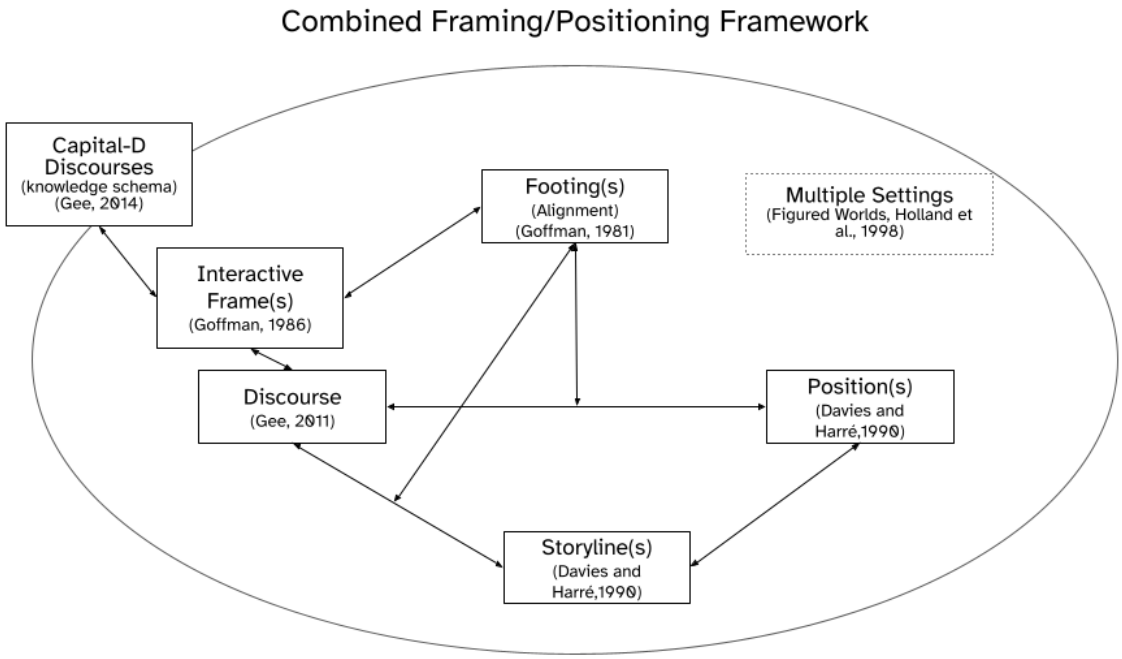


Figure 1: Combined Framing/Positioning Framework (adapted from Bruneel and Vanassche, 2021)

3.2.2.3 From Multiple Worlds to Multiple Figured Worlds

PTs experience multiple competing centers of gravity from the fragmented worlds of the university and K-12 schools (Smagorinsky et al., 2013). However, these "worlds" are not physical locations like the university and school. Instead, they are individual and collective interpretations: social and cultural constructions of the "world" that can exist within and across physical locations. Within these "figured worlds," people navigate social interactions by following social and cultural expectations for behavior (i.e., scripts or storylines). The expectations for these social interactions develop and change over time (Holland et al., 1998). Figured worlds address the social constructed-ness of cultural expectations within particular contexts.

The value of figured worlds to this conceptual framework is twofold. First, figured worlds can overlap one another. A preservice teacher must navigate multiple figured worlds simultaneously during student teaching. In their student teaching classroom, they are a student, a

student teacher, and a teacher, depending on how they position themselves and are positioned by others. Thus, rather than an astronaut traveling to multiple worlds, we might think of parallel worlds that exist simultaneously.

Second, figured worlds are interpretations. These interpretations, and therefore the figured worlds, can change as PTs participate in the socially situated practices of the figured world. Universities and schools become sites for conflicting constructions of each setting (Smagorinsky, 2010), where PTs participate in the co-construction of figured worlds that may not be in alignment. Furthermore, the relationship between figured worlds can be developed through shared practices within a shared setting. The interpretive character of figured worlds can consider why some ELA PTs might experience tension while others may not, as it can draw on the schooling experiences, personal identities, life experiences, and formal learning that contribute to PTs' interpretive lenses.

3.2.2.4 Discourse Within and Between Figured Worlds

Discourse refers to the ways people use language through acts of saying, writing, doing, being, valuing, and believing (Gee, 1989). Gee distinguishes between Capital-D Discourses and little "d" discourses. While little "d" discourses refer to the actual language/action in use, Capital-D Discourses are "ways of being in the world" or "identity kits" that enable a person to take on a particular social role and display membership in a social group (Gee, 2011). In other words, in their interactions, SecELA PTs draw on Capital-D Discourses in their discourse to position themselves as particular kinds of people within figured worlds.

A discursive framework must attend to a multi-layered view of language that examines the discourse as embedded within particular mental processes, social practices, and sociocultural and political contexts (Fairclough, 1995; Ivanić, 2004). To capture the political contexts of figured worlds PTs experienced, I also address how the institution and state-level discourses (available through policy documents) draw on Capital-D Discourses to frame particular ways of defining student teaching and specific positions and storylines for SecELA PTs. For instance, state documents on "expectations for student teaching" frame student teaching as a collaboration between field instructors, mentor teachers (universities and schools), and student teachers.

3.2.2.5 Positioning Within and Between Figured Worlds

This study takes up the metaphor of Preservice teachers as travelers. In the traditional narrative of the development along a twisting path (Smagorinsky et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1987), a PT develops conceptions of learning to teach. This leads to an image of an explorer journeying along a path. In this metaphor, the PT is an interstellar traveler, moving between different planets. However, research suggests that the divide between the university and k-12 schools offers no linear path and a journey with no set endpoint (Smagorinsky et al., 2013). Furthermore, the fragmentation within these contexts leads to multiple competing and often conflicting centers of gravity that push and pull preservice teachers.

However, I would challenge this view of the astronaut to that of an interdimensional traveler with feet in multiple dimensions. Rather than navigating the vast space between planets, preservice teachers experience multiple figured worlds in the same place and even at the same time.

Positioning analysis examines how people establish and negotiate identities for themselves and others in interaction (Davies & Harré, 1990). Through their "speech acts," which I will refer to as discourse, PTs take up certain subject positions in relation to others. Drawing on metaphors of types of people (e.g., teacher/student) and characteristics (e.g., having authority) are both ways that researchers talk about positions in educational situations (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015). As a person positions themself (self-positioning), they also position others (other-positioning), and vice versa. This positioning can be intentional or unintentional. As people position themselves and others, they do so within certain storylines (Harré, 2012) that afford and limit the rights (what a person claims they can do) and duties (what a person understands others should do for them) in a social situation (Moghaddam et al., 2008). Unlike identities or roles, positions are largely flexible and dependent on interaction in the social situation at hand.

I am interested in how preservice ELA teachers position themselves and others and how they are positioned when trying to navigate tensions. Harré & van Langenhove (1999) identify three orders of positioning concerning how attention is drawn to the positioning and the resulting (non)tension. First-order positioning refers to unquestioned positioning, where the positioning goes unquestioned. Second-order positioning occurs when a subject questions or challenges a position and attempts to renegotiate it. Third-order positioning refers to talking about an experience after the fact. For this study, I examine second-order and third-order positioning.

Second-order positioning refers to how positioning occurs in the moment of enactment through, for instance, the language and actions of participants within group meetings. Third-order positioning, on the other hand, refers to how PTs talk about an event (i.e., identifying the root of their tension and reflecting on what they did to resolve it) from outside of that event, such as in reflection.

Discourse, subject positions, and storylines are helpful for examining PTs' perceptions of tensions within and across figured worlds during student teaching. Within figured worlds, PTs take up particular identities and follow expectations for how to act (Holland et al., 1998). Within these overlapping figured worlds, the PT does not develop a unified (albeit hybrid) professional identity across professional settings (Alsup, 2006). Instead, they take up multiple positions depending on the expectations of the situation and their context, often having to juggle multiple positions within multiple figured worlds (Alsup, 2019).

Furthermore, positioning and framing are increasingly being used in tandem to examine both how the situation is being defined and how interactants in the situation negotiate their relationships with each other (Gordon, 2015).

3.2.2.6 Framing Within and Between Figured Worlds

From its beginnings in anthropology and sociology, framing has been used to examine how people establish "definitions of a situation" in an interaction (Goffman, 1986, p. 10). For the case of this study, the "situation" I broadly refer to is PTs' student teaching experiences where they experience tensions. In this way, framing might refer to past events (reframing) or future events, such as a planning conversation with a mentor teacher, as well as the situation at hand. In an interaction, people draw on prior frames, or "knowledge schema," expectations about people, objects, events, and settings in the world" (Tannen, 1993, p. 60), as they actively frame what is happening. These knowledge schemas draw on dominant and nondominant Capital-D Discourses.

Within their figured worlds, PTs and others understand and define what is happening through framing, drawing on historical, social, and cultural cues of discourse (Goffman, 1986; Tannen, 1993). However, during student teaching, PTs may encounter competing frameworks and ideologies within and across figured worlds. Here, the concept of "footing," or frame alignment, is critical. Footing refers to how interactants construct alignments between themselves and others and between themselves and what is being communicated. In their study,

Lillge and Knowles (2020) found that their Daybook conversations led one PT to understand her mentor teachers' framework and work within it to accomplish her goals. Working within her MT's framework required aligning what the PT wanted to do with the MT's knowledge schema. This example showcases the opportunities of a combined framing/positioning framework.

3.2.2.7 Finding Footing

However, frame alignment can be challenging for PTs when navigating tensions within and across multiple figured worlds. Therefore, I find it important to examine how PTs navigated tensions, which may *not* include this more formal and explicit frame alignment at all. In other words, a PT might challenge one or more figured worlds and make a mess of things, although social and cultural expectations work to prevent such actions. A difficult bind occurs when alignment within one figured world appears to necessitate misalignment within another. For example, a PT who does not agree with their MT in student teaching or teaching figured worlds might find it difficult to maintain alignment with their MT in both. Additionally, the teacher must consider the situation as it is framed: How do they and others understand what is happening? Especially as preservice ELA teachers take up positions as "teachers," students, visitors, and strangers, these new teachers must balance interacting with others during student teaching with the issue of what to make of English and how to actualize that in the classroom.

Here is the crux of what I am trying to get at with this study. On the one hand, preservice ELA teachers are working to define a situation in collaboration with others. For instance, they are trying to position themselves as teachers, or as close as they can be to teachers, in a classroom where someone else is already the teacher. They are negotiating the rights and responsibilities of "teacher" or working to define what "student teacher" means to the various stakeholders in and across multiple settings. As preservice teachers often find, their named identity lacks a clear definition: *Can I tell students to put their phones away? If I do, will they, or will they look at me, their eyes asking, "Who are you?"* As a student teacher, teaching intern, preservice teacher, or any other term the field uses to describe the humans training to be teachers, these humans must constantly negotiate the situation of "teaching." Furthermore, teaching interns must constantly negotiate their status in every classroom situation. The traditional classroom has clearly defined roles of "student" and "teacher." The student teacher is both and neither and one and the other all at the same and different times depending on the situation and

perspective. This is why actions such as meetings to establish goals and roles for the teaching intern are so important.

However, when these goals and roles, for both the student teacher and the teacher, are not actualized or communicated to all stakeholders (students, parents, administrators, and others), misalignment can and often does result. Misalignment is not conflict. Conflict has a much more aggressive connotation than misalignment. Conflict is direct and most often explicit. It is the realization of misalignment in action. There will always be misalignment in a group, but conflict will not always exist. Thus, negotiating the situation is important. This is increasingly important as the profession in the U.S. is beset by a political climate in which teachers are deprofessionalized and dehumanized.

Additionally, teachers must simultaneously frame the situation of "teaching" they do every day. As educators, we cannot take for granted that "teacher" and "teaching" when put into practice will not lead to misalignment between ourselves and our students, their parents, administrators, community members, or legislators.

3.2.2.8 Navigating Tensions Across Time

To examine how PTs navigate tensions across time, I draw on Horn's (2007) term "episodes of pedagogical reasoning." She defines episodes of pedagogical reasoning as "units of teacher-to-teacher talk in which teachers exhibit their understanding of an issue in their practice" (p. 46). She adds, "EPRs are moments in teachers' interaction in which they describe issues in or raise questions about teaching practice that are accompanied by some elaboration of reasons, explanations, or justifications" (p. 46). Horn's pedagogical reasoning episodes can vary, ranging from single turn-of-talk utterances to multiple turns-of-talk between many people.

For the sake of this study, I made several changes, keeping the bounding nature of variability centered on a particular topic. Inspired by framing's popular relationship to film and because of its ease of understanding, I draw on the language of television: I shift Horn's "episodes" to "scenes." As preservice ELA teachers plan, enact, and reflect on a curricular or pedagogical change, how they frame that change can be seen in different "scenes," similar to thinking about where the camera is during a scene (as well as how it shifts or moves about). Topically connected scenes form "episodes" of framing that can but do not necessarily span planning, enacting, and reflecting cycles. For instance, teachers often plan how they will speak to students (planning), speak to students during class (enacting), and then reflect on their teaching

(reflection). This example centers on students as the audience. Similarly, a teacher might plan how to speak to their mentor teacher (planning), speak with their mentor teacher (enacting), and then reflect on their conversation (reflection). Episodes might also have multiple scenes of the same type depending on how the preservice ELA teacher approaches their audiences. If episodes are similar topically for the same preservice ELA teacher, I call these "series."

Having detailed the conceptual framework for this study, I transition to describing the positionality I bring to this research study.

3.3 Researcher Positionality

In this section, I articulate the social identities, life experiences, and educational/teaching experiences that shape how I position myself as a researcher in this study. These elements collectively influence my interactions, interpretations, and contributions within the research environment.

3.3.1 ***Social Identities***

I identify as a white, male, cisgender, heteronormative, and non-disabled individual who speaks English fluently. These identities reflect the dominant perspectives prevalent in U.S. culture. As a result, I am rarely compelled to consider my belonging in social settings or question whether my knowledge is valuable. Recognizing that I perceive the world through these privileged positions, I must interrogate in my research how these identities have contributed to my beliefs and conceptions around learning to teach and researching the preparation of teachers (Milner, 2007). Decentering the white male lens requires adopting a listening stance as a researcher and attending to how my identities preposition me in many interactions in complex ways that are not the de facto "norm." For example, I must recognize how my experiences as a preservice teacher and teacher differ from most other teachers and how those differences have contributed to my changing perspective on my experiences. While many educational researchers and leaders are white men, most teachers are white women (Schaeffer, 2024), as are the participants in this study. As a result, I lean into methods that emphasize collaboration and privilege nondominant and marginalized perspectives, building from participants' knowledge rather than my own.

I want to illustrate three critical moments that affected how I understand my positionality in this study. First, I illustrate how my teaching ELA in Huntington Park, California, led me to

recognize the centering of whiteness and other privileged identities in school settings and the work I needed to do to change that. Second, I describe how I learned to collaborate with preservice teachers as an educator during the COVID-19 pandemic to embrace what was far from "normal." Third, I reflect on a moment from teaching ELA methods where I recognized how my choices as an instructor, however well-meaning, closed off valuable discussions of the tensions preservice teachers were experiencing in their field placement.

3.3.2 Teaching ELA in Huntington Park, CA (2014-2019)

My second teaching position at Alliance Margaret M. Bloomfield High School (BHS) in Huntington Park, California, shaped my positionality as an educator and researcher. I started at BHS the same year the school opened and grew into myself as an educator as the school grew to accommodate each new class of students and teachers. There, I taught Grade 9 English Support, Grade 9 English Language Arts, Grade 11 English Language Arts, and AP English Language and Composition. After two years, I also worked as the ELA department co-lead.

I could easily have maintained a deficit perspective of students while teaching at BHS. Preparing students to be college and career ready felt like an impossible task. As a designated Title 1 Charter school, BHS comprised a population of nearly 100% Latine students, many of whom were generation 1, 1.5, or 2 immigrants. Nearly 70% of the first two cohorts of students had been socially promoted from middle school to grade 9, meaning they failed one or more courses. According to measures of students' reading ability, most students read three or more grade levels below expected. I struggled.

I struggled for two reasons. First, I did not know what I was doing. At no point in my credential program did I encounter a classroom like those at BHS. The kids were loud. Many of them spoke Spanish during class. Some students did not speak English *at all*. None of them wanted to read *Romeo and Juliet*. Few of them would do any of the work I assigned.

The second reason I struggled was because I blamed students rather than working to understand our social setting and my role in constructing our classroom. In other words, I engaged in color-evasive racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). BHS was the first school setting I attended where my whiteness was not central. Most of the time, I was one of a handful of white teachers on campus. I only came to terms with this racism after Ms. M, the principal, kept questioning what I could do to support students after a messy observation. The school's goals

were undoubtedly to prepare students for college and career readiness. However, students' college and career readiness did not need to resemble mine.

Ms. M helped change my perspective toward students and teaching. I learned to develop curriculum and instructional strategies aligned with the new College and Career Readiness expectations of the Common Core State Standards that worked for my students. I worked alongside colleagues, moving away from a deficit approach and recognizing student assets and learning in real time. Working as part of a collaborative team, particularly with my English co-lead, Chris Membribes, enabled me to work collectively toward shared goals. This period marked my advocacy for students and self-improvement, grounded in organizational goals and data-driven evidence. While I taught there, BHS significantly outperformed the state average on Grade 11 ELA standardized testing.

Working at BHS gave me insights into how I took for granted whiteness as centered in educational spaces. Students, staff, parents, and colleagues within those spaces brought funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) that differed significantly from my white boy Orange County conservative monolingual upbringing. Collaborating with them allowed me to understand myself better, how I interacted with others, and the system we were part of. My experiences at BHS led me to question deficit assumptions and decenter the perspectives that led to those assumptions in the first place.

3.3.3 Teaching Field Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Fall 2020)

I started collaborating with preservice teachers as a field instructor in the Fall of 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was my second year of graduate school. The year prior, I moved across the country from Los Angeles to Ann Arbor for the Joint PhD Program in English and Education (JPEE) with my wife and dog. Now, I sat in front of a computer screen for 10-12 hours daily, teaching, taking classes, and attending meetings.

That Fall, I had 18 undergraduates enrolled in my field seminar class. We met online on Zoom on Tuesday nights throughout the semester. Additionally, I observed each of them as they taught lessons in their practicum field placements. Some taught class virtually in Zoom rooms, and others led their virtual class in Microsoft Teams. Essentially, I sat at my desk, entering virtual classrooms to observe the undergraduate secondary ELA preservice teachers as they virtually taught middle and high school students.

The experience caused me to question everything I thought I knew about teaching and learning to teach right alongside the preservice teachers. I spent so much of my life *not* having to question myself or what I knew, and the pandemic challenged me to interrogate "normal" and just how much I took for granted. I brought a college and career ready focus to teaching ELA that differed so much from my colleagues and the preservice teachers I worked with. However, many preservice teachers and their students needed different things than I had experience with.

Giving some of the reins to the preservice teachers made the field seminar impactful. The main project of that semester involved preservice teachers leading a class activity in the seminar on a topic of their choice that related to their teaching. This activity allowed the preservice teachers to position themselves as teachers and experts, teaching their classmates and me about a topic they cared deeply about. PTs engaged with personal teaching questions in meaningful ways and from perspectives I did not have. Sure, I had abstract ideas of teaching and situated knowledge, but leading a class during the COVID-19 pandemic humbled me to no longer uncritically rely on the traditional teacher/student hierarchy. Furthermore, these experiences pushed me to consider what and whose values I centered when working with preservice teachers.

3.3.4 Teaching ELA Methods (Fall 2022)

In the semester leading to this study, I taught English Language Arts Methods to the participants and their respective cohorts of undergraduate and master's Secondary ELA preservice teachers. In one of the class sessions, I asked preservice teachers to bring in student work. Two undergraduate PTs placed at a middle school brought student writing samples. As the pair discussed students' writing, I overheard them drawing attention to minor errors. The PTs pointed out misspellings, missing punctuation, and verb tense disagreements, considering how they might address these common concerns in students' writing.

Walking by the two of them, I suggested they focus on a different aspect of the students' writing. I pointed out how they might examine how students' writing processes led them to submit such work. From my teaching experience and research on preservice teachers, I knew that focusing on marking up these "errors" of students' writing would do little to support the students. However, as I said they should focus on something else, one PT suggested that I was not allowing them to work through their thinking, to "wobble" through the dilemma they faced when encountering student writing that looked like that.

The recognition came slowly. It took weeks for me to consider that my self-positioning as the instructor could close off learning opportunities for preservice teachers to embrace the wobble. I did little to understand their perspectives, merely overhearing snippets of their conversation before I interjected to suggest that what they were doing was wrong. *I did not know*.

From this interaction and upon reflection, I thought about the consequences of expecting so much change from preservice teachers so quickly. I brought many assumptions to my teaching, and many of those assumptions worked in direction opposition to an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Instead, these strategies aimed to fill PTs with my knowledge for expediency. I reflected on how quickly I started to "know" what to do when I started teaching methods, the pitfall of the traditional classroom structure that works to create hierarchies when critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) aims to disrupt those structures through mutual learning and collaboration.

3.3.5 ***Conducting This Research: My Researcher Role***

My experiences teaching at BHS, as a field instructor during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Teaching ELA methods have shaped my positionality as an educator and researcher in ways I do and do not yet recognize. As I entered the study as a former instructor and novice researcher, I aimed to challenge traditional power dynamics associated with my roles. Recognizing my prepositioning as a knowledge-holder, I sought to redefine my position as a facilitator, colleague, and collaborator. This is reflected in my research approach, where I positioned participants as co-constructors of knowledge and invited them to co-construct the group meeting space. I approached the study as a critical listener rather than an evaluator, embracing participant narratives as multifaceted truths. This is visible for how I developed my research questions.

Through Research Question 1, I reconsidered *what* tensions preservice teachers were navigating. This diverged from research designs that focus on how PTs implement particular program-focused teaching concepts (e.g., critical composition pedagogy; Behizadeh et al., 2021) and practices (e.g., writing workshop; Johnson et al., 2003).

Through my exploration of Research Question 2, I offered preservice teachers opportunities to develop approaches to navigating tensions independent of programmatic requirements. This conceptualization of decentering the university and myself as a teacher educator to focus on PTs' knowledge-building challenged me as a teacher educator and researcher to reflect on the assumptions I brought to learning to teach.

Lastly, through research question 3, I explored how we positioned ourselves and each other within group meetings, further examining my positionality in this dynamic learning space. My training as an educator ingrained in me the skill of evaluating student learning swiftly; however, my role as a researcher required adopting a critical listening stance. This perspective foregrounds the importance of collaborative knowledge-making in educational research. Ultimately, my tensions as a researcher wobbling about whether and how to participate in group discussions with preservice teachers emphasize what I see as the challenges of framing teacher educators and teacher education programs focused on social justice as knowledge-holders and producers. Social justice teacher education requires embracing unknowability (Kumashiro, 2000) and avoiding dichotomous thinking (e.g., right/wrong, Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Trying to undo hierarchies is messy work. As a result, I, too, am in the constant process of revision.

3.4 Context of the Study

In this section, I describe the multiple contexts the Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers navigated in the study. Leah, Charlotte, Eva, Madison, and Tracy were all students in the same School of Education at Riverford State University. Within the School of Education, they were enrolled in two distinct yet overlapping Secondary English Language Arts Teacher Education Programs, Secondary Undergraduate (SecUG) and Secondary Masters plus Certification (SecMAC). As part of their enrollment in the program, each SecELA PT completed a student teaching internship in person at a local middle school (grades 6-8) or high school (grades 9-12). I distinguish between student teaching and secondary schools as contexts because each activity setting is distinct. Lastly, all participants participated in two interviews and biweekly inquiry group meetings via Zoom over the student teaching semester.

3.4.1 The City of Riverford

Riverford is a city of over 100,000 residents in the Midwest U.S. It is a "college town." Politically, Riverford consistently votes Democratic in elections. Like many Midwest college towns, the liberal aspects of the city form a "bubble," separating the city from many of the surrounding smaller towns and farmland.

3.4.2 The Riverford State University School of Education

The School of Education at Riverford State University (pseudonym) has programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The school also offers a variety of teacher certification

programs as well as other certification and endorsement programs. The school's vision statement reads, "We are working together to build the society in which we all want to live, a society where everyone can thrive." The RSU School of Education advanced an agenda focused on diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity (DIJE), which often took the form of "advancing just and equitable educational opportunities." Among the school's research partners is a program promoting high-leverage teaching practices.

3.4.3 The Secondary English Language Arts Educator Preparation Programs

The School of Education offered multiple pathways to receiving Secondary English Language Arts certification. These pathways included undergraduate degrees in English or Education with certification in Secondary English Language Arts or a master's degree in educational studies with certification in Secondary English Language Arts.

The secondary undergraduate ELA (SecUG ELA) program lasted 1.5 years. The program started during the second semester of the students' junior year and ended the second semester of their senior year. Throughout the program, students took a variety of foundational and methods courses. Additionally, they participated in field experiences each semester of the program. Students spent several weeks in two or three different placements in the first semester. In their second semester, students spent the whole semester with one mentor teacher, attending their placement for a half-day two days a week. In their third semester, students attended their placement for the entire day for the whole semester with one mentor teacher.

The secondary master's with certification in ELA (SecMAC ELA) program lasted one calendar year. The program began in the summer and ended in the Spring/Summer of the following year, depending on whether students opted to receive their English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement. Starting in the Summer, students took various foundational and methods courses. During the summer, they had field experience at a summer school. Then, students attended one field experience for the whole school year. During the Fall semester, students attended their placement for a full day, two days a week. Then, in the winter semester, students attended the same placement for the entire day with the same mentor teacher.

During the study, differences between the SecUG and SecMAC ELA programs included the program length, most courses, field placement assignments, and field placement requirements. In contrast, the programs shared two courses: a Secondary ELA disciplinary literacy course and a Secondary English Language Arts Methods course. All students took these

courses in their respective programs' fall semester. These courses constituted the totality of content area instruction that students received. While SecUG and SecMAC PTs took other similar courses, they took these within their own cohorts or with UG or MAC cohorts, respectively.

Additionally, during the student teaching semester under study, the SecUG and SecMAC programs shared a field seminar course, although they did not share field supervisors. The field seminar course was taught by a retired teacher serving as an adjunct faculty. Field supervision responsibilities were split between the retired teacher and a PhD student. The retired teacher observed SecMAC students, and the PhD student observed SecUG students.

Course prerequisites were shared across the two programs, including courses on the English Language, Writing Theory, and a variety of topics. However, while most SecUG ELA PTs took these prerequisite courses by the end of their junior year, many SecMAC ELA PTs were admitted with related coursework or had to take these courses during their student teaching semester.

The school also offered an alternative route to certification (ARC) beyond the scope of this study.

3.4.4 Student Teaching

All SecELA PTs completed student teaching during the winter semester. Requirements for SecUG and SecMAC PTs were similar. The requirements for PTs were described as "ramping up" to lead instruction for 60% of FTE, leading instruction for six to eight weeks, then "ramping down" to close out the semester. For most field experiences, 60% of FTE equated to "taking over" three out of five of a mentor teacher's classes. Three courses amounted to one or two preps for PTs.

A collaborative effort between the secondary placement coordinator and members of the Secondary English Language Arts teaching team determined field experiences. The teaching team included one adjunct instructor (a retired teacher), two PhD students (one of which was me), and a tenured faculty member who led the program. Before assigning placements, the placement coordinator shared PTs' survey responses concerning their field placement needs and wants. The group discussed available mentor teachers, attempting to find the best fit for each PT.

After attending their placement, PTs had opportunities to advocate for changing mentor teachers. Each semester, the program relied on a handful of new mentor teachers recommended

by their administration for their teaching excellence but often had minimal experience mentoring preservice teachers.

Two significant differences between SecUG and SecMAC were how many PTs interned with a mentor teacher in the fall semester and the length of field experiences. In the Fall, during their practicum, SecUG PTs were assigned in pairs or triples to one mentor teacher. In contrast, SecMAC PTs remained independently in the same field placement with the same mentor teacher for the entire academic year. SecUG PTs switched placements between the fall and winter semesters. As part of this process, SecUG PTs were assigned potential mentor teachers in the late fall. They then "interviewed" with these potential mentor teachers to determine their fit. These interviews often included a classroom visit to observe their potential mentor teacher during instruction. Then, between the Fall and Winter semesters, SecUG PTs transitioned into new classroom contexts.

However, during the Fall meeting the semester prior to the study, I advocated for SecUG PTs to have the opportunity to remain with the same mentor teacher for the academic year. As a result, several UG PTs stayed with a mentor teacher for the full academic year.

Mentor teachers were selected from the pool of available mentors because of their qualifications as highly qualified teachers. The criteria for being highly qualified included teaching for at least three years, filling out the mentor teacher interest form on the program's website, receiving a positive recommendation from a school administrator, and teaching classes aligned with the secondary English Language Arts certification.

Mentor teachers did not receive training. Mentor teachers working with the program could voluntarily attend a logistics meeting at the start of each semester. The logistics meeting detailed the program requirements for the mentor teacher. This meeting included an illustration of using the program's evaluation tool, which was shared across all secondary subject areas. Further details about field experiences were disseminated by field instructors during Getting Started Meetings in the first weeks of each semester.

3.5 Setting and Participants

This study occurred at a large research university in the Midwest U.S., Riverford State University (a pseudonym). Five Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers enrolled across two Secondary ELA programs housed within the School of Education at RSU self-selected to participate in the study.

3.5.1 ***Selection of Participants***

I recruited participants from a Secondary English Language Arts Methods course I taught in Fall 2022. I aimed to recruit between four and ten participants. I sent recruitment emails to all 19 students in the course. Initially, six methods students agreed to participate in the study. One participant dropped out shortly thereafter. As a result, five students from the course participated in the study.

I offered participants $100 as a recruitment incentive to participate in the study. I considered their time and labor valuable and wanted to compensate them for their participation in interviews and meetings.

Recruitment from the Secondary ELA Methods course at RSU was purposeful. Drawing from this population of Secondary ELA PTs ensured that I had an established relationship with and knowledge of the program and participants. Additionally, this ensured participants had shared experiences within and across their respective programs.

Pre-established relationships with the participants supported the rapport between me and participants and participants and each other. Given the short length of the study (one semester) and the vulnerability and openness required to discuss challenges and problems they faced with each other and myself, drawing on these already established relationships helped create shared expectations quickly.

After recruiting the five participants, I contacted their assigned mentor teachers and school principals to inform them of the study and request permission to potentially record conversations between participants and their mentor teachers and teaching moments. I also visited each school site to introduce myself and the study to mentor teachers and school principals. All mentor teachers agreed to participate in the study, and all school principals consented to the study.

3.5.2 Participant Profiles

In this section, I provide a brief profile for each participant. These profiles introduce the participant and their background. All names are pseudonyms; some information has been omitted to protect anonymity.

Table 3: Participant Demographics

Participant	Racial Identity	Gender Identity	Program Level	Undergraduate Major /Area of Study

Leah	white	female	Undergraduate	Secondary Education, ELA focus
Charlotte	white	female	Undergraduate	Secondary Education, ELA focus + English Language and Literature
Eva	white	female	Master's	Communications
Madison	white	female	Undergraduate	Secondary Education, ELA focus + English Language and Literature
Tracy	white	female	Master's	English Language and Literature

3.5.2.1 ***Leah Davis***

Leah was a senior undergraduate in the RSU Secondary ELA Program pursuing a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education (B.Ed.) focusing on English. She grew up in what she described as a close-knit farming town in the middle of the state. She identified as white, female, middle-class, and college-educated. Leah aspired to create a supportive environment for students to explore their identities and connect with literature. Leah was interested in returning to a rural school in the state. She hoped to apply her knowledge of growing up in a rural community to teach about social justice. She also wanted to remain close to her family. Leah talked about valuing English for its capacity to engage students in critical thinking, self-discovery, and communication skills. Additionally, she described the centrality of identity exploration and personal connections through literature to the subject. Leah described herself as quiet. She shared that as a student, she preferred to listen and think about what others said during classes but rarely shared herself.

3.5.2.2 ***Charlotte Whitfield***

Charlotte was a senior undergraduate in the RSU Secondary ELA Program pursuing a degree in secondary education focusing on English (B.Ed.) and English Language and Literature (BA). She grew up in one of the largest cities in the state, which she described as having a mix of affluent and low-income areas. Charlotte identified as white, female, middle-class, and college-educated. Charlotte was inspired by her debate roles and peer educator role in a sexual health program. She also shared how her experiences with health issues and learning disabilities within her family led her to care deeply about accessibility for all students. Charlotte wanted to teach in a middle school near Riverford or Carpenter, a neighboring city. Eventually, she hoped to teach in a more rural area, where she thought she could draw on her identity as a white woman to teach "anti-racism to white students." In line with her debate background, Charlotte appreciated ELA's role in teaching communication, critical thinking, and expression. From a social justice

perspective, she aimed to make learning relevant to students' lives and promote advocacy and understanding through diverse texts. Charlotte described herself as introverted and worried about being "bubbly" and "outgoing" enough to teach. However, she acknowledged how much her self-perception differed from her outgoing roles, especially in her dual student-coach role in her school's nationally ranked debate program.

3.5.2.3 ***Eva Olsen***

Eva was a master's student in the RSU Secondary ELA Program pursuing a master's in educational studies with certification in Secondary English Language Arts. She received her undergraduate degree in Communications from a different state university in the same Midwest state. Eva was from what she described as a "rednecky, very conservative, small-town vibe," a short drive from a major metropolitan city in the state. Eva identified as white and female. She mentioned her unique experience of being educated entirely in charter schools. Eva was motivated to teach by one of her high school teachers, whom she described as "transformative" in helping her develop as an adolescent and supporting her mental health. She wanted to do the same for students to "find themselves through writing or resonating or connecting with a character." Eva prioritized identity exploration and empathy building in ELA through reading diverse literature. She prized how English classes can function as inclusive spaces to foster student growth. Eva did not know where she wanted to teach. She preferred to move out of the state but also wanted to maintain close ties with her family, whom she knew would not leave. She hoped to find a school that emphasized diversity and equity and had strong administrative support. I will add that Eva spoke her mind. She shared about her mental health and how it impacted her relationship with her mentor teacher in her initial placement. Coming into the program at RSU, she experienced imposter syndrome in part because of what she described as her non-English background in Communication.

3.5.2.4 ***Madison Miller***

Madison was a senior undergraduate in the RSU Secondary ELA Program pursuing a degree in secondary education focusing on English (B.Ed.) and English Language and Literature (BA). She grew up in what she described as a "very homogenous, very white" community where most people were "pretty wealthy," "affluent," and "generally accepting" about ten minutes from Riverford. Madison identified as white, female, and middle-class. She shared that her family

cared deeply about her education and supported her throughout her upbringing. Madison knew she wanted to teach since she was in sixth grade. She really enjoyed English and History and liked sharing her joy with others and making that meaningful to them. She added her excitement to help middle and high schoolers during "very frustrating and difficult times" in their lives. Madison viewed English as foundational for critical thinking, communication, and self-advocacy. She was committed to exposing students to diverse authors and perspectives. Madison planned to move to the Northeast U.S. after graduation to experience living in a large metropolitan area. She was interested in teaching in culturally diverse, small school settings. Having gone to an International Baccalaureate school and student teaching at one, Madison hoped to find another IB school. Personality: When asked about how she would describe herself as a teacher, Madison described herself as "caring," "principled," and "serious about having a professional classroom."

3.5.2.5 ***Tracy Turner***

Tracy was a master's student in the RSU Secondary ELA Program pursuing a master's in educational studies with certification in Secondary English Language Arts and an ESL (English as a Second Language) endorsement. She received her undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature from a public university near her hometown. Before attending RSU, she also earned a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification. Before entering the SecMAC program, Tracy worked as an ESL Paraeducator and long-term substitute teacher in her hometown. Tracy grew up in a nearby major metropolitan area suburb, which she described as affluent and diverse. Tracy identified as white and female. Tracy felt driven to teach by her enjoyment of working with kids and helping them develop language skills to express themselves. Tracy emphasized English's role in fostering critical reading, writing, and communication skills. She valued creating a supportive and engaging classroom environment where students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds could learn. She planned to work in an ESL capacity in a diverse and inclusive school environment near Riverford or someplace overseas, like Korea. Tracy described herself as laid-back, humorous, and caring.

Table 4: Participants' Motivations for Teaching ELA

Participant	Motivation for Teaching	Importance of ELA
Leah	• Leah aspired to create a supportive environment for students to explore	• Valued English for its capacity to engage students in critical

	their identities and connect with literature. • She hoped to apply her knowledge of growing up in a rural community to teach about social justice.	thinking, self-discovery, and communication skills. • Described the centrality of identity exploration and personal connections through literature to the subject.
Charlotte	• Inspired by her debate roles and peer educator role in a sexual health program. • Her experiences with health issues and learning disabilities within her family led her to care deeply about accessibility for all students. • Eventually hoped to teach in a more rural area, where she thought she could draw on her identity as a white woman to teach "anti-racism to white students."	• In line with her debate background, Charlotte appreciated ELA's role in teaching communication, critical thinking, and expression. • From a social justice perspective, she aimed to make learning relevant to students' lives and promote advocacy and understanding through diverse texts.
Eva	• Eva was motivated to teach by one of her high school teachers, who she described as "transformative" in helping her develop as an adolescent and supporting her mental health. • She wanted to do the same for students to "find themselves through writing or resonating or connecting with a character."	• Eva prioritized identity exploration and empathy building in ELA through reading diverse literature. • She prized how English classes can function as inclusive spaces to foster student growth
Madison	• Knew she wanted to teach since she was in sixth grade. • Enjoyed English and History and liked sharing her joy with others and making that meaningful to them. • Excited to help middle and high schoolers during "very frustrating and difficult times" in their lives.	• Madison viewed English as foundational for critical thinking, communication, and self-advocacy. • She was committed to exposing students to diverse authors and perspectives.
Tracy	• Tracy felt driven to teach by her enjoyment of working with kids and helping them develop language skills to express themselves.	• Emphasized English's role in fostering critical reading, writing, and communication skills. • Valued creating a supportive and engaging classroom environment where students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds could learn.

In summary, the study includes five participants: Leah, Charlotte, Eva, Madison, and Tracy. All five participants identified as white women. All were enrolled at Riverford State

University to earn their Secondary English Language Arts Teacher Certification. Three participants (Leah, Charlotte, and Madison) were undergraduates, and two were master's students (Eva and Tracy). All participants grew up in the same Midwest US state, although their places of upbringing differed. Similarly, the participants highlighted different aspects of their experiences that contributed to their desire to reach.

3.5.3 Student Teaching Placement Sites

The five participants were placed at four different school sites for student teaching. Each PT taught Secondary English Language Arts (grades 6-12).

3.5.3.1 ***Leah Placement School: Milton High School***

Leah completed her student teaching placement at Milton High School. The school had about 800 students. Nearly 90% of the students were white. Over 70% of students met or exceeded state standardized tests in ELA, and 15% qualified for free or reduced lunch. She described Milton as a small town in a rural community near Riverford with a range of socioeconomic statuses and political values. Leah described MHS as a close-knit community with strong educational values focused on student well-being. She praised how many teachers built positive relationships with students. Leah described how members of the English department were collaborative and generally tried to move away from traditional teaching methods, such as assigning literary analysis essays of canonical literature. She described support from the administration as mixed.

3.5.3.2 ***Leah Placement Courses: English 10 and English 10 Honors***

Leah taught English 10 and English 10 Honors at Milton High School. The number of sections of each course she taught changed during student teaching because students took different classes each trimester. She described her students as diverse in their motivation for learning. Leah felt particularly connected with students in her English 10 classes who were disengaged with school. During student teaching, Leah taught a unit on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which she characterized as "forward designed" by her mentor teacher. Then, she taught a unit on persuasion in which she emphasized English skills such as explaining, analyzing, and providing evidence aligned with the CCSS and upcoming state testing.

3.5.3.3 ***Leah Mentor Teacher: Rebecca Wright***

Leah's mentor teacher was Rebecca Wright. Rebecca presented as a white woman. She had been teaching for nearly 30 years and was the English department chair at Milton High School. Leah characterized Rebecca as experienced and energetic, describing her teaching style as "theatrical," which contrasted with Leah's more relaxed approach. Leah praised Rebecca's push for deep learning and student accountability. Leah described their relationship as open and supportive during Interview 1. Rebecca encouraged Leah to reflect on her teaching and growth. However, Leah noted some tension due to their differing teaching styles regarding their interactions with students.

3.5.3.4 ***Charlotte Placement School: Horizon Middle School***

Charlotte completed her student teaching placement at Horizon Middle School in Milton. HMS was a feeder middle school for Milton High School. The school served over 500 students across grades 6-8. Similarly to Leah's placement at MHS, nearly 90% of the students at Horizon Middle School were white. More than 60% of students met or exceeded state standardized tests in ELA, and just over 15% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Charlotte described the Milton community as small, wealthy, nondiverse, and leaning liberal. She described Horizon Middle School as a small school with a strong sense of community, school pride, and active parent engagement. Charlotte described the English department at HMS as supportive and involved, with strong staff communication. Charlotte had mixed feelings about administration at her school. She mentioned they were supportive but that their newness as administrators may have impacted tensions with the discipline policy on campus.

3.5.3.5 ***Charlotte Placement Courses***

Charlotte taught four sections of sixth-grade English. Charlotte described her students as enthusiastic, sweet, and eager to learn but "sheltered." She mentioned that they varied in their basic skills due to their opportunities for learning during COVID-19. Charlotte taught an argumentative writing unit incorporating authentic audiences and integrating students' interests.

3.5.3.6 ***Charlotte Mentor Teacher: Harper Hawthorne***

Charlotte's mentor teacher was Harper Hawthorne. Harper identified as a white woman. She graduated from the program at RSU less than ten years before. Charlotte appreciated her experience because Harper was familiar with the program as a student and could integrate

educational theories from RSU. Charlotte described Harper as positive and supportive toward Charlotte and her students. Charlotte appreciated that Harper talked about instruction and the broader aspects of teacher life, including work/life balance and navigating relationships with colleagues.

3.5.3.7 ***Eva and Madison Placement School: Discovery Regional High School***

Eva and Madison were placed at the same school, Discovery Regional High School. DRHS was a public charter school in Carpenter, the neighboring blue-collar city to Riverford. Discover Regional High School drew students from Carpenter and the surrounding county. The school followed an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. The school had roughly 550 students, with more than 60% identified as students of color and many designated white, identifying as of Middle Eastern descent. Eva described Discovery Regional High School as a diverse, supportive, collaborative environment emphasizing empathy, equity, and inclusion. Madison highlighted DRHS's rigorous academic expectations, diverse culture, and commitment to honor students' identities. Both Eva and Madison mentioned how the English department collaborated frequently. Department members met and planned together regularly, aligning across lessons and grade levels. Similarly, Eva and Madison highlighted the department's shared focus on inclusion, equity, and reading diverse literary texts. Madison described the administration as supportive, saying they were involved in both academic and student behavior. Administrators checked in with Madison and Eva often to offer support.

3.5.3.8 ***Eva Placement Courses***

Eva taught first-year literature at Discovery Regional High School within the IB curriculum. Eva described her students as very diverse. She highlighted how they deeply explored their identities and the world through the texts they read, such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*. Eva taught her focal unit on narrative art and personal/family history projects, using *Maus* as a core text.

3.5.3.9 ***Eva Placement Mentor Teacher: Jen York***

Eva adored her mentor teacher, Jen York. Jen presented as a white woman. She had been working as a teacher for about ten years. The program's field instructor specially selected her to work with Eva, who knew Jen as a former colleague. Eva described Jen as empathetic and gentle. She noted how Jen created a welcoming environment, drawing on trauma-informed

practices. Eva also mentioned Jen's focus on student-centered learning, a point Eva sometimes felt challenged by as she negotiated her perceived need for control in the classroom. Eva admired Jen's ability to connect with students and support their needs. Eva shared that she and Jen had a strong relationship. She felt nurtured by Jen. Eva felt the two of them aligned in their thoughts about teaching. Similarly, Eva appreciated Jen's support, allowing her to grow as a teacher and build self-confidence.

3.5.3.10 ***Madison Placement Courses***

At Discovery Regional High School, Madison taught IB Literature 1 and 2 for juniors and seniors, although she was more involved with the juniors. Madison described the students in her classes as diverse and highly motivated to achieve academic success. Madison's focal unit revised one of her mentor teacher's previous units, which used a feminist lens to analyze narratives in Angela Carter's book of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber*. Madison added a creative writing component with students using the narratives as models to write their own feminist fiction.

3.5.3.11 ***Madison Mentor Teacher: Astrid Johnson***

Astrid Johnson was Madison's mentor teacher. Astrid presented as a white woman. She had been teaching for almost ten years after graduating from the undergraduate Secondary ELA program at RSU. Madison described Astrid as an intentional educator committed to antiracism in her classroom. She prized principles of equity, inclusion, and a supportive student classroom environment. To Madison, these principles came through in her attention to academic success and social equity for her students. Madison saw that these values aligned with the strategies she learned in her coursework at RSU. Madison described their relationship as overwhelmingly positive. The two disagreed very little. Astrid was very supportive of Madison and supportive of setting professional boundaries. Madison did not bring work home during student teaching! Madison also emphasized Astrid's mentoring approach, which involved critical reflection on practice in a mentor-mentee relationship.

3.5.3.12 ***Tracy Placement School***

Tracy completed her student teaching at White Oak Woods Middle School in Riverford. WOWMS had over 65% of students identify as students of color, with 30% of the student population identifying as Black. The school had about 600 students in grades 6-8. Just over 40%

of students passed the state standardized tests in ELA. Moreover, 50% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Tracy characterized the White Oak Woods community by its diversity and focus on inclusivity. Tracy saw these reflected in Riverford, although the school differed demographically from the city (racially and socioeconomically). Tracy described White Oak Woods MS as highly diverse, focused on developing student identities and enacting equitable education practices. She noted how the school embraced community building and built understanding and respecting other cultures and identities into their schoolwide curriculum. Tracy described how the English department focused on inclusivity, student choice, and adaptability. Members of the grade-level department team co-planned or shared lessons. At WOWMS, Tracy appreciated the positive support of the administrators.

3.5.3.13 ***Tracy Placement Courses***

Tracy taught eighth-grade English Language Arts at White Oak Woods Middle School. Students: She prided herself on her relationships with her students, whom she described as diverse and energetic. Tracy's classes included Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) cohorts, so she often had Special Education co-teachers and paraeducators in the classroom with her. For Tracy's focal unit, she conducted literature circles with Young Adult (YA) memoirs and biographies that focused on identity. The unit aimed to develop personal narrative and presentation skills aligned with the state standards and upcoming grade 8 state tests.

3.5.3.14 ***Tracy Placement Mentor teacher: Cheryl Baker***

Tracy's mentor teacher at White Oak Woods Middle School was Cheryl Baker. Cheryl presented as a white woman. She had been teaching for over 20 years, mainly at the high school level, before moving to middle school a few years before the study took place. Tracy characterized Cheryl as experienced, flexible, and excellent at connecting with students. She added that Cheryl was meticulous in curriculum development and focused on implementing the state standards in her lessons. Tracy described how Cheryl supported her and worked collaboratively with her to plan and teach. Tracy appreciated that Cheryl offered her freedom to experiment in her teaching and learn from the outcomes. Additionally, Cheryl actively sought to involve Tracy in planning and student engagement from the beginning of the school year.

Table 5: Student Teaching Sites

Name	Placement	Mentor Teacher	Placement Demographics	Test Scores	Free / Reduced Lunch	Courses Taught
Leah	Milton High School	Rebecca	~90% white	~70%	~15%	English 10 English 10 Honors
Charlotte	Horizon Middle School	Harper	~90% white	~60%	~15%	English 6
Eva	Discovery Regional High School	Jen	~65% students of color*	>90%	~20%	Freshman Literature (IB)
Madison	Discovery Regional High School	Astrid	~65% students of color*	>90%	~20%	IB Literature 1 (Junior) IB Literature 2 (Senior)
Tracy	White Oak Woods Middle School	Cheryl	~65% students of color	~40%	~50%	English 8

3.6 Data Collection Methods

I collected data during the Winter 2023 Semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. Data included audio and video recordings of two interviews with each participant and eight group meetings, program and state policy documents related to preservice teachers, researcher memos, and participant-selected artifacts. In this section, I detail these data sources, how they were conducted and collected, and their purpose for the study.

In total, I collected the following data for each participant:

- An Interview 1 recording
- An Interview 2 recording
- Group Meeting recordings

- Including one or more cycles of "wobble discussions": identify, plan, enact, reflect[3]

Additionally, I collected the following program and state policy data:

- Expectations for student teaching (program and state)
- Standards for preservice teachers (program and state)
- Performance Instrument [Evaluation Tool] (program)

Furthermore, throughout the research process, I wrote over 50 analytic memos.

Table 6: Data Source Descriptions and Timelines

Data Source	Description	Collected
Interview 1 (Zoom)	The semi-structured interviews centered around PTs, their contexts, and their beliefs about teaching English. Included one hypothetical scenario based on PT experiences. See Appendix A for protocol and questions)	January - February 2023
Biweekly Inquiry Group Meetings (Zoom, 7; In person, 1)	PTs met over Zoom to discuss how to navigate tensions: • Began with thought questions and greetings. • PTs shared updates on their wobbles. • One PT shared a wobble and went through the problem-of-practice protocol with group (x2) • Group debrief and goodbyes. Some meetings followed a different structure, which I describe below.	January - April 2023
Interview 2 (Zoom)	Semi-structured interviews centered around PTs, their contexts, their beliefs about teaching English, and how they navigated tensions during student teaching. Included two hypothetical scenarios based on PT experiences. (See Appendix B for protocol and questions)	May 2023
Program and Policy Documents	• RSU Program Policy Handbook • State Clinical Expectations for Student Teaching • RSU Program Standards • RSU Program Evaluation Tool (including a rubric for how to evaluate PTs) • State Professional Standards for Preservice Teachers • State ELA Standards for Preservice Teachers	January-May 2023

3.6.1 ***Inquiry Group Meetings***

The primary data source for this study was audio/video recordings of group meetings. During their student teaching semester, I facilitated eight group meetings with the PTs from February through April. I referred to these as "Making Change Meetings" with participants. I

[3]I aimed for two cycles of identification, planning, and reflection for each participant.

framed these meetings as “Making Change Meetings” because PTs made decisions to “make changes” when they wobbled about something happening in the particular context of their MT’s classroom. See the informed consent forms (Appendix C and Appendix D) and the example meeting slides (Appendix E), particularly my unsophisticated depiction of “developing your repertoire of teaching practices during student teaching” (Slide 5) for how PTs’ tensions offered opportunities for change. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a setting for the ELA PTs not associated with the university or their student teaching placement for them to work through tensions they were experiencing during student teaching in collaboration. I shared,

> As you develop a sense of your mentor teacher’s classroom, you may experience wobbles as you notice differences between the practices in your mentor teacher’s classroom and what you want to do.
>
> We can think of these wobbles, or tensions, as opportunities to think of and put into practice changes in the what, how, and why of teaching ELA. (Meeting 1)

In explaining the group’s purpose, I used a diagram that depicted their mentor teacher’s context and teaching practices on the left. As student teachers, they would agree with and adopt or adapt many of these practices into their metaphorical toolkit. For other practices, though, they might not align, wanting to teach in other ways. I articulated these misalignments or tensions as “opportunities for change” that would require planning, framing, and practice to incorporate different practices into the toolkit. (See Slide 5 in Appendix E)

Group meetings followed the same general format. Each meeting occurred over Zoom and lasted 1.5 hours, from 4:30 - 6:00 PM on Wednesdays. Due to the timing of the meetings, participants were sometimes at their student teaching placement and other times at home. Where each person was while on Zoom was important, as these contexts leaked into Zoom (as Zoom similarly leaked into these contexts), such as when Eva asked her mentor teacher, Jen, to share her thoughts on a particularly thorny tension or when Charlotte’s cat asked for dinner. I note this because of the liminality of the Zoom space where PTs could be with us and somewhere else simultaneously.

Table 7: Meeting Descriptions

Meeting Segment	Description

Greetings + Thought Question	The researcher posed questions to which participants responded. Example: What's a glow, grow, or slow from your personal or teaching life you're reflecting on since we last met?
Updates	Participants shared updates to previous discussions.
Wobble Discussions	One or two participants (a) introduced a wobble. The group (b) asked clarifying and probing questions. The group and presenter (c) discussed possible actions for the presenter. (d) The presenter determined action steps. Lastly, (e) the facilitator asked how the process went.
Closing	Participants shared their takeaways and next steps.

Across the meetings, each participant initiated at least two wobble discussion cycles. In other words, each participant presented a tension they were experiencing to the group and discussed with the group to make a plan for navigating that tension. However, not all PTs completed the cycle by reflecting on meetings or during Interview 2.

Two meetings were exceptions to the format. Meeting 1 focused on goal setting and norming the group's expectations, including reviewing and discussing hypothetical scenarios. In the first meeting, I shared my goals for the meetings and asked about participants' goals:

- To name and explore the wobbles between what we want to do and what is happening in our student teaching classrooms.
- To examine and discuss these wobbles with care and criticality.
- To determine how we can (or can't) make changes through our talk and actions.
- (if time) To practice strategies for making changes in our student teaching classrooms.
- To reflect on the decisions we make and consider how our strategies might be useful in our future teaching.

We examined potential scenarios and meeting expectations and brainstormed about tensions PTs were experiencing. These activities in Meeting 1 set up the process and roles and responsibilities for the remaining meetings.

Meeting 6 was also an exception to the structure outlined above. When recruiting participants, I talked about opportunities to eat during meetings. However, the PTs agreed to keep meeting on Zoom. The virtual meeting setting offered the convenience that we did not all need to be in the same physical location, but it posed a problem for my capacity to provide food. As a result, I coordinated with participants to meet on campus after their field seminar course to eat together. The resulting meeting was unstructured and involved various topics, including scholarships, interviews, and jobs, as the ELA PTs and I discussed.

Inquiry Group Meetings were recorded through Zoom. Meeting audio files were uploaded to a transcription service for initial "good enough" transcription (Bokhove & Downey, 2018).These yielded a rough verbatim transcript. I reviewed and edited these text transcripts for speaker attribution and clarity, trying to make the text easy to read by adopting punctuation norms while maintaining the flow of participants' talk. I wanted these transcripts to be searchable for keywords. For meeting data used in the study, I reviewed transcripts a third time, making additional revisions for correctness and clarity.

3.6.2 ***Interview Procedures***

I interviewed participants twice during their student teaching semester. I conducted the Interview 1s with each participant from late January to early February, which corresponded with them having attended their student teaching placement for two to three weeks. I conducted the second round of interviews in mid to late May after all participants had completed their student teaching placement. Interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes.

All interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom. I followed the same transcription process for interviews as inquiry group meetings.

Interview 1s occurred after participants completed their student teaching requirements for the day. Interview 2s occurred within a broader range of times throughout the day, as some participants were still working in schools. Leah had taken a long-term substitute role in a history class at Milton High School, and Madison had taken on a support staff role at Discovery Regional High School.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format. Interview 1s were organized into five sections: introductions, ideas about teaching English Language Arts, descriptions of their student teaching context, tensions they noticed in their student teaching contexts, and hypothetical scenarios. Interview 2s included these sections, and a sixth focused on takeaways from the study. An additional hypothetical scenario was included from the initial to the Interview 2 to reflect the tensions PTs discussed during meetings. For a complete list of the initial and Interview 2 questions, see Appendix A and B.

3.6.3 ***Program and State Policy Documents***

I collected relevant policy documents from the program and state. I aimed to understand how the program and state constructed expectations for student teaching. At the program level,

these policy documents included the program policy handbook, the program standards, and the program evaluation tool. The program policy handbook detailed expectations for and descriptions of different aspects of the program, including student teaching. At the state level, these policy documents included expectations for field experiences (including student teaching) and state standards for Secondary English Language Arts and Professionalism.

3.6.4 ***Participant-Selected Artifacts***

In my study development, I intended for PTs to bring in artifacts as they identified and reflected on tensions. I anticipated PTs sharing lesson plans, recorded conversations, recordings of classroom teaching, or anything else they found interesting or relevant. However, with one exception, PTs did not bring these artifacts to meetings. While I prompted PTs several times, I also acknowledged how their talk during meetings functioned as artifacts. This is one way I recognized participants and myself as co-creating the group meeting expectations. The exception is Madison, who shared the only explicit example in the study of enacting a response to her tension in the form of a video recording of her teaching.

This shift in data collection from what I might call deliverable teaching artifacts to participant talk required changing my orientation toward what counted as data, and, therefore, what counted as knowledge. Listening to their narratives led me to revise the evaluative stance I brought to working with PTs as an educator and instructor. What they shared reflected their figured worlds, and evaluating their interpretations would have done little to position them as knowledgeable.

At the end of the study, I gave participants the option to share other artifacts they thought might help me understand their student teaching experience. Eva, Madison, and Tracy opted to share their unit plans. Additionally, Eva shared her weekly field notes.

3.6.5 ***Meeting Notes and Analytic Memos***

I drafted notes during meetings of what everyone said. These meeting notes were shared with participants and accessible via the slides for each meeting. I used the meeting notes for two purposes: (1) I reviewed previous meeting notes to create continuity between ideas by bringing up throughlines in meetings; and I used the meeting notes to reflect while writing analytic memos before video/audio were processed and meetings were transcribed.

Throughout the research process, I wrote analytic memos documenting my thoughts, interpretations, and reflections about data (Miles et al., 2020). I wrote a memo after each interview and meeting, and while analyzing data. For example, in my memo following meeting 1, I reflected on "my role and how I might support learning" after bringing up language and writing. I asked, "Without prompting though, what would they have done?" A similar reflection that threaded its way into this draft is PTs' focus on relationships with students and mentor teachers, particularly that they did not bring up "classroom management" and the idea of "conflict" (Tracy) with mentor teachers in contrast to "being on the same side" (Eva). Ultimately, I used these memos to organize and track my thoughts, interpretations, and reflections throughout the study.

3.7 **Data Analysis**

Table 8: Data and Analytic Methods by Research Question

Research Question	Data Analyzed	Analytic Method
1 What tensions do secondary English language arts preservice teachers navigate during student teaching?	Interviews, Meeting Transcripts	1. Identified tension "scenes" (Horn, 2007); Used "in vivo" labels to preserve PT language (Saldaña, 2021) 2. Determined "identify," "plan," "enact," and "reflect." 3. Open-coding of tensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) 4. Closed-coding using preliminary tension codes (Saldaña, 2021)
1a How are these tensions reflected in program and state policies?	Program and State Policy Documents	• prepositioning analysis of expectations documents (Harré et al., 2009) • Closed-coding of standards using preliminary tension codes (Saldaña, 2021)

2 How do secondary English language arts preservice teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching?	Interviews, Meeting Transcripts	• Organized tension "scenes" into episodes and series (Horn, 2007)
		• Compared within and across participants' episodes and series
		  ○ Figured World(s) (Holland et al., 1998)
		  ○ Positioning analysis (3rd order; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999)
		  ▪ discourse
		  ▪ position(s)
		  ▪ storyline(s)
		  ○ Framing analysis (Goffman, 1986; Tannen, 1993)

		▪ Interactive framework(s) ▪ Alignment/footing (Goffman, 1981) o Capital-D Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)
3 How does participating in a problem of practice protocol support secondary English language arts preservice teachers in navigating tensions during student teaching?	Interviews, Meeting Transcripts	• Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) of how PTs talked about meetings during meetings/interviews • Critical case analysis (Patton, 2015) of two meeting interactions o Figured World(s) (Holland et al., 1998) o Positioning analysis (2nd order; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) ▪ discourse ▪ position(s) ▪ storyline(s) o Framing analysis (Goffman, 1986; Tannen, 1993) ▪ Interactive framework(s) ▪ Alignment/footing (Goffman, 1981) o Capital-D Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)

*3.7.1 **Analytical Framework***

The data analysis process for this study involved multiple steps and methods to comprehensively explore the experiences and discourses of secondary ELA preservice teachers. Drawing from the rich qualitative data collected through interviews, group meetings, and state/program documents, I employed various methods to explore the research questions. See table 8 for an overview of my data analysis procedures for each research question.

*3.7.1.1 **Research Question 1: What tensions do secondary English language arts preservice teachers navigate during student teaching?***

The first coding cycle examined research question 1. I coded interviews and meeting transcripts to identify the tensions PTs navigated during student teaching. Drawing from Horn's (2007) unit of analysis, I identified variable-length units of discourse, ranging from single turn-of-talk utterances to multiple turns-of-talk between many people. Multiple rounds of reviewing the transcripts yielded 152 instances where participants discussed tensions. These coded

instances ranged from one sentence to several paragraphs. I used "in vivo" coding to label each tension scene in PTs' language and give it a unique identifier (Saldaña, 2021).

Following the identification of tension scenes, I coded each scene according to its place in a cycle of identification, planning, enactment, and reflection. In other words, when PTs named a tension, I coded it as identification. If they were making a plan for how to navigate that tension (make a change), I coded that as planning. If they shared an enactment of how they navigated that tension, such as an artifact from their teaching, I coded that as enactment. Lastly, if they talked about how they navigated a tension, I coded that as reflection.

I approached determining what tensions participants' navigated through open-coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Based on my review of the literature and experiences working with ELA PTs, I anticipated PTs' tensions would center around curriculum and pedagogy. In other words, I thought PTs would talk about tensions related to the texts and content they were teaching (curriculum) and their teaching practices (pedagogy). I assigned each tension scene a preliminary open code. This initial analysis yielded additional tensions and different priorities than I anticipated, including a focus on PTs' duties and responsibilities, their relationships with other teachers, and classroom management. These preliminary thematic codes were collapsed to three main tension codes: professional practices, classroom environment, and instructional practices, with subcodes for each. See Appendix F:for the codebook. I then used these as a codebook to close code the data (Saldaña, 2021). During closed-coding, I assigned tension scenes multiple codes when applicable to reflect the complexity of PT's tensions. See Table 9 for a count of coded tensions by participant.

Table 9: Tensions by Participant (Main Categories)

Tension Code	Charlotte (28 scenes)	Leah (33 scenes)	Eva (27 scenes)	Madison (27 scenes)	Tracy (37 Scenes)
Professional Practices	22	28	20	8	33
Teaching Practices	6	13	9	23	14
Classroom Environment	15	15	12	1	16

PT's tensions were often multiple and overlapped. For example, Eva, while discussing her mentor teacher's policies, shared:

> And then I've also thought about her cell phone policy. She is just very, I don't take cell phones, which I also don't want to take phones. But also, I feel like she doesn't do enough to discipline them when they do constantly have their phones out. (Interview 1)

Eva clearly felt tension as she began student teaching with students "constantly" having their phones out during class. Therefore, I coded this scene as "Classroom Environment: Classroom Management/Discipline." Additionally, I coded this tension scene as "Professional Practice: Navigating Policies" because Eva's tension included her mentor teacher's policy of liberally allowing cell phone use during class.[4]

Another example excerpted from Leah discussing her relationship with her mentor teacher, Rebecca:

> And so it's in terms of classroom management, how, an example is getting the students' attention. She will do it one way that gets their attention really fast and grabs our attention because she's being really loud and theatrical. Whereas I just do more quiet ways that I think worked better for me and are reflective in what I value that students are doing. And she's struggling with that because she wants to get their attention like that and I'm okay with not getting their attention like that. And so she's struggling a little bit with that. So I think there's moments of tension in that sense. (Interview 1)

Unlike Eva's example, Leah's tension scene focused primarily on her relationship with her mentor teacher. Therefore, I coded Leah's tension scene as "Professional Practices: MT Relationship" because Leah describes her MT as "struggling" with their different approaches to classroom management. Although less so, I also coded this scene as "Classroom Environment: Classroom Management/Discipline." While Leah seemed to locate the tension with her mentor teacher's "struggling," that struggle stemmed from different classroom management approaches.

I organized the 152 coded scenes of talking about wobbles into episodes (one or more consecutive instances of talk on the same topic) and series (multiple thematic or chronological episodes). While Horn (2007) did not use this language of scenes, episodes, and series, she grouped similar temporally and thematically-connected sub-episodes to form a case of one episode. I extended this thinking when considering how PTs' identification, planning, enactment,

[4] Eva's focus on policy here highlights the messiness of policies in a teacher's classroom. When does a teacher's preference become a policy? When coding, I relied on the specific language PT's used to distinguish between an MT relationship tension and a classroom policy tension.

and reflection cycles could construct episodic cycles across meetings. Furthermore, when PTs engaged in multiple cycles concerning the same tension(s), these could develop into a series. Returning to Eva's and Leah's examples, Eva did not mention the phone policy or related discipline issues again, making her scene a one-off "identify" code. By contrast, Leah's scene of tension with her mentor teacher built into a series of scenes where she attempted to navigate her mentoring relationship and relationships with students simultaneously. These episodes and series often corresponded to the cycles of identification, planning, (enactment), and reflection that each participant went through. As a result, I examined what tensions PTs experienced and how they unfolded through cycles of identification, planning, enactment, and reflection over time.

3.7.1.2 ***Research Question 1a: How are these tensions reflected in program and state policies?***

After analyzing the tensions PTs experienced (RQ1 and RQ2), I wanted to know more about how program and state policy contexts might contribute to these tensions. I was particularly interested in the frequency with which PTs navigate tensions with their mentor teachers. To answer research question 1a, I used several analytic approaches depending on the document type.

For program and state documents that described the expectations for field experiences, the program policy handbook, and the state clinical experience requirements, I used prepositioning analysis (Harré et al., 2009). Drawing on positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), I analyzed how these documents constructed positions along particular storylines for various actors in the settings of the university, student teaching, and K-12 schools. For example, the state clinical experience requirements described how the mentor teacher must provide a "summative evaluation" of the PT's performance (p. 8). As a result, regardless of the other positions PTs took up in interactions with their MTs, they were always prepositioned as evaluators and evaluated. Mentoring research suggests that while many power relationships exist in mentoring relationships, collaborative and critical frameworks are complex and full of tension within asymmetrical power relationships (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

Concerning program and state documents that outlined standards for preservice teachers, I used the same code book I developed for tensions PTs navigated during student teaching: professional, instructional, and classroom environment practices, with the appropriate subcodes. For example, the state standards document, Professional Standard 3c, detailed that well-prepared

beginning teachers will "demonstrate intentionally collaborative approaches…through mutually beneficial partnerships with colleagues" (p. 10). 3c's language of "collaborative" and "partnerships with colleagues" led to coding the standard professional practices and sub-codes for relationships with colleagues and relationships with MT.

Through the first cycle of coding program and state standards, I identified two additional potential areas of tension relevant to the question and the type of practice that led to me making a second pass at the data: (1) How did the standards approach the idea of tensions? I recognized that I was using a codebook designed for tensions. However, I did not often see the language of heterogeneous ideologies and frameworks (i.e., multiple perspectives), challenges, communicating across differences, etc. For example, ELA.6.k on Standardized English ("Develop students' understanding of 'Standard English' as socially constructed, reproduced, and privileged as part of standard language ideology") is written as factual knowledge for the PT to know and teach, but having students read diverse literature anticipates challenges (ELA.12.i). These differences highlight or obfuscate tensions and the politics of teaching.

The second category relevant to these tensions emerged along the lines of (2) professionalism in terms of individualism and collaboration. The analysis of question 2 revealed that individualistic and collaborative frames were central to how PTs thought about navigating tensions. So, I examined whether the standards focused on doing something independently (e.g., teaching X content to students) or collaboratively (e.g., co-creating norms with students or working with colleagues).

3.7.1.3 ***Research Question 2: How do secondary English language arts preservice teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching?***

To examine research question 2, I used the combined framing/positioning framework I outlined earlier. The framework includes positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), framing (Goffman, 1981, 1986; Tannen, 1993), Capital-D discourses (Gee, 2011), and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). For RQ 2, I looked at third-order positioning, which refers to how a person talks about positions of a separate interaction (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), such as when Madison talked about her tension with how students collaborated:

> I think something I would like to see is still more collaboration among students, and I don't like, she's definitely trying to get them to collaborate, but I don't know if I'm seeing

specific examples of how she's doing that too often. It's more like her asking them, and then they won't do it when she asks. It's like work with your table groups to do this, but there's not much more guidance for them to collaborate, other than that. (Interview 1)

Here, Madison used third-order positioning to describe a frequent situation she observed between her mentor teacher and students where students did not collaborate with one another despite teacher prompting.in her comparison between herself and her mentor teacher. She (the interviewee) spoke to me (the interviewer), referring to a separate interaction she observed in her student teaching classroom. Over the course of the semester in the group, Madison identified her tension, planned how to respond, implemented her plan to support student collaboration, and reflected on the process.

Next, I will explain how I implemented this framework through coding. I began by examining PTs' discourse in their tension scenes.

Interactive Frames: I first attempted to identify patterns within and across participants' scenes and episodes for how they navigated tensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Interactive frames refer to saliencies and patterns for how a person draws on discourse to define the situation. At its most succinct, framing requires looking for saliences and patterns across data (Entman, 1993).

I examined commonly coded tensions within the code database to look for saliencies and patterns within and across participants' scenes and episodes. Reviewing these tensions, I looked for patterns in how PTs identified, planned, and reflected on tensions. As I began noticing patterns, I in vivo coded PTs' language. Then, I organized in vivo codes according to similar themes (Saldaña, 2021). For example, four of the PTs expressed tension with another teacher in the room during their cycles of identifying, planning, enacting, and reflecting during meetings:

She has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility (Charlotte, Meeting 3a)

And maybe could you not jump in as much? (Eva, Meeting 2)

She is behind the scenes writing him up (Leah, Meeting 3a)

I genuinely can't teach in this room with her in here (Tracy, Meeting 3b)

These four in vivo codes and their respective tension scenes focused on how mentor teachers and colleagues affected the PTs' teaching by "stepping in" during instruction (Kavanagh et al., 2023; Schwille, 2008). As I detail in Chapter 5, stepping in foregrounds tensions within and across student teaching and teaching figured worlds because teachers rarely interfere in each other's

teaching, preferring niceness to critical colleagueship, which has consequences for educational equity and teacher preparation (Bissonnette, 2016; Castagno, 2019).

Other in vivo categories included the need to do things "on my own" (as now and future teachers) and the challenges of privacy and surveillance.

Capital-D Discourse/Knowledge Schema: As PTs discussed these tensions, their language choices reflected cultural, historical, and social Capital-D Discourses (Gee, 2014) in education. For example, these tensions with another teacher in the room evinced the mentoring practice of "stepping in" (Kavanagh et al., 2023; Schwille, 2008). I noted how their language concerning "stepping in" drew on different frameworks for mentoring and, thus, student teaching. Turning to the literature on mentoring, I found Orland-Barak and Wang's (2021) approaches to mentoring and examination of mentor teachers' implicit theories of student teacher learning (e.g., Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Kavanagh et al., 2023; Matsko et al., 2024) particularly useful for characterizing the interactive frames PTs explicitly and implicitly drew on in their talk about stepping in within Capital-D Discourses of education. Similarly, I drew on research concerning teacher socialization and professional norms (Alsup, 2006, 2019; Ghousseini et al., 2021; Hargreaves, 2000; Little, 1990a, 1990b; Lortie, 1975; Sachs, 2001) to represent the interactive frames of teaching within Capital-D discourses of education, and drew from Zeichner (2010) for articulating the relationship between university-based teacher education programs and K-12 schools.

Footing/Alignment: Within the combined framework, footing, or alignment (Goffman, 1981), referred to how PTs worked to move from wobbling in tension to balance. In other words, PTs (and others in their reported narratives) used discourse to maintain particular positions among particular storylines within particular definitions of the situation. To identify footing/alignment, I first recognized that the tensions PTs experience during student teaching were examples of *mis*alignment.

Then, to identify footing/alignment, I looked for how PTs reflected on how they navigated their tensions. Perhaps the best example of *tenuous* alignment occurred when Leah and her mentor teacher, Rebecca, both drew on norms of noninterference during instructional time. Rebecca interrupted Leah's instruction. Rebecca, then Leah, spoke *to students*, giving them conflicting directions from opposite sides of the room. While tenuous, Leah used this "non"

interference to maintain alignment with her mentor teacher as she taught in a way that aligned with her values.

Position(s): Positions are usually constructed as relationships between interactants and things within a setting. For example, the PTs often drew on mentor/mentee positioning in their talk about student teaching while simultaneously drawing on other positions (e.g., teacher/teacher, teacher/student, host/guest). Positions can also describe qualities, usually as adjectives, such as good or helpful (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015). For example, Tracy's characterization of her co-teacher positioned all three teaching team members (Tracy, her mentor teacher, and the co-teacher) as teachers. However, Tracy's narrative of students throwing items around the classroom and not listening when told to return to their seats positions her co-teacher as either neglectful or lax to the point of concern.

Storyline(s): In their retellings of tension scenes, PTs positioned themselves or others (or felt positioned) within particular storylines. Davies and Harré (1990) described storylines as being organized through discourse and "around various poles, such as events, characters and moral dilemmas" (p. 50). To put this into practice, I identified storylines by examining how PTs defined their situation through discursive/interactive frames (events), positioned themselves and others as certain types of people (characters), and with particular professional tensions (moral dilemmas).

Multiple Settings/Figured Worlds: PTs constructed and were constructed by the figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) of the teacher education program, student teaching, and their K-12 field placement. In their talk, they often toggled between various competing figured worlds. For example, when Eva discussed tension with her mentor teacher stepping in, she described a tension between her figured worlds of student teaching and her *future* figured world of K-12 teaching, where she imagined herself alone and unprepared to teach.

3.7.1.4 ***Research Question 3: How does participating in a problem of practice protocol support and challenge secondary English language arts preservice teachers' navigation of tensions during student teaching?***

I used the combined framing/positioning framework to investigate research question 3. I used the framework for question 2, except that the analysis shifted from third-order positioning to first- and second-order positioning. First-order positioning refers to the acceptance or assumption of positions without challenge. For example, PTs accepted my self-positioning as the

meeting facilitator when I shared slides, asked questions, and solicited reflections. Second-order positioning refers to when the positioning is resisted or rejected and in which repositioning may occur. An example of when my self-positioning as the meeting facilitator was resisted involved a moment when I suggested that group members could practice responding if a fight broke out during their teaching (Eva had brought a wobble to the group about a similar situation that day). Acting as a facilitator, I asked, “So, does someone have a mini wobble that they're thinking about, or do you want me to ask one of you to rehearse two students fighting?”

Eva responded, “I'm just really burnt out. It's been a long week, and it's only Wednesday. Yeah, I don't want to role-play a fight, respectfully” (Meeting 4). Here, Eva’s response illustrated how group members had a right to decide on meeting activities. She resisted the passive participant role, possibly framed by my question about rehearsal.

Additionally, the figured world shifted to interactions during interviews and group meetings. In other words, PTs and I were positioning ourselves and each other within the setting of the inquiry group meetings. Analysis of the figured world of the group meetings illustrates how it functioned as a third space (Bhabha, 1994) both separate from and entangled with the figured worlds of the university, student teaching, and student teaching placements.

Analyzing discourse for question 3, I was particularly drawn to how I positioned myself within the group and how the PTs positioned themselves and others as they talked through cycles of identification, planning, enactment, and reflection on tensions they navigated.

3.8 **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

3.8.1 ***Researcher Reflexivity***

Throughout this study, I iteratively developed an understanding of my own biases and assumptions related to this research. I documented this process throughout my research. Initially, I recognized little about how my positionality impacted my conceptualization of the study and my roles. For example, during the prospectus defense, a question asked me to examine my dual role as an instructor and researcher. As a result, I memoed and continue to memo about how I positioned myself, my participants, and others through identifying a topic, designing the study, analyzing data, and reporting results.

3.8.2 ***Triangulation***

I used multiple data sources to examine how ELA PTs navigated tensions they experienced during student teaching. These sources included two interviews and eight group meetings. In addition, I developed a procedure that yielded multiple cycles of the phenomena under investigation, with at least two cycles for each participant.

3.8.3 ***Methodological Documentation/Audit Trail***

I documented and organized the methodological process of this study from its conception in March 2022 to now. I wrote a memo after (and often before) each meeting with committee members.

3.8.4 ***Member Checking***

I shared periodic updates with participants about the progress of the study. This occurred during meetings when I mentioned moments from previous meetings to pose "thought questions" as options to discuss as we started. Additionally, I referred to PTs' previous tension scenes during Interview 2s, asking them to reflect on those moments. Lastly, during Interview 2s, I asked a question about what I thought was a key part of the research to gauge their response. After I concluded data collection, I shared and solicited feedback on several conference presentations and the dissertation.

3.8.5 ***Peer Review***

Nearly every part of this dissertation has appeared in some iteration in a peer-reviewed journal or as part of a peer-reviewed conference presentation. I relied on peer-reviewed conference presentations to solicit feedback on my initial literature review and research design. Then, as I collected and analyzed data, I brought those analyses to conferences to present and solicit feedback.

3.9 **Ethical Considerations**

3.9.1 IRB and Informed Consent

The study was determined exempt by the institutional IRB review process. All PTs voluntarily agreed to participate in the study after receiving an informed consent form for the study (Appendix C) and having the opportunity to meet with me to discuss their role and any potential risks or dilemmas.

Additionally, although they were not direct participants in the study, each PT's mentor teacher voluntarily agreed to participate, signing an informed consent form (Appendix D). For how I described their role, see Appendix D. I met each mentor teacher in their class and talked about the study with them and the preservice teacher.

I further contacted the principal of each school where PTs were placed for student teaching to inform them of the study and ask for consent. All principals consented to the study via email or over the phone.

3.9.2 ***Confidentiality***

All student, preservice teacher, mentor teacher, school, community, city, district, and state names have either been omitted or replaced with pseudonyms. Maintaining the confidentiality of these individuals and their contexts was important. As a result, I balanced the need for sociocultural research to include descriptive information about people within particular contexts with the need to maintain the anonymity of the preservice teachers, mentor teachers, schools, and cities described in this study. When participants included identifying information for themselves or others, I attempted to keep the spirit of their comments while maintaining confidentiality.

All study data was stored following IRB requirements for exempt research at the University of Michigan.

3.9.3 ***Transparency***

I have been transparent with all aspects of this study, including methods, data, analysis, and conclusions. I documented each step in the research process. Although data is not publicly available per the agreement with participants, I am happy to discuss data sources and analysis procedures.

3.10 **Limitations and Delimitations**

3.10.1 Reported Narratives of Classroom Interaction

This study relies on data from preservice teachers' reported narratives of classroom interactions. Relying on these secondary reports from PTs distanced me from the classroom, as I only visited each classroom once to discuss the study with PTs and their mentor teachers. Alternative approaches to researching how PTs navigate tensions often rely on observations of

teaching and collections of instructional materials along with interviews. This difference in study design and the resulting data collected led to a greater reliance on the perspectives of the preservice teachers participating in the study. For example, I could not triangulate their perspectives with my classroom interactions; instead, I focused on combing through data to identify opportunities to reflect.

Relying so heavily on PTs' perspectives also offered greater insight into the assumptions and biases I brought to the research. Instead of providing an alternative interpretation, I challenged myself to trust the PTs as knowledgeable about their context and to develop my critical listening as a critical collaborator rather than a researcher or teacher, where I held asymmetrical power over them.

3.10.2 Co-Constructing Group Meetings

Group Meetings differed significantly from how I envisioned them when developing the study. I envisioned a structure that aligned closely with examples of similar group models from research (Hill et al., 2020; Lillge & Knowles, 2020). These structures emphasized PTs bringing artifacts to meetings, such as Daybooks with annotated field notes and post-discussion written reflections (Lillge & Knowles, 2020). However, these discussion structures reflected the kinds of work participants were already doing for their coursework. Similarly, I envisioned PTs recording their teaching and conversations with mentor teachers. In my development of the study, I wrote,

> Due to the changes I have observed in visiting and recording classrooms during pandemic online learning and during the ongoing pandemic school protocols, as well as the content of this study, I anticipate some difficulty in completing physical observations of participants in their student teaching placements. As a result, I will ask interns to record their enactments of framing. If they are unable to do so, I will use the closest representation to their enactment (e.g., notes).

Along this line of "closest representation to their enactment," we mainly relied on narrative retellings of their conversations and teaching. These choices not to record their conversations with MTs reflected the cultural expectations around the awkwardness of recording conversations, especially when those conversations might be heated (or at least warm).

The resulting meetings and data resulted from listening to and responding to participants' perspectives and working to co-create a space that met their needs while maintaining the spirit of the original design.

Except for Madison, the PTs rarely brought artifacts to group meetings. Instead, much of their talk about tensions occurred as semi-spontaneous reflections. For example, when Charlotte mentioned her mentor teacher, Harper, absorbing the responsibility for disciplining students, she prefaced introducing her tension by saying, "I didn't have a set wobble to share just because, I don't know, it's just been a busy couple of weeks" (Meeting 3a). Situating the group meetings outside of the field seminar, PTs did not take up the potential positioning as "students" doing assignments for the group. Similarly, I developed my ideas for the group meetings by drawing on a practice-based approach to approximate the practices PTs wanted to enact as closely as possible. However, for example, when I asked if PTs wanted to role-play a potential situation, Eva shared, "I'm just really burnt out. It's been a long week, and it's only Wednesday. Yeah, I don't want to role-play a fight, respectfully" (Meeting 4).

3.11 **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined the research design for this study. This study takes a sociocultural and asset-based approach to qualitatively studying how English language arts preservice teachers navigate tensions during student teaching. I provided profiles for the five study participants and descriptions of the contexts of the study, including detailed descriptions of participants' mentor teachers and student teaching placements. I detailed the data sources and collection methods, including recordings of initial and post-interviews, eight group meetings, and program and state policy documents. In the data analysis section, I explained and provided examples of each research question's framework and coding procedures. In the last sections, I explained the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the ethical considerations of the study, and limitations and delimitations.

In the following three chapters, I will report findings from each of the three main research questions. In the next chapter, I report findings on Research Question 1: What tensions do Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers navigate during student teaching? and Research Question 1a: How are these tensions reflected in program and state policies? Following that investigation, I present a comparative multiple case study (Stake, 2006) of Charlotte's, Leah's, and Eva's tensions when their mentor teacher "stepped in." These cases represent findings to Research Question 2: How do Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching? In the third findings chapter, I explore another way the PTs discussed navigating tensions: privacy. Then, I explore findings related to

Research Question 3: How does participating in a problem of practice protocol support and challenge secondary English language arts preservice teachers' navigation of tensions during student teaching?

Chapter 4 “I Will Be By Myself Eventually”: Tensions Preservice Teachers Navigated During Student Teaching

4.1 Introduction

> So sometimes when the discussion's really dead, I mean I guess it is a good thing that she's jumping in, but also I would kind of like to try to jazz up the discussion more on my own without her needing to jump in because I will be by myself eventually and I will need to raise the energy on my own somehow…Part of me is I kind of need to learn this, do learn how to do it on my own, but also I do your help. So I don't know. I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail because at the end of the day, that's what your student teaching is for, is trying and failing in a safe space. (Eva, Meeting 2)

This excerpt from Eva’s wobble discussion depicts the titular tension of PTs being by themselves “eventually.” Here, Eva discussed how her mentor teacher, Jen, jumped in to support her in leading discussions when students were not talking. Eva expressed that the future isolation of being “by myself eventually” represented a foregone conclusion. This imagined future caused her to worry about her readiness to teach. At that moment, she recognized she could not “jazz up the discussion” on her own. Eva identified student teaching as a safe space for trying and failing. In contrast, other participants, especially toward the end of student teaching, looked forward to the day they would no longer have to reproduce the culture of their mentor teacher’s classroom or petition their mentor teacher to make any changes. These variations and vacillations between independence and collaboration typified the tensions PTs experienced during student teaching in their relationships with their mentor teachers and colleagues. In other words, even when PTs experienced tensions with other aspects of teaching (i.e., instructional practices, classroom environment practices), their tensions with professional relationships intertwined with those tensions to complicate the question of “How can I…?” Ultimately, I begin this chapter with a

brief discussion of the tension between independence and collaboration in student teaching and teaching because this tension characterized many of the wobbles PTs discussed during interviews and group meetings.

In this chapter, I examine the tensions English Language Arts Preservice Teachers identified, made plans to navigate, and reflected on during student teaching. I draw transcript data from Interview 1s, group meetings, and post-interviews to illustrate how PTs navigated professional, instructional, and classroom environment tensions. I highlight how these tensions were often interwoven as PTs determined that mentor teachers, colleagues, and policies required navigation alongside tensions concerning teaching and constructing a positive classroom environment, which similarly overlapped.

Then, I transition to program and state policy documents to explore how these tensions were reflected in the policies that dictated the program's intentions. Comparing the expectations set by the policy documents with PTs' lived realities reveals the frictions that surface when professional differences, rooted in power and politics, go unaddressed in an apprenticeship. This begs the question: an apprenticeship toward what? Similarly, when learning to teach is construed primarily as planning and instruction with only small attention given to cultural norms of the profession and professional contexts, what assumptions are we making about what teaching is? Ultimately, PTs have vastly different student teaching and teaching experiences even within the same program. These different experiences offer an opportunity to investigate how these variations, particularly concerning independence and collaboration, reflect and construct student teaching and teaching more broadly.

4.2 Research Question 1: What Tensions Do Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers Navigate During Student Teaching?

To understand *how* preservice teachers navigated tensions (RQ2), I first wanted to know *what* tensions they navigated during student teaching. Research Question 1 asks, "What tensions did English Language Arts Preservice Teachers navigate during student teaching?" With this inquiry, I worked to depart from the body of literature that has focused on the movement of ideas and knowledge from teacher education programs into schools (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2013). Instead, I wanted to know more about the practical tensions PTs experienced in their day-to-day student teaching. What aspects of teaching caused them to wobble? To report the findings on this

question, I review the three major categories of tensions: professional, instructional, and classroom environment tensions. Then, I illustrate how these tensions overlapped, moved through identification, planning, enactment, and reflection cycles, and reflected the interaction between PTs and their contexts.

The main categories of professional, instructional, and classroom environment practices accounted for all of the tensions PTs discussed. Professional tensions focused on aspects of being a professional, such as how to interact with colleagues. Instructional tensions referred to actions of planning, teaching, and assessment. Lastly, classroom environment tensions stemmed from PTs' wobbles about how to maintain a positive learning environment. For a complete list of tension categories, descriptions, and examples, see Appendix F.

Table 10: Tensions by Participant (All Categories)

Tension Category	Charlotte (28 scenes)	Leah (33 scenes)	Eva (27 scenes)	Madison (27 scenes)	Tracy (37 Scenes)
Classroom Environment	15	15	12	1	16
Professional Practices:	22	28	20	8	33
Teaching Practices	6	13	9	23	14
Classroom Environment: Classroom Management / Discipline	11	8	7	0	11
Classroom Environment: Relationships with Students	7	9	5	1	7
Professional Practices: Colleague Relationships	10	2	1	2	15
Professional Practices: Families/Communities	1	0	0	0	0
Professional Practices: MT Relationships	11	27	12	5	17
Professional Practices: Policies	11	4	5	4	13
Professional Practices: Teacher Identity	1	2	1	0	1
Professional Practices: Reflective Practice	0	0	2	1	0
Teaching Practices: Feedback, Assessment, and Grading	3	6	1	5	2
Teaching Practices: Instructional Activities	2	2	6	16	3
Teaching Practices: Planning/Curriculum	2	6	2	8	12
Total subcodes	59	66	42	42	81

4.2.1 Theme 1: Professional Tensions

Of the three main categories of tensions, PTs most frequently discussed professional practice tensions. These tensions concerned relationships with mentor teachers, discretion in enacting policies, working with colleagues, interacting with families and communities, and their identity as a teacher.

4.2.1.1 Mentor Teacher Relationships

72/152 of the tension scenes PTs spoke about in interviews and meetings included tensions with their mentor teacher. Not all of these tensions were the same, however. PTs navigated tensions with their MT concerning three areas: mentoring practices, teaching practices, and classroom environment practices.

Mentoring practices included how mentor teachers supported PTs in student teaching. PTs identified tensions with mentoring practices when their MTs "stepped in" during instruction. In other words, PTs were leading the class when their MT intervened somehow. Here, I use the word "intervene" to offer a middle ground between what a student teacher might describe as "interrupting" and a mentor teacher "supporting." For example, in Meeting 2, Eva shared how her mentor teacher, Jen, intervened when she was leading a discussion:

> Sometimes, and she's also made it clear that it's not just me. Some of her hours just hate doing class discussions, and it's pulling teeth, trying to get kids to share. So sometimes when the discussion's really dead, I mean I guess it is a good thing that she's jumping in, but also I would kind of like to try to jazz up the discussion more on my own without her needing to jump in because I will be by myself eventually and I will need to raise the energy on my own somehow. So I wish she would just hold off a little bit before she jumps in, but I get what she's trying to do. She doesn't want to see me up there struggling by myself, which I appreciate. I value that a lot because my last mentor teacher did not give a frick about anything. But yeah, I don't know. Part of me is like I kind of need to learn this, do learn how to do it on my own, but also I do [need] your help. So I don't know. I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail because at the end of the day, that's what your student teaching is for, is trying and failing in a safe space.

Here, Eva characterized Jen's intervention as a form of support but wanted different kinds of support from Jen.

Concerning tensions with MTs intersecting with teaching practices, PTs often felt challenged by how their mentor teacher graded, planned, or led instruction. Tracy, for example, shared in her Interview 1 a tension with her MT's attachment to the five-paragraph essay. Tracy felt hesitant to disagree with her MT, though, "because it's ultimately not my classroom."

PTs also navigated tensions with how MTs constructed the classroom environment. For example, in her co-teaching role with Cheryl, Tracy acknowledged differences in how they managed the classroom. In her Interview 2, Tracy shared how Cheryl wanted the classroom to be "absolutely silent." In contrast, Tracy did not mind "if students were still working and chatting a little bit."

Similarly, Leah disagreed with her mentor teacher, Rebecca, regarding how to treat or talk to students. For example, during Meeting 2, Leah shared how Rebecca referred to students as "squirrels and puppies." Rebecca told Leah the best classroom management advice she received came from a dog trainer she brought her puppy to when the dog did not listen. The dog trainer told her, "Your commands need to be short."

4.2.1.2 Policies

37/152 tension scenes PTs' brought up included tension with policies. Like MT relationships, policy tensions often co-occurred with other tensions, either classroom environment or teaching practices. In Meeting 5, policies as a tension came to the foreground during a discussion of *policies*, which Charlotte then Madison framed as rules passed down from someone else who may not have classroom experience for a teacher to then enforce. PTs experienced tensions with policies because the policies were not theirs and being imposed on them.

In some instances, PTs attributed policies to their mentor. For example, in Meeting 5, Leah shared:

> I was also thinking about late work in terms of not agreeing with certain policies because my mentor teacher has a policy and I'm really bad at following it, but it's completely intentional because I don't agree with it. And very early on I was put in charge of grading. I graded everything, and I have been for a while. And I am, I don't really know if I'm going totally against it or she doesn't care that much. So I don't think I'm going to get in trouble for not following it, but I still have that feeling that I'm going to get in trouble.

Leah mentioned her mentor teacher's grading policy, which she chose not to follow. Similarly, Tracy added just after Leah:

> I feel like I've kind of done that too a little bit, especially with cell phone policy. We just deal with this a lot at White Oak Woods, and I just feel like that's not the hill that I want to die on or a relationship that I want to kill with a student because I decided to take their phone because they had it out for two seconds. And so I feel like there are times where we have to do that in order to, I don't want to say make our lives easier, but I think in order to make our lives a little bit easier sometimes and also to, I don't know, just to save those relationships with students I think is more important than, I don't know, following a policy that I like myself am not going to enforce in my own classroom.

While Leah attributed the grading policy to her MT, Tracy attributed it to her school. Interestingly, Leah's and Tracy's back-and-forth included Leah's wondering about not enforcing a phone policy reflecting her values or just not being a priority and Tracy's acknowledgment of her MT's "freedom to implement some things…little things…especially classroom management." Ultimately, these policy approaches reflected a different framework that PTs used compared to how they navigated MT relationships.

The last area of policies that PTs navigated tensions in was related to Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504s. Leah experienced tension when her MT seemingly ignored a student's 504. Tracy, on the other hand, did not know how to navigate supporting a new student in her classroom who had an IEP. Tracy felt especially wobbly because the school relied on substitute special education coordinators.

4.2.1.3 Colleagues

Charlotte and Tracy both experienced tensions with colleagues during student teaching. Charlotte's tensions involved how other teachers and administrators at her placement treated a student. During her Interview 2, Charlotte shared how the principal suggested during a meeting about one student's behavior to have a restorative justice circle with the student. She said, "And then he basically had to go around the table and listen to everyone in the room…say how they felt about how he [the student] was acting. And he [the student] just kind of sat there crying." This was a 6th-grader. As a result, Charlotte voiced her concerns about how the student was being treated and how his behavior was not changing.

The incident, among other things, led Charlotte to experience tension with her colleagues regarding the student. She felt discomfort sharing the student's behaviors with her colleagues, even if some were "disturbing," because she worried he would be harmed.

In contrast, Tracy's co-teacher caused her considerable tension. Tracy was the only participant who had a special education push-in co-teacher. She was also the only PT whose MT "would jump in" within an explicit co-teaching model (Interview 2). Tracy hoped that being direct with the co-teacher about what she needed to do to support her caseload of students would improve the classroom environment. However, suggestions "would work for a little bit and then things would go back to normal" (Interview 2). This tension was not solely Tracy's, as her MT, Cheryl, shared her frustrations. Tracy felt tension between the personal friendship that Cheryl and the co-teacher shared compared to their professional relationship, a complication she shared when she babysat for the co-teacher.

4.2.1.4 Families/Communities

The PTs did not identify tensions with families or the community. When the study took place in the 2022-23 school year, schools, districts, and states had started enacting book bans and anti-DEI rules and legislation. However, none of the PTs brought up families or communities in this way for their student teaching placement. Charlotte shared how her fall placement at a different middle school had encountered challenges from the community. At her previous placement, school board meetings were filled with parents advocating for book bans. Additionally, responding to community pressure, the school instituted a policy that teachers could not ask for students' pronouns.

PTs' interactions with parents included meetings at parent-teacher conferences and emails. Tracy described her mentor teacher meeting with an irate parent conspiracy theorist. However, beyond hypotheticals, the PTs did not experience tensions with families or the community. Nor did they perceive them as assets, either. Families and the community were largely absent from discussions.

Charlotte was the only participant to mention how families and community members could be allies. During Interview 2, Charlotte shared that the ideal teaching method involved having colleagues, administrators, families, and community members "on your team." She expanded by talking about bringing families and community members into the classroom to learn more about what was going on.

However, Charlotte situated this ideal public classroom against her previous placement, where parents and community members actively tried to ban books and limit students' expression.

Given public attention to communities trying to ban books and limit curriculum in classrooms, I thought the PTs would experience this challenge. That they did not is either a testament to their schools (and the program choosing partners and ending relationships with others) or MTs who shielded PTs from individuals, like Tracy's MT, Cheryl, or both.

The discourse around families and community members as surveillant and invasive often focuses on conservative white people. This focus shifted away from the deficit views of families and communities that researchers have often found PTs harbor for students of color and students from low-income families.

4.2.1.5 Teacher Identity

PTs did not identify tensions with their identities except when prompted. Meeting 4 started with an optional thought question related to their identities:

> How do you think being white, a woman, or other social identities play a role in how you approach making changes? What about the social identities of your MTs or your students?

This time was the only moment that any of the PTs brought up how their identities as white women impacted their teaching. Of the four PTs who responded to the question, Charlotte and Leah taught in majority white communities. Charlotte shared:

> I feel like in Milton it's kind of hard to be as cognizant of being a white woman sometimes because so much of my identity is also reflected in my, reflected in my students. That's a very non-diverse place. So I feel like I am kind of struggling internally with trying to remember to still be reflecting on those aspects, especially my own whiteness when I bring identity into the classroom and try to introduce different identities to the students that they might not be familiar with.

Leah seconded Charlotte's point about being in Milton, adding:

> With the trimester change… I do have a student of color in one of my classes. And I had a student survey, and they put on their student survey that they care about Black and Latino rights in the US, and I was happy to see that. But I also don't really know how to position myself as, is that something that they would want to explore in my classroom?

> Would they feel comfortable exploring that with me, you know? Me being a white one of their many white teachers, and how I can be a positive space for them to explore caring about those topics instead of a negative space.

Charlotte and Leah felt tension with how they so seamlessly blended into white settings and how they could bring diverse voices into the classroom when they and most of their students were white. Leah's mention of the student of color in her class highlights the complexity of putting students of color in a less-than-ideal environment where they are often tokenized.

By contrast, Eva and Tracy both taught at schools with majority-minority students. However, Tracy's tension mirrored much of Leah's. Tracy marveled at how her students had not learned about the Civil Rights Movement. Tracy wondered how she, as a "white individual" could "bridge that gap without being…" Interestingly, Tracy never finished her thought, instead repeating, "Without being more, I don't know how to phrase this…"

Eva situated her identity tension within her unit on *Maus*, which corresponded with reading *This Book is Antiracist* to discuss how social and personal identities matter. She shared how "two white boys that sit in the back of the room" expressed that "me being white has no effect on me." Eva felt the tension as a white woman explaining white privilege to white students and emphasized that it was a privilege not to think identities matter. What added to Eva's tension was that the class and school were majority students of color.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Instructional Tensions:

PTs spoke about navigating tensions concerning teaching practices in 65/152 tension scenes. Teaching practices included (a) planning/curriculum, (b) instructional activities, and (c) feedback, assessment, and grading.

4.2.2.1 Planning/Curriculum

30/152 tension scenes included attention to planning/curriculum. 14 of those mentions occurred during Interview 1s, when PTs Charlotte, Leah, Madison, and Tracy identified tensions related to planning lessons or the curriculum they were expected to teach. For example, Charlotte brought up how sixth-grade students in her class were taught "a lot of direct grammar instruction" and had "root word Wednesdays," which culminated in a quiz every few weeks. Charlotte's comments highlighted the different approaches to language teaching that occur in

ELA classrooms. In particular, she felt tension with direct language instruction separated from the context of other literacy practices.

Also in her Interview 1, Leah shared her struggle with her MT's approach to "forwards design" for the unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As Leah saw it, Rebecca told Leah what topics to teach "week by week" without particulars about why. Leah appreciated how Rebecca responded to students' needs, reflecting on lessons to identify what went well and what she needed to change going forward. However, without a clear roadmap, Leah experienced tension as she tried to meet students' needs for the summative assessment while planning in response to her MT.

However, PTs rarely moved from identifying planning/curriculum tensions to working to resolve them. For example, Tracy shared in her Interview 2 about the "need to conform" to what the other teachers on the eighth-grade team wanted to do, even if she disagreed with their ideas. Sometimes, Tracy pointed to her MT, Cheryl, as the person who limited her curriculum choices, such as when she brought up aligning with standards and the school benchmarks. Other times, Tracy highlighted how her plans were shared across the eighth-grade team. All team members had to agree on the lesson, even if only one member planned it. Tracy also experienced curriculum tensions with the school, which she identified during her post-interview:

> I mean, I guess I think I would like to practice with whole class texts. That's something that White Oak Woods is very against. I do think student choice is really awesome, but I think especially as, in eighth grade, there should be at least maybe one [whole class text], even if it's a short story or something that we could read together and practice working with. Cause when they go to [High School 1] or [High School 2], all of their texts are whole class texts. There's not a lot of choice anymore. And I feel like that would've been really beneficial for students to practice with.

Tracy's placement was the only school with low standardized test scores and a majority of students of color. These characteristics align with these planning and curriculum tensions I experienced in my time at BHS. Madison and Eva experienced some planning and curriculum tensions at their site as well, but those mostly amounted to adhering to the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, which focused heavily on academic preparation.

PTs had few expectations of designing a unit from scratch, instead considering how they might adapt the existing unit plans or district guidelines (Peltier et al., 2021), even though

designing a unit plan is one of the most assigned tasks in ELA methods courses (Pasternak et al., 2018).

4.2.2.2 Instructional Activities

PTs discussed navigating instructional tensions in 29/152 of their tension scenes. Madison, the only participant to focus her tension presentations specifically on instructional activities, had sixteen of those scenes.

Madison identified in her Interview 1 that she wanted students to collaborate more and give feedback on each other's work. As she saw it, students in her 12th grade class were doing these things, but often without explicit instruction. She brought these tensions to the group's attention in her two wobble discussions. The group's advice and feedback led her to implement explicit instruction activities with students, even writing part of a story to model for students how to give peer feedback.

Two PTs, Charlotte and Eva, shared how they used instructional activities to build relationships with students in ways they did not see, at least as much, from their mentor teachers. Charlotte described how she would "give in to the conversation side of it…and if it's off-topic, sometimes I will stop and address it, and we'll have a laugh or something" (Interview 1). Eva reflected on how she began asking students to "share something positive that happened over the weekend or something they're looking forward to" as a way to have students open up and build relationships. She framed the move to "let them know that I care about them as an individual rather than just shoving literature in their face" (Interview 1). However, she still felt tension when students, especially the 9th graders, "took forever to get them back on track" after a thrilling class debate on naps.

Because I did not observe their classes, I could not identify additional instructional activities with which PTs identified and navigated tensions. Small comments throughout the data made it clear that the PTs made many small changes to how they taught to align with their values. For example, Leah brought up a moment with her mentor teacher as an example of how to model treating students with respect. As Leah took questions from the class about the structure of the Oscars, Rebecca suggested "from the back of the room" to students that they should stop interrupting so Leah could finish giving directions. Leah explained to the students that asking questions was okay because many students had never seen the Oscars before. She continued to take questions despite her MT's suggestion to students (Meeting 3). While Rebecca's

intervention heightened this moment, Leah's slight shift in how she invited questions offered a small instructional change she chose to implement in her teaching.

4.2.2.3 Grading, Assessment, and Feedback

Grading, assessment, and feedback comprised the smallest number of tension scenes in the instructional tensions category. These essentially amount to two ways of talking about grading, assessment, and feedback: feeling challenged by existing classroom practices and reflecting on how PTs resolved tensions with grading, assessment, and feedback practices.

Eva and Madison felt tension with the expectations of IB rubrics for how to grade and give students feedback on their essays. Eva discussed in Meeting One how she felt "IB is very limiting to what students can and can't write" and that they had to be "very explicit" with their standards-based rubric regarding what criterion they were used.

By contrast, Leah and Charlotte expressed tension regarding grading due to a lack of clarity. For example, Leah had been grading for weeks by the first meeting, yet she had not discussed with her MT how to grade or give feedback; instead, she used her judgment. She gave an example of students using "I feel" in their literary analysis, not knowing about Rebecca's preferences. Similarly, Charlotte acknowledged in her Interview 1 a disconnect for many assignments between what students should do and what they turn in, which led her to develop rubrics.

PTs also reflected on resolving tensions concerning grading, assessment, and feedback practices by actively ignoring some policies. For example, Madison, Leah, and Tracy actively ignored grading policies implemented in their classrooms. Madison ignored her MT's strict late work policy because she felt the argument that this treatment prepared them for college was insufficient for treating them like college students. Leah similarly ignored her MT's late work and grading policies. Tracy explained how she did not require "perfect" grammar and writing like her mentor teacher on all assignments. Instead, she treated most of the writing as practice and graded and gave different feedback on the summative assessments (Interview 2).

4.2.3 Theme 3: Classroom Environment Tensions:

The third kind of tension PTs navigated during student teaching involved their classroom environment. These tensions took the form of either management/discipline or building relationships with students. 59/152 tension scenes included classroom environment tension.

Interestingly, both management/discipline and student relationships had more reflections than identifications.

4.2.3.1 Management/Discipline

In 37/152 tension scenes, PTs talked about classroom management and discipline. For example, In Meeting 4, Charlotte expressed how she grappled with the tension of a potentially unsafe situation and inequitable disciplinary outcomes. Charlotte was unconvinced by her decision to report one of her students for writing harmful messages about his teachers on his tablet. The document, which Charlotte remembered was titled "Evil Plans for [Science Teacher], laid out a bulleted list of harmful plans. After reporting the document to the assistant principal, the teaching team and principal repeatedly spoke about the student using deficit language. The student ended up in in-school suspension, but the behavior continued. Charlotte shared how it was such a complicated case because the student had "a lot going on" that was not being addressed. Instead, the teachers and administrators focused on the student's "weird and concerning and disturbing behaviors" (Meeting 4). In Meeting 5, Charlotte followed up, sharing how the same student had again received in-school suspension for the same behavior.

Leah, Tracy, and Eva all shared similar management/discipline tensions as they felt they had different values related to classroom management from those of their mentor teachers. For example, Leah pointed out in her Interview 1 the difference between her MT's "loud and theatrical" style and her more laid-back "quiet ways." Similarly, Tracy viewed herself as more patient and community-oriented than her MT. She shared how she "wasn't very caught up on correcting students" and did not "like it to be silent all the time," which her MT preferred (Interview 2).

In contrast, Eva experienced tension with what she perceived as her MT's lax classroom management strategies. She expressed frustration that Jen did not take cell phones or discipline students, even when they constantly had their phones out. In the same vein, Eva expressed frustration ("drives me nuts") with students wearing AirPods even when she or Jen was teaching (Interview 1). Interestingly, these differences led Eva to adopt classroom management strategies from other teachers. In Meeting 4, Eva explained how she had asked to switch places with Madison for the day to observe Madison's MT, Astrid. Astrid used a different approach to get students' attention, which Eva quickly adopted and enacted in her own teaching.

4.2.3.2 Student Relationships

29 tension scenes involved relationships with students in some capacity. PTs experienced these tensions in two ways: with relationships with individual students and with other aspects of teaching that affected relationships with all students.

Charlotte, Leah, and Tracy discussed tensions they experienced in their relationships with students. For example, as mentioned before, Charlotte discussed the student who wrote disturbing comments about teachers on his iPad. Feeling stuck between a student exhibiting challenging behavior and an administration that appeared set on inequitable disciplinary action, Charlotte chose to work with the student but focus on classwork, being "hands-off" when it came to his behavior (Interview 2).

Throughout the study, Leah worked to build a relationship with one of the students in her 10th-grade class, William (pseudonym). Rebecca and Leah disagreed over how to characterize William, with Rebecca suggesting that he wanted to make the class "The William Show" and Leah appreciating how he contributed to the class but recognizing that he was not always the most thoughtful student. Leah's tension with building a relationship with William was mediated by his fractured relationship with Rebecca. In the end, Leah tried to work around her MT, indirectly distancing herself from her MT's actions. I will discuss these moves further in Chapter 5.

Like Charlotte and Leah, Tracy was unsure what to focus on with a new student who arrived at White Oak Woods weeks before standardized testing. The student had an IEP and was reading far below grade level. As she discussed supporting the student, Tracy emphasized that the most important thing was to establish a relationship with him and "make him feel comfortable" (Meeting 5). Tracy recognized that she would not be at the school for much longer, so setting the intention for herself and other adults to "make him feel comfortable" and "build connections with him" was important to her (Meeting 5).

4.2.4 Summary

This section describes the three main categories of tensions PTs navigated during student teaching. My initial expectation that PTs would engage with curricular and pedagogical tension was augmented by how frequently PTs had to navigate professional practices, such as their relationship with their mentor teacher or colleagues or had to determine the best way to navigate a class, school, or federal policy. These professional tensions highlighted how no two contexts

were alike. Moreover, even when PTs were at the same school, in addition to the unique experiences corresponding to different grade levels, each PT brought their own experiences and expectations to their multiple settings as they worked with their mentor teacher.

Significantly, PTs rarely experienced one tension at a time. Instead, describing one tension often depicted how it was interwoven with others. For example, tensions with MT and colleague relationships often coincided with tensions in building relationships with students. These two demonstrate together how PTs explored ways to build relationships with students who may not have had the best relationships with other teachers. Similarly, PTs' tensions related to policies intertwined with classroom management/discipline and curriculum/planning.

At times, these tensions existed in different settings. For example, Leah, Charlotte, and Eva talked about tensions with their MTs stepping in, an aspect of mentoring during student teaching. However, stepping in as a mentoring move uniquely crossed over into instruction.

At other times, PTs existed in multiple settings as they tried to navigate tensions. For example, Leah worried about talking with her mentor teacher about a disciplinary decision Rebecca made. Even though PTs were expected to ask questions about teaching, Leah did not know whether Rebecca would see the question as a challenge.

Ultimately, the variety of tensions PTs experienced displays the variety of professional heterogeneity PTs had to navigate during their student teaching experiences. These tensions cannot and should not be summed up along some continuum of progressive to conservative. Differences in professional practices, particularly mentoring, are challenging to navigate, especially when PTs must meet particular normative expectations of independence that I will explore by investigating *How* PTs navigated these tensions. Knowing how PTs navigated these tensions, even when they choose not to act as was the case for many of the curriculum/planning tensions, is of the utmost importance for supporting future PTs and understanding how programs work toward reform-oriented goals.

4.3 Research Question 1a: How are These Tensions Reflected in Program and State Policies?

I used several methods to examine research Question 1a: "How are these tensions reflected in program and state policies?" First, I used the tension codes (professional practices, instructional practices, and classroom environment practices) to identify similarities and

differences between the focus of the standards compared to the PTs. Then, I drew on prepositioning analysis to determine how policies that lay out the expectations for student teaching construct positions and storylines within particular frameworks. Lastly, I identified in vivo codes of words and phrases related to difference, challenge, or conflict to explore how the program and state articulated the tensions of the multiple worlds pitfall brought about by professional heterogeneity.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Standards

In this section, I analyze how the standards used to construct programs and evaluate PTs reflected the tensions PTs talked about experiencing during their student teaching experiences. I analyzed two state-level documents and one program-level document. The state had two standards documents because it differentiated standards for "professional knowledge and skills" from standards specific to English Language Arts. The state standards were specific to middle grades (5-9) and high school (7-12). The program standards were used in the secondary teacher education programs.

The State Standards for ELA teachers included 13 areas with 134 total standards. The state standards for professional knowledge and skills included three areas with 28 total standards. The program's standards document was constructed slightly differently, with the language of "objectives" and "components." Both objectives and components set expectations for what PTs needed to know and do, such as standards and sub-standards. As a result, I treated all of them as standards. The program differentiated between the first and second four sets of objectives. The first four objectives were evaluated during student teaching. These included planning for instruction (Objective 1), using effective and engaging instructional strategies (Objective 2), cultivating a positive learning environment (Objective 3), and assessing student learning (Objective 4). The remaining four objectives (supporting students' social-emotional needs, promoting access to learning for all students, collaborating with families and the community, and engaging in professional and reflective practice) were not evaluated.

4.3.1.1 Instructional Practices

Across all three standards documents, standards related to instructional practices were the most prominent. This ranged from 121/134 of the ELA standards to 25/45 program standards and 15/28 state professional standards. However, for the program, focusing on standards specifically

evaluated during student teaching, the ratio shifted significantly to 18/22. In other words, evaluation primarily focused on teaching practices when applied to student teaching. Instructional activities were most frequently articulated. For example, program Component 2b: Explaining and Modeling Content, Practices, and Strategies, read:

> Candidate makes content, academic practices, and strategies explicit to students through explaining and modeling, as appropriate to the discipline, the topic, and the instructional purpose.

Here, the program standards created expectations for PTs to explicitly explain and model discipline-specific content, practices, and strategies.

The program differentiated planning from instruction, but the state standards often did not. Phrases like "plan and implement, "design and implement," or "select and use" were paired together. Similarly, the standards set expectations around knowing and applying discipline-specific content in teaching. For example, section ELA.6d, "Foundations of English Language Arts," read:

> Understand that comprehension of text occurs as a dynamic interaction between characteristics of readers (e.g., prior knowledge, interest, cultural connection), text (e.g., density, level of abstraction, structure), activity (e.g., purpose, structure, clarity), and context (e.g., classroom climate, culture of expectations), and select and implement instructional practices that shape this interaction.

Overall, the state ELA and program standards evaluated during student teaching focused almost exclusively on instructional practices. Due to the state's focus on English Language Arts, the standards went into specific knowledge, planning, and instructional strategies for the content area. In contrast, the program's standards, applied to all secondary content areas, provided a general high-leverage practices approach to standards.

4.3.1.2 Professional Practices

The second most prominent standard across the three documents focused on professional practices. Nearly half of the professional knowledge and skills (13/28) and 15/45 of the program standards applied to professional practices, while 15/134 of the ELA-specific state standards did. These standards involved collaborating with colleagues, building relationships with families and the community, being knowledgeable about state and federal policies, and developing a particular teacher identity.

Collaborating with colleagues appeared across all three standards documents. This focus conveyed a sense of becoming "members of a professional community" (program Objective 8). For example, state professional standard P.3.c on Strategic Partnerships read:

> Demonstrate intentional collaborative approaches aimed at assisting a learner's unique social-emotional health, well-being, and academic growth through mutually beneficial partnerships with colleagues.

This collaboration extended to other school professionals as well, including librarians and administrators.

In addition to collaborating with school colleagues, state and program standards extended the school community to include families and community members. For example, state professional standard P.3.a Strategic Partnerships said:

> Identify valuable contributions and input that all families, caregivers, and community stakeholders provide for learners, by engaging with them as partners and agents in their learners' education.

Engaging families and community members as partners and agents included communication and building partnerships beyond the school setting.

One exception to this approach to colleagues, families, and community collaboration was State Standard ELA.12.i Literature:

> Prepare rationales for selection and use of literature and other texts to present to students, parents, and other stakeholders and to respond to potential challenges.

The standards here reflected the need for ELA PTs to be prepared for community members to challenge texts.

4.3.1.3 Classroom Environment Practices

Attention to the classroom environment was infrequently identified in the standards documents, although it was present across all three documents. For the state ELA standards, these focused on creating a space where students all students could thrive doing disciplinary work. For example, State ELA standards 1b ("English Language Arts Learning Environments") read:

> Create a variety of inclusive, organized, safe and respectful learning environments that foster collaborative and meaningful opportunities for inquiry and learning (e.g.,

> classroom libraries, choice reading, peer conferencing, writing/reading workshop, literature circles).

ELA state standards also emphasized creating an environment where students were active listeners and empathetic to multiple perspectives (ELA.11.c Speaking and Listening) and able to

> dialogue across differences to promote social justice, critical engagement, and civil discourse around complex issues related to creating and maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and equitable society. (ELA.1.g English Language Arts Learning Environments)

In comparison, the program standards described cultivating an "inclusive, meaningful, and supportive student-centered environment that fosters student engagement by connecting students' language, culture, and community to learning" (Component 3b). The language differences in classroom environment expectations highlight how the state and program standards described their vision for teaching.

One state professional standard and one program standard focused on responding to student behavior. For example, Component 3d: Promoting Positive Student Behavior focuses on strategies for building and maintaining a positive classroom environment:

> Candidate provides clear expectations for student behavior through implementing norms, routines, and strategies that support students. Candidate uses restorative practices and other non-punitive measures as needed to help create a productive and humane learning environment for all. When possible, candidate has also empowered students to manage themselves based on mutually developed norms and routines.

Altogether, classroom environment practices were the least cataloged of the three categories. However, standards that addressed the classroom environment explicitly focused on equity and justice-oriented approaches to managing the classroom and building relationships with students that went beyond traditional classroom "management" as discipline and relationships as strictly teacher/student.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Prepositioning

Policy documents at the program and state-level prepositioned PTs and MTs and their contexts in particular ways. This prepositioning was not necessarily representative of how they entered these spaces. However, it offered insight into how the program at RSU, and the state envisioned particular storylines for student teaching. Comparing the vision set out by the program and state with that of PTs' lived realities helped determine why PTs may have

experienced the tensions they did and why they chose to navigate those tensions in particular ways. I organized this section into PT and MT, then program and schools.

4.3.2.1 Preservice Teacher and Mentor Teacher

Program and State documents offered several different visions for prepositioning in the relationship between preservice teachers and mentor teachers.

The primary position that these documents offered PTs is that of novices working with experts, whether those experts be the program (broadly), course instructors, or mentor teachers. For example, RSU's policy handbook explained:

> Student teaching affords the opportunity to gain experience practicing the work of teaching while under the guidance and support of an experienced teacher and interaction with university instructors, staff and resources. (p. 13)

Here, language like "guidance and support" and "experienced" set up positions of novice/inexperienced for the PT and expert/experienced for the mentor teacher. The handbook offered a similar position in its description of the expectations for mentor teachers:

> Mentor teachers share their knowledge of teaching and learning and provide a forum for teaching interns to begin to see themselves as future educators. Because field experiences provide structured opportunities to try new teaching practices, mentor teachers often will observe teaching that is not yet well-developed. Working in collaboration with the program, particularly field instructors, mentor teachers' continual guidance and modeling are essential for helping interns move beyond their early capabilities. (p. 13)

Like above, MTs were positioned as experts and knowledgeable compared with PTs whose teaching is "not yet well-developed" and required "continual guidance and modeling" to move beyond what almost sounds like infancy.

Mentor teachers were also hosts or directors. In other words, MTs had control over the space and could provide opportunities for their guests or access to particular teaching activities. For example, above, the MT provided "a forum." Additionally, MTs "stage the intern's immersion in…classroom instruction" and "shepherd the intern's opportunities to interact with members of the school's wider community" (p. 13). Opposite this position of host or director, PTs took up a guest or novice actor position.

In fact, the language used throughout the program policy handbook took on a didactic tone toward PTs while often imploring MTs to meet expectations. For example, the expectations for PTs often focused on "responsibility":

> Student teachers are responsible for assuming a professional role in the school academically and socially, knowing students and planning, facilitating, leading and assessing effective and appropriate lessons and activities for the K-12 classroom students, gathering records of practice, participating in the school community, and taking advantage of all support systems built into the student teaching experience. (p. 13)

Similarly, the handbook's introduction stated:

> They must seek to work at a high level at all times and in all situations; interns must seek to do more, rather than the minimum; they must take advantage of designed learning opportunities, and seek other opportunities as each setting and situation allows. (p. 6)

Including "rather than the minimum" appeared to chastise some potential or former PT. In contrast, the policy handbook repeated the phrase "mentor teachers are asked to…":

> All mentor teachers are asked to provide "protected" time on a regular basis to meet with the intern and discuss essential matters of classroom life, such as individual student learners, planning, instructional effectiveness, assessment development and results, and curricular issues. (p. 13)

These linguistic differences in how the handbook laid out expectations for PTs and MTs highlighted the power dynamic between them. MTs were not *part* of the program but "working in collaboration with the program" (p. 13). However, they had power in the partnership, possibly because of their access to classrooms, which the program needed to facilitate PTs' learning experiences.

In contrast to the program's approach to prepositioning PTs and MTs, state expectations for student teaching offered a slightly different perspective. Of course, the familiar positioning of supervisor/supervisee and guide/guided were set up:

> The candidate then enters the Internship, gradually taking on more responsibility for planning, instruction, assessment, and management of a classroom under the supervision and guidance of a qualified mentor teacher. (p. 4)

However, these expectations were complicated by a more collaborative framing of student teaching. For example, state expectations offered "co-teaching with a mentor" (p. 7), a complicated dual positioning of mentee/mentor and teacher/teacher.

Additionally, state expectations positioned PTs as active in the mentoring process. Mentor teachers worked with "both the candidate and the clinical instructor to set goals, examine practices, and provide frequent formative feedback modeled after a data-based feedback cycle" (p. 8). Ideally, this feedback process would include feedback in all directions, positioning all team members as collaborators.

However, the observation and summative evaluation process by mentor teachers and field instructors at the conclusion of student teaching effectively limited this more equitable positioning. Even though PTs evaluated their MTs, these evaluations did not impact whether MTs obtained or kept their teaching credential. Thus, PTs were pre-positioned within an observed/observer dynamic.

Complicating this prepositioning is the change of experiences throughout the program, whereby PTs needed to "increase responsibility for teaching and learning through legitimate participation" (Clinical Experience Requirements, p. 13). This language of "increase[d] responsibility" and "legitimate participation" was taken from sociocultural theories of learning, which express that learning is situated within particular communities and contexts. As a result of drawing on this concept of legitimate peripheral participation, the state articulated expectations that PTs would assume increasingly professional positions. This is a difficult proposition for MTs to manage as they navigate their multiple positions across their classroom and student teaching settings. Perhaps that is why the state dictated mentor teacher supports, including curriculum training, supervision and feedback approaches, and program expectations (p. 13).

Ultimately, preservice teachers' positioning is compelling because they *are* teachers. They plan or co-plan lessons, engage with students, assess student work, use data to plan lessons, and enact authentic teaching experiences (p. 7). These actions all describe a teacher. However, teaching in K-12 schools is also associated with being a student teacher and all the positions therein.

The Evaluation Tool

The program's evaluation tool highlighted this shifting relationship between PTs and their MTs. The tool focused on PTs' enactment of practices associated with the objectives and

components of the program standards. The tool's three criteria were skill, intentionality/frequency, and independence (p. 4). Aligned with the view of student teaching as taking on increasing responsibility through legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the evaluation tool created an expectation of eventually independently teaching specific practices at the right time. Complicating this idea of independence was the expectation that PTs would take advantage of all the support available to them as they developed as teachers. Thus, the evaluation tool offered a perspective on teaching that emphasizes independence, characterizing a well-started beginning teacher as someone who no longer needs support and collaboration.

4.3.2.2 Program and Schools

The policy handbook and state clinical expectations described the relationship between university programs and schools as a "partnership." State documents depicted the partnership as "mutually beneficial," whereas the program policy handbook constructs a more hierarchical structure:

> The program will outline expectations and requirements for interns to experience success in the program. It is the intern's responsibility to ensure understanding and adherence with these norms and standards. (p. 12)

I recognize that the audience for the program handbook is PTs and course instructors, whereas the state clinical expectations document was designed for programs, but these differences have further implications. Where the state created a mutual responsibility to programs and schools to collaborate to prepare future teachers, the program framed student teaching as an experience outside of the program primarily facilitated by someone who does not have to answer to the program.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Professional Heterogeneity

In this last theme, I describe professional heterogeneity, which, while prominent in PTs' talk about tensions, was missing from program and state policy. The program and state policy documents did not engage with professional heterogeneity. Professional heterogeneity is the potential for tensions within professional contexts for teaching based on ideologically different frameworks within the profession. For example, the PTs navigated tensions rooted in professional differences in mentoring, collaborating with colleagues, planning, teaching, grading,

managing the classroom, and building relationships with students. However, these different approaches were not visible in the standards or expectation documents.

The state ELA standards acknowledged different perspectives in their section on public comment. The authors wrote:

> Three respondents expressed concerns with the amount of emphasis the standards place on equity and advocacy. One respondent felt the emphasis was not strong enough, while two respondents argued that it was an unnecessary and harmful overreach in defining teachers' knowledge and skills. (p. 5)

These different perspectives on equity and advocacy in the ELA standards reflected different views on the role of an English teacher in the classroom. The authors explained their rationale for the explicit focus on equity and advocacy by pointing to other state policies.

However, the standards presented many "controversial" topics as apolitical. For example, ELA.6.k Foundations of English Language Arts discussed "Standard English" and standard language ideology: "Develop students' understanding of 'Standard English' as socially constructed, reproduced, and privileged as part of standard language ideology" (p. 13). Standard English and standard language ideology are hot-button issues, but here, they were presented as concepts for a teacher to teach students. As a result, the standards promoted implicit advocacy in addition to the explicit advocacy addressed by standards such as P.1.m Learner-Centered Supports, ELA 13.h, and j Professional:

> **P.1.m Learner-Centered Supports**
>
> Address the impact of curriculum, policies, processes, and practices on the education of all adolescents, with particular attention to historically underserved communities and social identity groups through culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and advocacy.
>
> **ELA.13.h Professionalism**
>
> Connect teaching and learning to social, political, and cultural contexts in ways that support students' growth of critical consciousness.
>
> **ELA.13.j Professionalism**
>
> Advocate for diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity in English language arts classrooms, curricula, and instruction and within the school and district at large.

These standards used language like “advocacy,” “critical consciousness,” and “diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity” to construct certain expectations for ELA PTs.

Although implied, the mission of political activism for ELA teachers rarely anticipated challenges or controversy. Two exceptions included ELA.11.i Speaking and Listening and ELA.12.i. Literature:

> **ELA.11.i Speaking and Listening**
>
> Model and facilitate productive discussions by making discursive moves and constructing norms appropriate to the discipline of ELA and to civic discourse around public issues and potentially controversial topics.
>
> **ELA.12.i Literature**
>
> Prepare rationales for selection and use of literature and other texts to present to students, parents, and other stakeholders and to respond to potential challenges.

Here, the standards set expectations to facilitate discussions around “public issues and potentially controversial topics.” While ELA.11.i addresses speaking and listening in the classroom, it acknowledged the potential for controversy. Likewise, standard ELA.12.i Literature recognized that teachers may need to “respond to potential challenges” from students, parents, and other stakeholders.

Anticipating differences and preparing a proactive response can help support teacher autonomy in the face of book and curriculum bans. However, P.3.e Strategic Partnerships offered an alternative approach to proactive defense:

> Use a variety of communication strategies to create mutually beneficial relationships with students, families, caregivers, and communities that promote engagement, learning, and agency.

In the sections on communicating and collaborating, the state and program standards both focused on using effective communication strategies with students, families, and communities. While not explicitly addressing challenges or controversy, these standards highlighted the need to “cultivate dialogue across differences to promote social justice, critical engagement, and civil discourse around complex issues related to creating and maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and equitable society” (ELA.1.g English Language Arts Environments, p. 9).

These tensions similarly impact PTs as they engage with their mentor teachers and colleagues at school sites. Working collaboratively with colleagues as part of a professional

learning community (PLC) and in other situations surfaces professional differences. However, navigating and negotiating those differences was not addressed by the standards. This oversight did not acknowledge the power dynamic that PTs experience in their student teaching and often into their teaching. What it means to advocate for students is clouded by professional tensions left implicit and unresolved by the standards. Given the power MTs have over PTs' entrance to the profession, advocating for students might be in tension with professional teaching norms.

Ultimately, the inattention to professional heterogeneity leaves a gap for considering how PTs navigate tensions *when they are experts*. The program's frame of the achievement gaps stemming from "pervasive inequities" as a "plague" (p. 6) constructed a relationship between the program and schools where PTs must function as doctors to cure the disease. Instead, acknowledging differences and highlighting how PTs and all members of the teaching community bring important knowledge may offer a more inclusive professional vision.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored what tensions PTs talked about navigating during student teaching and how those tensions were reflected in program and state policy documents. These tensions occurred within and across PTs' contexts of student teaching (e.g., their relationship with their mentor teacher) and teaching in K-12 classrooms as PTs navigated professional tensions, instructional tensions, and classroom environment tensions–often interwoven in complex ways. Ultimately, professional tensions played a significant role in how PTs navigated their contexts to find their footing.

Examining program and state standards and expectations for student teaching revealed why some professional tensions may have arisen for PTs. For example, the program policy handbook framed education as "plagued" with inequities, positioning PTs as doctors to contribute to curing systemic issues. However, this critical approach to teaching was in tension with the hierarchical positioning of PTs with the program and their mentor teachers (e.g., student/teacher, evaluated/evaluator). So, while state standards emphasized advocacy for students and political activism in English Language Arts teaching and society broadly, almost no attention was given to the possibility of misalignment in (a) doing the work of a justice-oriented English Language Arts teacher or (b) developing ELA preservice teachers during student teaching.

I drew from Eva's reasoning, "I will be by myself eventually," as a title for this chapter to illustrate the dissonance between cultural expectations that teaching is largely a solo act, often reinforced by state and program policies, and the reality of how contextualized and collaborative the profession is. While Eva envisioned her future teaching self as alone, she did not express it as a desire, as others, like Leah, did. Yet the PTs were anything but alone or isolated during their student teaching. Although the reality is that many teachers will feel isolated, individualizing teaching should not be the goal. However, reimagining this vision for *teaching* requires expanding priorities to include and emphasize PTs' and teachers' relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, families, community members, and policies at multiple levels. In the next chapter, I explore *How* preservice teachers navigated these professional tensions.

Chapter 5 “A Good Relationship Between Us”: How Preservice Teachers Navigated Mentor Teacher Relationships

5.1 Introduction

> I am kind of still prioritizing my relationship with my mentor teacher because I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it. Like, I don't appreciate how you treat this specific student. But I am still to some extent protecting myself in that way and protecting my relationship with her to make sure that she still likes me and will, it'll be a good relationship between us because I know that if I say that it won't be. (Leah, Meeting 3a)

In the excerpt from Leah above, she reflected on how her mentor teacher went “behind the scenes” to discipline a student. To Leah, her mentor teacher’s action to write up the student, which led to his eventual suspension, contradicted Leah’s lead teaching approach of “trying to get the student to enjoy my class” and to “build a relationship with him.” Not communicating the decision or reasoning only compounded Leah’s frustration. However, as Leah explained, she avoided “having a conversation” with her MT to maintain “a good relationship” with her.

In this chapter, I examine a subset of data in research question 2: “How did Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers talk about navigating tensions during student teaching?” Specifically, I compare three cases (Charlotte, Eva, and Leah; Stake, 2006) when PTs discussed their mentor teachers “stepping in” during instruction (Kavanagh et al., 2023; Schwille, 2008). I focus on these cases for two reasons. First, four out of the participants (excluding Madison) identified a tension, planned how to navigate it, and reflected on some tension with their mentor teacher or another colleague stepping in during instruction. These instances of mentor teachers stepping in created tensions as PTs tried to navigate their relationships with their mentor teachers as they felt “stepped on.” The shifting responsibilities for PTs and MTs associated with student teaching created complex, tricky moments where PTs and MTs had to make split-second interactional decisions. Second, stepping in during student

teaching potentially foregrounded other tensions PTs had concerning the classroom environment or instructional practices in teaching. As a result, these cases showcase the intertwining of multiple tensions and the complexity of PTs being "in step" with MTs in multiple positions across and within multiple, often competing figured worlds.

Thus, I draw on the combined framing/positioning framework to illustrate how PTs navigated multiple positions within and across multiple figured worlds to create alignment. Before illustrating each case, I describe the interactive frameworks, positions, figured worlds, and Capital-D Discourses that PTs engaged with and in as they talked about navigating tensions with their mentor teacher.

5.2 Theme 1: Interactive Frameworks

PTs approached navigating tensions with their MT utilizing three distinct interactive frameworks: stepping with, following in step, and sidestepping. "Stepping with" their MTs meant the PT conversed with their MT to discuss the tension. For example, Eva addressed her tension with her MT by talking with Jen. However, PTs did not always choose to opt into potentially tense conversations. For example, in response to her MT stepping in, Charlotte chose to assert herself more and take on the expectation of classroom management that Harper had absorbed. In other words, Charlotte worked parallel to her MT and eventually took the lead without discussing the transition in responsibility. In contrast to both Eva and Charlotte, Leah worked around her MT, Rebecca, when Rebecca stepped in during instruction multiple times. Specifically, Leah engaged in practices that avoided communication and potential confrontation (like Charlotte) but did not align with the teaching her MT wanted from her (unlike Charlotte). To maintain a semblance of alignment, Leah used norms of teaching and mentoring to "slyly maneuver," to use Charlotte's words, around her MT.

5.3 Theme 2: Positions

PTs positioned themselves and others in various ways as they identified tensions with MTs, made plans for navigating those tensions, and later reflected on their actions. Eva and Charlotte often positioned themselves as both mentees and teachers, respectively positioning their mentor teachers as mentors, teachers, or observers. In other words, as they talked about their MTs stepping in during instruction, Eva and Charlotte were being *mentored* (mentor/mentee, expert/novice). However, they wanted to position themselves as teachers,

novice or otherwise. In this second positioning, specific to teaching, the position afforded to their mentor teachers is less clear. A second teacher in the classroom (teacher/teacher, or even novice teacher/experienced teacher) does not have clearly defined duties and responsibilities to teach, so they may be relegated to observation following professional norms such as noninterference and niceness. Instead, focusing on the shift in interactants from the PT and MT to the PT and students offers a more precise positioning of teacher/student(s). Significantly, Eva navigated and held these positions simultaneously through her co-construction of hybrid in-the-moment mentoring practices with her MT.

Leah positioned herself and her MT very differently, however. Leah primarily positioned herself as a teacher when she led the classroom with a similar teacher/student positioning. She also took up teacher/teacher positioning and even flipped the mentor/mentee positioning, framing some of her teaching as modeling for her mentor teacher. This critical positioning extended to Leah, distancing herself as a teacher from her mentor teacher to students.

While discussing Leah's tensions with her mentor teacher, Madison also characterized a guest/host positioning for the PTs, similar to the prepositioning I described in the policy handbook. Similarly, a temporary/permanent relationship echoed throughout the study, with the PTs characterizing themselves as temporary and, therefore, less positioned to challenge their MTs, colleagues, or school policies.

5.4 Theme 3: Figured Worlds and Storylines

Two figured worlds presented most prominently when PTs navigated tensions with their mentor teacher: the figured world of student teaching and the figured world of teaching. This differentiation between student teaching and K-12 teaching strays from the traditional metaphor of the two-worlds pitfall of the university and K-12 classrooms and into what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) referred to as the cross-purposes pitfall. However, student teaching is both part of the university and school settings, and at the same time, neither. Therefore, it exists as its own world. The same people might inhabit the figured worlds of student teaching and K-12 teaching, such as PTs, MTs, and students. However, actions are interpreted differently, and different outcomes are valued in student teaching and teaching. For example, Eva highlighted how Jen's choice to jump in supported students (figured world of teaching) but did not support her (figured world of student teaching):

> Sometimes, and she's also made it clear that it's not just me. Some of her hours just hate doing class discussions, and it's pulling teeth, trying to get kids to share. So sometimes when the discussion's really dead, I mean I guess it is a good thing that she's jumping in, but also I would kind of like to try to jazz up the discussion more on my own without her needing to jump in because I will be by myself eventually and I will need to raise the energy on my own somehow. So I wish she would just hold off a little bit before she jumps in, but I get what she's trying to do. She doesn't want to see me up there struggling by myself, which I appreciate. I value that a lot because my last mentor teacher did not give a frick about anything. But yeah, I don't know. Part of me is I kind of need to learn this, do learn how to do it on my own, but also I do your help. So I don't know. I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail because at the end of the day, that's what your student teaching is for, is trying and failing in a safe space. (Meeting 2)

Eva perceived these multiple worlds functioning at cross-purposes. In addition to the expectation she had for student teaching ("trying and failing in a safe space"), Eva framed Jen's actions as jumping in because "she doesn't want to see me up there struggling by myself"—a rationale that draws on the figured world of student teaching. However, Eva's earlier comments about "jumping in" to facilitate the discussion also called to mind the purpose of teaching, which is for students to learn.

Within and across these figured worlds of student teaching and K-12 teaching, PTs drew on storylines of mentoring and teaching. In the mentoring storylines, PTs accepted or rejected the storyline of MT intervening during instruction to support them (i.e., intervention as a form of mentorship). By comparison, PTs accepted or rejected the storyline of a co-teacher intervening during instruction with a much less clear outcome. In other words, a teacher (MT) observing another teacher's classroom (PT) would typically not intervene. However, if they did intervene, it would be outside of the rights and responsibilities of a teacher and cause misalignment. Alternatively, a teacher (MT) co-teaching with another teacher (PT) may have a broader range of possible storylines, given the variety of approaches to co-teaching and its dynamicity.

5.5 Theme 4: Capital-D Discourses

The Capital-D Discourses PTs drew on and challenged as they navigated tensions with their MTs included individualism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy.

5.5.1 Individualism

All three PTs used individualism to frame teaching. For example, Eva shared, "I will be by myself eventually" (Meeting 2) to illustrate the difference between student teaching, when she had support and mentoring from her mentor teacher, Jen, and her future independence as a teacher. Similarly, Charlotte identified her tension by drawing on individualistic discourse:

> I feel like she has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility when I also, I want to be able to have those conversations just to, I guess get the experience. And also since I'm teaching the kids to also have them see that I am caring about their work and their behavior in class. And it's like, it's my problem when they are having difficulties. (Meeting 3a)

Here, Charlotte individualized the "difficulties" students were having as her "problem." Leah also drew on individualistic discourse to describe the tension between herself and her MT:

> I would say more recently it's been a little bit of a source of confusion or not necessarily tension that I'm a little bit different than her. I think she recognizes that I'm not going to do everything the same way as her. And so when she recommends that I do something, she doesn't, and I, I'm not super open to it, she doesn't know really know how to respond to that. And I'm trying my best to phrase it as that's just not what I would do. But then she doesn't really know how else to do it because that's how she does it. (Interview 1)

Leah drew on individualistic discourse to differentiate how she and her MT taught. Their individual differences led them to "not do everything the same way." Similarly, I would argue that Leah's response of being "not super open" to recommendations falls into individualistic discourse because it is rooted in individual differences from Leah's perspective.

5.5.2 Noninterference

Noninterference as a dominant discourse referred to the cultural norm in teaching of staying in your lane. It was entwined with discourses of individualism, niceness, and privacy. This discourse functioned in three ways in the cases of stepping in. First, PTs did not want someone to interfere with their teaching. Second, PTs did not want to interfere with their mentor teachers' classrooms. Third, PTs (Leah) drew on noninterference discourse to (a) navigate tensions in ways appropriate to the discourse and (b) navigate *other* tensions in ways their MTs might disagree with. Of the three PTs, Eva challenged this discourse of noninterference from the

start. As a result, she and her MT developed hand signals so Eva could relay to Jen when she wanted Jen to intervene and support her.

5.5.3 Niceness

Similar to noninterference, niceness was interwoven with discourses of individualism and privacy. Specifically, niceness as a discourse surfaced in how PTs wanted to avoid causing confrontation or negative feelings between themselves and their MTs. For example, Leah described how she wanted to maintain a "good relationship" with her mentor teacher:

> And I feel bad partially because I feel like I am kind of still prioritizing my relationship with my mentor teacher because I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it. Like, I don't appreciate how you treat this specific student. But I am still to some extent protecting myself in that way and protecting my relationship with her to make sure that she still likes me and will, it'll be a good relationship between us because I know that if I say that it won't be (Meeting 3a)

To Leah, ensuring her mentor teacher liked her was central to how she interacted with Rebecca. Similarly, Charlotte planned to talk with her mentor teacher about taking on more responsibility for classroom discipline. However, when she reflected with the group, she shared she "felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out" and that it "didn't necessarily need to be a whole conversation" (Meeting 4). In this situation, Charlotte avoided a potentially awkward conversation that could have involved open communication and feedback between her and her MT.

5.5.4 Privacy

Although I will discuss privacy more in the next chapter, it also influenced how PTs navigated tensions with their mentors. Wrapped up with discourses of individualism, noninterference, and niceness, privacy as a discourse conveyed that teachers held ownership over their classroom spaces (i.e., private property) and could limit who had what kinds of access to the classroom. Furthermore, specific to the PTs, privacy discourses related to what they disclosed about their tensions with their MTs. For example, after Leah brought up the need to maintain a "good relationship" with her MT, Madison described their position as a result of the MT relationship as *guest*: "We're [student teachers] restricted because of the relationship we have with our mentor teachers and just the position we're in where we're really guests in the schools."

(Meeting 3a). In this framing by Madison, Leah was a guest in her MT's private space of the classroom. Including others (Leah) in the setting upset that right of privacy, so the PTs felt they were responsible for limiting their footprint.

5.5.5 Collectivism, Collaboration, and Public/Social

The above discourses of individualism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy functioned as dominant discourses that PTs navigated within their tensions. Additionally, to a lesser extent, PTs also took up and complicated nondominant discourses in navigating their relationships with MTs, such as collectivism, collaboration, and public/social. For example, Eva's challenge of noninterference and niceness by communicating her needs openly to her MT drew on discourses of collaboration.

5.6 Three Cases of Stepping In: Following in Step, Stepping With, Sidestepping

In this section, I illustrate three cases of how PTs navigated relationships with their MTs when MTs stepped in during instruction. After each case, I use the combined framing/positioning framework to analyze how PTs constructed and were constructed by the multiple figured worlds they discussed.

5.6.1 Case 1: Charlotte

In this first case, Charlotte navigated her relationship with her mentor teacher, Harper, concerning Harper's tendency to manage classroom behaviors while Charlotte taught. Charlotte wanted to take on more responsibility with "disciplinary conversations or management conversations with students" in her sixth-grade ELA placement, which she felt Harper had "sort of absorbed" (Meeting 3a). In other words, Harper had taken some of the load of teaching from Charlotte by having Charlotte focus on instruction while she paid more attention to student behavior. Recalling a plagiarism case, Charlotte described how Harper carefully spoke to the student in the hallway. Nevertheless, Charlotte experienced tension with this allocation of teaching tasks between the two of them. Charlotte wanted to have those hard conversations with students. After identifying her tension, Charlotte discussed her tension with Leah and Madison. Together, they developed a plan for Charlotte to talk with Harper and proactively set up a plan to take on more responsibility. However, she characterized the potential request to "practice" as "weird." In the end, Charlotte never spoke with Harper about her tension. Instead, because of the trust between herself and Harper, Charlotte "felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out"

(Meeting 4). Ultimately, Charlotte's shift in action without any accompanying conversation about how or why illustrated how Charlotte **followed in step** with her MT–an option available to her because of her alignment with Harper on how to approach classroom management.

5.6.1.1 IDENTIFY: "She has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility" (Meeting 3a)

Charlotte identified her tension with her mentor teacher in Meeting 3a. Charlotte shared how she and Harper discussed a student's plagiarism. Then, she described how Harper spoke with the student, asking him questions before asking Charlotte to add her thoughts to the conversation. Charlotte did not remember what she said but paraphrased it: she wanted to see the student's work but could not accept work that belonged to someone else. Reflecting on the moment, Charlotte identified how she was "struggling with…having those disciplinary conversations or management conversations with students" (line 58).

Tension Scene 1: "She has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility" (Charlotte, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
57	Charlotte	But this is, I think one example of not something that Harper is doing necessarily that I don't appreciate,
58		but I think something I'm myself am struggling with is having those disciplinary conversations or management conversations with students
59		I feel like she has sort of absorbed a lot of that responsibility
60		when I also, I want to be able to have those conversations just to, I guess get the experience
61		And also since I'm teaching the kids to also have them see that I am caring about their work and their behavior in class
62		And it's like, it's my problem when they are having difficulties
63		So I feel just figuring out a way to one, start doing that
64		And then also when I do that, how to effectively do it, I guess is something I've been struggling with

5.6.1.2 PLAN: "What can I to be proactive about this next time it happens?" (Meeting 3a)

Planning with the group, Charlotte intended to talk with Harper about taking on the role of responding to student behavior. Leah suggested Charlotte might frame the request as a way to "practice" (line 45) Charlotte expressed how "weird" (line 52) she felt waiting for a significant behavioral issue to "practice," although she connected the practice to being helpful for her and her relationships with students. Madison added that she should be "proactive" (line 61) in talking with Harper so that she could respond the next time a significant behavioral issue arose. These

suggestions built on Charlotte's explanation that she wanted to emulate her mentor teacher but was not getting the opportunities to do so. Ideally, as Madison put it, the next time a situation arose, Charlotte and Harper would assume that Charlotte would respond.

Tension Scene 2: "What can I do to be proactive about this next time it happens?" (Charlotte, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
31	Charlotte	But yeah, she like tells me about them when they happen,
32		but usually I'm not a part of it
33	Leah	So is what you want just the opportunity to do it more on your own or the opportunity to respond differently than she would?
34	Charlotte	I think more so the opportunity to do it myself, especially since it's an assignment that I'm giving them,
35		I'm doing the teaching
36		It's sort of, I feel more natural if I address problems with work they're doing that I made for them
37		But I think she responds in a way that I would want to,
38		and from what she's told me about other conversations she's had, she's not a punitive person or a disciplinarian
39		She starts out asking, are you okay?
40		What's going on?
41		I keep noticing this behavior,
42		and I want to know if there's something I need to know why this is happening
43		So very gentle with it, which I would like to emulate if I were having those
44		But I feel like it's just not getting the chance to have all of those pieces together in my unit, especially
45	Leah	Do you think that you would be able to ask her if you could next time something like this happens, do you think I could take it on just to practice it?
46	Charlotte	Yeah
47	Leah	Like frame that as I just want to practice it?
48	Charlotte	Yeah, I think I would definitely be able to have that conversation with her
49		And today was a little hectic,
50		so I don't know if there was an opportunity for that
51		But I think, I don't know
52		I almost feel weird asking for that

53		I guess waiting for the opportunity for a significant behavioral issue so I can be like, oh yes, practice time for me
54		Do you mind?
55		It just is I think, something that I really want to do
56		And then I think it would be really helpful for me and my relationship with the students,
57		but also something that is a little bit weird and doesn't happen often enough that I can be like, oh, let me jump in on this one
58		So...
59	Madison	You could pose it as I get what you're saying about not wanting your students to do stuff where you have to have conversations,
60		but make it sound like, oh, well how should I handle this next time it happens?
61		What can I do to be proactive about this next time it happens?
62		So you feel like you don't have to have a conversation with her to initiate the conversation between either one of you and the student next time,
63		but it's assumed from both of you that it'll just be you

5.6.1.3 REFLECT: "I felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out" (Meeting 4)

However, Charlotte never had a "whole conversation" (line 12) with Harper about stepping in to respond to student behaviors. From her perspective, she felt comfortable enough to "jump in and try it out" (line 13). By jumping in and trying it out, she meant that she identified an "incident" (line 7) where a student was saying disrespectful things during class, pulled the student aside, and spoke with him. The experience went "really well" (line 9) for Charlotte, leading her to continue taking on the responsibility. She shared she felt "lucky" (line 11) that Harper trusted her and that she felt comfortable to "jump in and try it out" and then "share takeaways with her afterward" (lines 13-14). Later, in her post-student teaching interview, Charlotte added, "It was never an issue of her not letting me do something or not thinking I was capable of doing something." Instead, Charlotte placed the onus on herself, having not "taken the initiative" or communicated that she wanted to do it. She explained further, "With me, it was more of a confidence thing…and just jump in. Try it out. Do it."

Tension Scene 3: "I felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out" (Charlotte, Meeting 4)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Charlotte	I can
2		So last time I kind of talked about having hard conversations with students

3	and how we had the plagiarism incident where Harper and I then talked to that student together
4	So I was reflecting on how I could go about practicing that
5	And I know we had talked about me just asking her for pointers and things like that or to practice with her
6	My cat has been weirdly cuddly right now, I'm sorry
7	But I ended up having an incident with a different student who was just saying some kind of disrespectful things during class
8	And so I ended up just going ahead and pulling him aside for a conversation
9	and it went really well
10	And I've just kind of been doing that since as it's needed
11	And I don't know, I feel like I'm in a position where I'm lucky enough that my mentor trusts me
12	and it didn't necessarily need to be a whole conversation
13	I felt comfortable enough to jump in and try it out
14	and then ask for just share takeaways with her afterward
15	So I think that progress has been made there,
16	which I feel happy about

5.6.1.4 Figured World(s) Analysis

Tension (Misalignment)

Charlotte's tension stemmed from her mentor teacher, Harper, stepping in during instruction to support Charlotte with classroom management. Similarly, Harper led conversations with students concerning more serious behaviors like plagiarism. As Charlotte looked to take on more responsibility over teaching in the classroom, she wanted to stop using the co-teaching model they had employed.

Figured Worlds

Charlotte constructed two figured worlds across her planning, identification, and reflection on her tension with her mentor teacher: the figured world of student teaching and the figured world of classroom teaching.

Storylines

Charlotte had to balance storylines in each figured world. In the figured world of student teaching, she wanted to take on more responsibility, get experience, and "have all of those pieces together in [her] unit" (Meeting 3, planning, line 44). She had to balance this with Harper's need

to maintain a positive learning environment. As she made a plan, Charlotte highlighted how she did not want to respond to classroom behaviors differently because she wanted to emulate Harper's gentle, non-disciplinarian approach. The other potential student teaching storyline that caused Charlotte tension was that Harper was supporting her. However, Charlotte focused explicitly on her instruction *to students* to justify the need for more responsibility, saying that "it would be really helpful for me and my relationship with the students" (Meeting 3, planning, line 56). Interestingly, Charlotte also acknowledged that she "almost felt weird asking" to "practice" having those conversations with students (Meeting 3, planning, line 52). This storyline developed the cross-purposes tensions between Charlotte needing to practice as a student teacher and Charlotte needing to effectively manage the classroom as a teacher.

Positions

Charlotte's tension resulted from her MT, Harper, positioning both of them as **co-teachers**. While Charlotte occupied the **instructor** position, Harper took up the **disciplinarian** position. However, Charlotte wanted to take on the position of **lead teacher**, taking on responsibilities of instruction *and* discipline, re-positioning Harper as **not a teacher** in the classroom. At the same time, in the figured world of student teaching, Charlotte re-positioned Harper into a less involved instructional role, such as an **advisor** or **mentor** who supports Charlotte *outside* of instruction *after* the fact, sharing takeaways through debriefing. Charlotte characterized her success and Harper's trust as enabling her to maintain this position.

Interactive frameworks

In the same way that Harper had "absorbed" the responsibility of classroom management, Charlotte seemed to absorb it back when she jumped in and tried it out. Because she aligned with Harper on how to approach classroom management, Charlotte could **follow in step** with her MT after her MT stepped in and then out. In other words, Charlotte treated Harper's stepping in as modeling and scaffolding for her practice and worked to replicate it before discussing it. This framework differed from the **conversational framework** for navigating tensions that Charlotte, Madison, and Leah discussed during the meeting.

Discourses

Charlotte's approach to navigating tensions with her MT reflected discourses of individualism, noninterference, and niceness. First, Charlotte characterized her desire to address

student behavior independently, shifting from a collective to an individual model for teaching as she tried to balance the settings of student teaching and teaching. Second, Charlotte relied on a discourse of noninterference built on trust with Harper. Here, noninterference discourse included Charlotte's desire for Harper not to interfere, her decision not to address the interference, and the shared expectation, built on trust, that Charlotte could manage the classroom as the lead instructor. Lastly, Charlotte took up a niceness discourse when she avoided the proactive conversation with Harper by acting independently when she could jump in and try it out.

Alignment

Charlotte benefited from her jumping in and trying it out with students going "really well" (Meeting 4, reflect, line 9). Thus, she maintained alignment between the figured worlds of student teaching, where she wanted to practice and get experience with all aspects of instruction, and teaching, where Harper wanted to ensure a positive learning environment. Their alignment with teaching enabled Charlotte to use a "follow-in-step" framework, re-positioning herself as the lead teacher and her mentor teacher as a mentor or advisor whose responsibility was to observe and provide feedback.

5.6.2 Case 2: Eva

This second case explores how Eva navigated her tension with her mentor teacher, Jen, by **stepping with** her when Jen stepped in. Eva recognized that sometimes she struggled with leading discussions but did not want Jen to jump in and take over when things were not going well. As Eva entered student teaching at DRHS, she felt unprepared. She thought she needed more content knowledge and practice time, which was always just one more thing. After struggling in the Fall semester, she had considered dropping out of the program. However, her confidence and self-efficacy dramatically increased while working with Jen at DRHS.

Nevertheless, Eva recognized Jen's tendency to step in and her own hesitancy to "overstep" that led to her not participating as much as she wanted to in student teaching (Meeting 2). Eva wanted opportunities to participate more and "try and fail" (Meeting 2, plan, line 30). However, Eva also recognized that Jen was trying to help her and the students. Eva brought this tension with trying to balance her needs, Jen's needs, and the students' needs to the group. Eva planned to speak with Jen about taking on more responsibility and having Jen take notes on specific teaching goals they drafted together that they could review. Then, unlike Charlotte, Eva

talked with Jen about what she needed. Together, they developed a help signal Charlotte could use and created a norm around Jen taking notes during class to discuss afterward rather than stepping in. Eva's reflection highlighted how she and Jen worked together to navigate the tension, finding alignment for everyone involved. Ultimately, Eva's decision to discuss and co-create expectations for navigating the tension demonstrated how she **stepped with** Jen.

5.6.2.1 IDENTIFY: "I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail" (Meeting 2)

Eva identified her tension with Jen, her mentor teacher, in Meeting 2. She talked about not wanting to overstep as a student teacher but also feeling like she was not participating as much as she could have been because Jen so often took over to ensure things were done correctly. Clarifying her tension after introducing it, Eva questioned how to ask, "Is it okay if I take over some more, and maybe could you not jump in as much?" Eva talked with the group about her interactions with Jen when Jen jumped in. She appreciated Jen's support and understood her actions but also felt the need to do it "on my own" (line 26), to "try and fail" (line 30) in a "safe space" (line 31).

Tension Scene 4: "I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail" (Eva, Meeting 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
11	Eva	Sometimes and she's also made it clear that it's not just me
12		Some of her hours just hate doing class discussions
13		and it's pulling teeth, trying to get kids to share
14		So sometimes when the discussion's really dead,
15		I mean I guess it is a good thing that she's jumping in,
16		but also I would kind of like to try to jazz up the discussion more on my own without her needing to jump in
17		because I will be my by myself eventually
18		and I will need to raise the energy on my own somehow
19		So I wish she would just hold off a little bit before she jumps in,
20		but I get what she's trying to do

21	She doesn't want to see me up there struggling by myself,
22	which I appreciate
23	I value that a lot
24	because my last mentor teacher did not give a frick about anything
25	But yeah, I don't know
26	Part of me is like I kind of need to learn this, to learn how to do it on my own,
27	but also I do need your help
28	So I don't know
29	I'm still working on the balance of help,
30	but also let me try and fail
31	because at the end of the day, that's what your student teaching is for, is trying and failing in a safe space

5.6.2.2 PLAN: "asking about finding more opportunities for me to do my thing"

During planning, Eva characterized Jen's jumping in in two different ways: (1) to facilitate effective discussions when they're "really dead" (line 14) and (2) as a way to support Eva as she struggled to lead discussions Eva talked about needing to do things like "jazz up the discussion" (line 16) on her own because she would not have Jen's support in the future. After discussing with the group, Eva planned to talk with Jen about providing feedback after activities like leading a discussion instead of jumping in. She further planned to ask Jen to take notes or fill out a form so that Jen could contribute meaningful feedback to help Eva grow.

Tension Scene 5: "asking about finding more opportunities for me to do my thing" (Eva, Meeting 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
38	Eva	Yeah, I like that idea a lot too
39		And it sounds like you're very respectful in how you're thinking about it and why you want her to stop jumping in
40		So I feel like framing it in that way, I need to be able to try these things
41		and if they don't work then that's how I learn
42		And the way that you're explaining it, I feel like is respectful and conscious of why you need to fail
43		So framing it in that way I think is good
44		I feel It sounds like she would be receptive to that
…	…	….

59	Eva	Yeah, I think, well if we have school tomorrow during our prep hour, I'll probably be like, can we run through the plan for today
60		and can I take more than I usually take?
61		And then can we also go over what specifically I want to work on and grow on?
62		That way you can have something to keep in your mind when you're watching me do this
63		That's also beneficial for me and my teaching overall, if that makes sense
64		So just asking about finding more opportunities for me to do my thing,
65		but then also gently being, rather than jumping in the middle of the discussion, can you wait till after to tell me what you think could have been better?

5.6.2.3 REFLECT: "I do a circle with my hand" (Meeting 3b)

Interestingly, Eva did more than advocate for herself than ask her MT to wait until after instruction so she had more opportunities to lead the class. In line with her planning, she and Jen shifted Jen's mentoring from in-the-moment stepping in to post-instruction debriefs. The second strategy that she and Jen devised was for Eva to use a signal during instructional time when she wanted Jen to intervene. As Eva described, if she made a circle with her hand (line 28), Jen would know she wanted her to support her by intervening in the activity. This signal, shared between Eva and Jen, enabled Eva to communicate with Jen while in front of the classroom. Using the signal also demonstrated that Eva constantly reflected on how she was doing in the classroom. Ultimately, creating the signal and structuring time for post-instructional feedback enabled Eva to control when and how often Jen gave her mentoring, limiting the chances for her to "jump in" while maximizing Eva's lead teaching. This setup enabled Eva to teach bravely while still feeling supported and cared for by her MT.

Tension Scene 6: "I do a circle with my hand" (Eva, Meeting 3b)

Line	Speaker	Text
20	Eva	Yeah, she's definitely stepped back
21		and she's been open with the fact that it's hard for her to sit still and not jump in, which I get that
22		I feel like sometimes I can also be the type that's like, if I want something done right, I'll do it myself
23		I feel like that's kind of how she is
24		But she's getting a lot better at just sitting in the back and not doing anything unless I have a help signal that I'll send to her if I need help
25		And then she'll jump in

26	Chris	You raise your hand
27		The students are just like, why are you raising your hand?
28	Eva	I do a circle with my hand
29		I act like I'm drawing a circle
30		That way it looks like kind of natural

5.6.2.4 Figured World(s) Analysis

Tension (Misalignment)

Eva's misalignment resulted from the cross-purposes pitfall and her mentor teacher's desire to support her. When Eva struggled to facilitate discussions, Jen stepped in and took over. But Eva did not characterize this rescue move as supporting her in the expectations of student teaching: to try and fail. Eva worried she was not participating enough to be ready to teach independently in just a few months.

Figured Worlds

Eva constructed two figured worlds across her planning, identification, and reflection on her tension with her mentor teacher: the figured world of student teaching and the figured world of classroom teaching.

Storylines

The central storyline Eva constructed was one of mentorship versus independence that crossed the figured worlds of student teaching and classroom teaching. Eva balanced the storyline of in-the-moment rescue with one of practice, error, and reflection within the figured world of student teaching. For example, Eva said, "I'm still working on the balance of help, but also let me try and fail" (Meeting 2, Identify, lines 29-30). Comparatively, in the figured world of teaching, Eva developed a storyline related to independence, where her future self needed to be able to facilitate discussions on her own "because I will be by myself eventually" (Meeting 2, Identify, line 17).

Positions

When introducing her tension, Eva positioned herself as imposing on Jen's classroom, not wanting to "overstep." This positioning resembled a guest/host relationship. However, in anticipation of her future position within teacher/student positioning *without* Jen's support, Eva worked within her position as a novice student teacher to request different kinds of support. As a

result, she and Jen worked together to reposition Jen as a hybrid teacher/observer and Eva as the lead teacher. At the same time, the help signals they developed enabled dynamic, in-the-moment repositioning that Eva could control.

Interactive Frameworks

Eva and Jen initially followed an interactive framework of stepping in to rescue. However, Eva discussed her needs with Jen, particularly the need to try and *fail*. These discussions drew on an interactive framework of open communication and collaboration between in mentoring. Then, their co-developed help signal gave Eva more control over toggling between rescue and trying and failing frameworks for support during lead teaching. In other words, Eva and Jen co-developed a hybrid framework where she could still ask for support from Jen as a student teacher while presenting herself as the lead teacher to students. As Eva said, "But she's getting a lot better at just sitting in the back and not doing anything unless I have a help signal that I'll send to her if I need help and then she'll jump in" (Meeting 3a, Reflect, lines 24-25). They supplemented this framework with the traditional post-observation debrief after class.

Discourses

Eva drew on discourses of individualism, noninterference, and collaboration as she navigated her tension with Jen. In terms of individualism, Eva emphasized her need for personal growth and independence. She perceived Jen's interventions as intended to help but not offering the chance to develop her teaching. Concerning noninterference, Eva redefined the norm to fit her needs. She negotiated boundaries of noninterference that allowed her to lead instruction with Jen's immediate interventions. Additionally, Eva drew on collaboration in her identification, planning, and reflection. Recognizing how she *needed* Jen, Eva collaborated with Jen to establish shared goals around a new student teaching framework where everyone's needs could be met.

Alignment

Eva's initial misalignment with Jen's stepping in to rescue her also stemmed from the challenges Eva encountered trying to teach complex material. She used direct communication as a strategy, which worked within her open relationship with her mentor teacher, Jen. As a result, the two co-constructed a new hybrid framework that included both stepping in to help and waiting. Importantly, this framework gave autonomy to Eva as the signaler. Their signal enabled

Eva to renegotiate mentorship boundaries, allowing her to try and fail in a supportive classroom environment where she could be both a *student* teacher and a *teacher* of students.

5.6.3 Case 3: Leah

In this third case, I explore how Leah navigated multiple tensions with her mentor teacher, Rebecca, by **sidestepping** when Rebecca stepped in. As early as Interview 1, Leah shared how she and Rebecca were different. However, Leah recalled that Rebecca repeatedly gave advice aligned with her "loud and theatrical" teaching style. While Leah reported that the two of them initially thought of these differences as assets, Leah also identified them as a source of tension. For example, Leah shared how Rebecca wanted her to emulate her approach to getting students' attention. Rebecca suggested a strategy to get students' attention "really fast" in a way that "grabs" their attention. Leah was "not super open to it," explaining that her "more quiet ways" worked better for her and reflected her values for student autonomy. Leah felt that Rebecca did not "know how to respond" because "she doesn't really know how else to do it because that's how she does it." Leah's comment about Rebecca's response addressed her teaching *and* mentoring practices.

These mentoring and classroom management strategies became a hot-button issue for Leah in the early meetings. In Meeting 1, as described in Chapter 4, Leah identified William as a specific student with whom she wanted to build a relationship. However, Leah found that her MT's existing relationship with William made building a positive relationship difficult, as he only seemed to want to disparage Rebecca. In Meeting 2, she expanded on this identified tension, highlighting how her mentor teacher talked about and treated students, referring to them as "squirrels and puppies" (Meeting 2, identify, line 6). Leah planned to get Rebecca to not see students as "puppies and squirrels" by highlighting the positive attributes of William and his classmates' contributions to the class in her conversations with Rebecca. She also planned to create some new instructional activities where students could showcase more of their personal identities. However, Leah never directly spoke with Rebecca about how she treated William. In Meeting 3a, Leah expressed frustration because Rebecca disciplined William while Leah led the class. The discipline led to an in-school suspension and William's transfer to a different English 10 class. Leah explained her decision not to talk with Rebecca as trying to protect their "good relationship." Regardless, she found other ways to navigate her tensions with Rebecca. Leah **sidestepped** Rebecca to build relationships with students and model what she saw as more

humane relationships with students to Rebecca. Ultimately, Leah's case displayed the complexities of concurrently navigating mentor teacher tension and instructional practices or classroom environment tension. Leah could not follow Rebecca in step without compromising how she wanted to build relationships with students. Neither did she feel she could step with her. As a result, she worked to maintain an unsteady balance as she **sidestepped** and stepped around Rebecca's attempts to step in.

5.6.3.1 IDENTIFY: "She constantly refers to them as squirrels and puppies" (Meeting 2)

When introducing William, Leah said Rebecca had a negative relationship with one student "who likes to blurt out a lot and ends up disrupting the class a lot." William and Rebecca had a history of negative interactions that predated Leah entering the space for her student teaching semester. Their shared history made William feel he was targeted. Similarly, Rebecca told Leah that she should make sure she was not letting class turn into "The William Show." Essentially, the two did not get along. The two were at an impasse as Rebecca felt William disrupted the class with his behavior, whereas William thought he was unfairly targeted. As a student teacher new to the scene, Leah planned to repair William's relationship with the class, hoping to shift his perspective toward ELA 10 and Rebecca's perspective toward him. Leah wanted Rebecca to recognize how William's contributions could be reframed as assets.

The contrast between how Leah and her mentor teacher, Rebecca, thought about treating students was evident from a story Leah shared that Rebecca told her, which I will aptly refer to as "squirrels and puppies." Rebecca, taking on the mentoring role, told Leah about her experience training a new puppy who would not listen. Rebecca took the puppy to a dog trainer. The trainer advised her to keep her commands short. As she told Leah the story, she said the dog trainer's advice "was the best classroom management advice I ever got" (line 13). Rebecca suggested to Leah that she make her commands short, but Leah disagreed with Rebecca's language. Leah did not feel like she was "commanding" students (line 15). She was "talking" to them (line 16), shifting (or obscuring) the power dynamic between teacher and students.

While talking with the group, Leah used this narrative to differentiate and distance herself from her mentor teacher. She characterized Rebecca's talk about students as dehumanizing and controlling. Importantly, Leah did not empathize or connect with this advice at all. Later, she worried that her perspective on how to treat students would be received by veteran teachers such as Rebecca as "naive" (line 22, line 27). Although she did not expand on why experienced

teachers might think differently, she mentioned that they might say she had no "experience with 10th graders yet" (line 28). So, even as Leah recognized veteran teachers' perspectives on classroom management as needing to control the classroom, she distanced herself from them and her mentor teacher.

Tension Scene 7: "She constantly refers to them as squirrels and puppies" (Leah, Meeting 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Leah	I would say there are students that, a handful that she treats that way mostly in that hour, specifically that boy and his friend
2		But she treats, she treats the friend a little bit differently
3		But overall, I know I was giving a lot of stories about this one student specifically
4		because I really don't like the relationship that she has with him
5		But I guess my overall wobble is how she talks about students in general
6		She constantly refers to them as squirrels and puppies
7		And even gave me a long example of one time when she was calling them puppies,
8		she gave the long example of she was,
9		when she first got a puppy, she had to do dog training with it
10		and she didn't know why the dog wasn't listening to her
11		And the dog trainer was like, well your commands are too long
12		so your commands need to be short
13		And she's like and that was the best classroom management advice I ever got
14		And she was trying to tell me to make my commands short,
15		which I was like, I'm never commanding them,
16		I'm talking to them
17		And so it's just some of the language that she uses around students specifically
18		So I guess it's a handful of students that she talks about in that way,
19		but overall sees them as like that too
…	…	…
20	Leah	I guess I feel pretty comfortable on my own figuring out how to repair the relationship with him
21		So I guess more so how my mentor teacher talks about students
22		and to not make it come off as I'm naive
23		and I just don't know these things yet
24		because I feel like that's how she would perceive it
25		If I say, oh, I don't really like talking about students like that
26		and I don't really see them like that
27		it might be perceived as, I'm really naive

28	and I just haven't had that experience with 10th graders yet
29	And also not an attacking kind of thing,
30	I'm just a place of, I want to talk about students in a better way

5.6.3.2 PLAN: "Not seeing them as puppies and squirrels" (Meeting 2)

Leah wobbled as she described her plan to navigate her tension with her mentor teacher. How would she change how her mentor teacher talked about students without coming off as a newbie who did not understand classroom management and relationships with students? Leah decided that when she talked with Rebecca, she would focus some of her comments on what William was doing well in class, an asset-based approach. She hoped that by highlighting what she appreciated about William's contributions, Rebecca would change her perspective. Similarly, Leah planned to create more opportunities for students to show "different sides of themselves" in the curriculum (line 5). This plan avoided direct confrontation, which Leah detailed she had tried multiple times with Rebecca to that point, with no positive results.

Tension Scene 8: "not seeing them as puppies and squirrels" (Leah, Meeting 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Leah	Yeah, so talking about how to appreciate what he is doing
2		and get my mentor teacher to see and appreciate what he's doing as well
3		The participation and the involvement in different things and the personal conversations that we can have appreciating those, appreciating what he is doing
4		And hopefully that will turn into better conversations about students and not seeing them as puppies and squirrels
5		And also creating more opportunities for this student specifically and maybe other students that are similar to him to show different sides of themselves in different ways than I have been creating

5.6.3.3 REFLECT 1: "She just speaks from the back of the room" (Meeting 3a)

Leah mentioned one other unwanted in-the-moment-of-instruction mentoring story in which Rebecca's suggestion did not align with her views about teaching. She told the group her dismay at how much she could do to "control how other people respond to students" (line 3). She mentioned, "I can try and model to my mentor teacher how I would want to respond to things" (line 4).

Having said that she could "model," Leah launched into an example from that day when she gave students directions for an assignment. Leah described how students asked questions as she talked about a speech assignment they were completing the next day. They raised their hands

and waited to be called on before asking questions related to the assignment. Leah did mention that "some of them were a little silly" (line 9) but connected students' silliness to her own during that class period.

Following one question-and-answer exchange with a student, Rebecca interjected. Leah said Rebecca "just [spoke] from the back of the room" (line 12). Rebecca suggested, "Maybe let's have Ms. [Leah] Davis finish giving directions before we interrupt her and ask anything" (line 13). Interestingly, Rebecca did not address her suggestion to Leah. Instead, she focused on addressing students.

Talking to the group, Leah rolled her eyes, sharing that she thought Rebecca was going to be angry with her for her response and talk to her after class. As Leah discussed the speech assignment, she explained that some students knew little about what a speech would look like to present or accept an award because they had never watched award shows. Leah then shared how she responded to Rebecca's suggestion: "Oh. It's okay. I get the questions…. some of you have never seen the [awards show] before, so you don't know what I'm talking about" (lines 15-22). Leah addressed the students as Rebecca did, avoiding directly addressing her mentor teacher.

After sharing this brief story about how Rebecca spoke "from the back of the room" (line 12), Leah connected the narrative to her point about modeling for her mentor teacher. She shared how she could try to do things "in the moment" that reflected how she wanted to "treat students and treat their questions and their concerns" (line 25). However, Leah was unsure how much she could actually do "without making it a full-blown conversation" (line 26) to change how Rebecca talked about and treated students.

Tension Scene 9: "She just speaks from the back of the room" (Leah, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
3	Leah	And I guess this relates to the wobble of how much I can actually do to control how other people respond to students
4		Like, I can try and model to my mentor teacher how I would want to respond to things
5		Like today for example, I was giving directions for on an assign- a long, long directions on an assignment, really thorough
6		I was talking for a while about speeches that they're going to give tomorrow and the content of their speeches
7		And some of them were asking questions while I was talking
8		They were raising their hands and I would call on them and they would ask their questions and the questions were related to what I was talking about

9		Some of them were a little silly, but that hour, I'm really silly with them
10		And so I was fine answering some silly questions while giving directions
11		
12	Leah	And my mentor teacher, after one of them asks the question and I answer it, she's like, she just speaks from the back of the room
13		Maybe let's have Ms. Davis finish giving directions before we interrupt her and ask anything
14		And I was like (rolls eyes), so I said, I thought she was going to actually going to get mad at me about this and say something to me after the lesson
15		But I said, oh, it's okay
16		I get the questions
17		Like I said this out loud to the class
18		I was like, I get the questions
19		Some of you have never seen the Oscars before -- and an award show because I was talking about how their speech is going to be on giving, modeling, giving, presenting, and accepting an award
20		And so I was giving it a lot of examples and some of them were like, oh, I've never seen the Oscars
21		And I was like, that's okay
22		Some of you haven't seen the Oscars, so you don't know what I'm talking about
23		And so I said that to the class, I was like, it's okay
24		I get some of your questions
25		And so I can try and do things in the moment that reflect how I want to treat students and treat their questions and their concerns,
26		but without fully making it a full-blown conversation with her
27		how I don't know how much I can do to actually change how she talks about students and treats students in some situations

5.6.3.4 REFLECT 2: "A good relationship between us" (Meeting 3a)

However, the wobble became an earthquake moment when Rebecca wrote up William "behind the scenes." In other words, Rebecca disciplined William while Leah led the class. When Leah told the group about Rebecca writing up William, she could not determine what happened, when, or why. She emphasized that Rebecca never shared anything with her about whatever incident occurred. Checking in with William, he did not seem to know, either. The write-up led to William receiving an in-school suspension. From Leah's telling, the moment also served as the breaking point for William's transfer into a different English 10 class.

Although Leah did not know that Rebecca wrote up William until afterward, when William returned from his ISS, I characterized this scene as in-the-moment-of-instruction

mentoring ("stepping in") because Rebecca disciplined William during instructional time, even if the disciplinary practice was covert. Furthermore, Leah and Rebecca never discussed what William did or Rebecca's choice to write him up outside of class time. Significantly, while the situation of her mentor teacher "stepping in" to discipline a student parallels Charlotte's tension, Rebecca's rationale for and disciplinary approach did not match with Leah's goals, leading to misalignment.

Once again, the moment highlighted their different approaches to instruction and mentoring. Leah opposed exclusionary disciplinary practices. She viewed the write-up, paired with a lack of communication between the two of them, as breaking their collaborative relationship. The situation remained ambiguous. Perhaps Leah missed something William did. Alternatively, Leah and Rebecca may have interpreted William's actions differently in a specific moment, a difference that repeatedly proved a source of tension between them in Leah's narratives about William. Regardless, Leah saw Rebecca's choice as harmful to their mentoring relationship and ineffective as a teaching strategy.

Although Leah imagined talking with her MT, she chose not to speak with Rebecca about the incident. When another group member, Madison, told Leah that she admired how she was focusing on her relationships with her students over her relationship with her mentor teacher, Leah disagreed with the characterization. She talked about "prioritizing" (line 38) her relationship with Rebecca because "I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it" (line 39). Her groupmates Madison and Charlotte agreed that as student teachers positioned as "guests" in someone else's classroom (line 51), "you can't be too conflictual" (line 52).

Tension Scene 10: "a good relationship between us" (Leah, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
36	Leah	Yeah, yeah, yeah
37		And I feel bad
38		partially because I feel like I am kind of still prioritizing my relationship with my mentor teacher
39		because I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it
40		Like, I don't appreciate how you treat this specific student
41		But I am still to some extent protecting myself in that way and protecting my relationship with her to make sure that she still likes me
42		and will, it'll be a good relationship between us

43		because I know that if I say that it won't be
44		So, I don't know
45		I still feel like I'm trying my best to not be like that
46		and maybe publicly, publicly defending the student instead of her in those situations,
47		but I don't know
48		But I appreciate what you said
49	Madison	Yeah
50		Well, that also reminds me of what you had to say about realizing the extent to which of what we can do and what we actually have control over
51		And I think as student teachers we're restricted because of the relationship we have with our mentor teacher and just the position we're in where we're really guests in the schools that we're in
52		So you can't be that conflictual
53		But (exasperated sigh)
54	Charlotte	Yeah, I totally agree with what Madison said
55		And I just want to add, if it's any consolation, your mentor teacher has a reputation even at the middle school for being incredibly difficult to work with and just not at all a collaborative person
56		So I don't want you at all to think that you are doing anything wrong
57		because from everything that I've heard that is pretty solidly on her
58		And with that in mind, I think I totally agree that it seems like coming out and just confronting her would probably damage that relationship

5.6.3.5 Figured World(s) Analysis

Tension (Misalignment)

Leah's tensions with her mentor teacher, Rebecca, were multiple. From the start, Leah felt that Rebecca's suggestions for teaching did not align with what she wanted to do. Similarly, Rebecca did not appreciate Leah's lack of uptake. These differences in mentoring and teaching continued throughout the semester, with Rebecca taking on an authoritative position, dictating to Leah what she should do regarding how to teach and construct a positive classroom environment. As a result, Leah wanted to find ways to change her MT's perspective toward students, effectively getting her to stop stepping in and disciplining students simultaneously.

Figured Worlds

Leah constructed figured worlds of student teaching and the K-12 classroom across her tension scenes.

Storylines

From Leah's perspective, she and her MT were following different, conflicting storylines for mentoring and teaching. While Leah appreciated Rebecca's perspective, she did not feel obligated to listen to her mentor teacher. She considered student teaching an opportunity to practice independently, even if her mentor teacher dictated much of what she taught early on. On the other hand, Rebecca's suggestions to align with her practices reflected a storyline where her mentorship included modeling expert practice, which Leah would then emulate.

In teaching, Leah shared early that she and Rebecca thought their different personalities would benefit students. Instead, Leah and Rebecca seemed to clash over fundamental differences. Leah worried that more veteran teachers would consider her perspective toward students as naive, but she continued to advocate for students, even reversing the expectations when she modeled for her mentor.

These two storylines knotted together when Rebecca stepped in to discipline William. As a result, Leah attempted to balance her advocacy for students with maintaining a "good" relationship with her mentor teacher, who had significant power over her.

Positions

Unlike Charlotte or Eva, Leah did not position her mentor teacher's interventions as supportive or mentoring. Instead, she located Rebecca's stepping in within the teaching figured world, where both Leah and Rebecca took up teacher positions with students, often within conflicting frameworks for building a positive classroom environment.

Throughout her narratives, Leah positioned herself as an advocate for her students and **the teacher** (not *lead*). She positioned Rebecca as an **authoritative** and more **traditional teacher** who was often **absent**, except to discipline particular students. Leah's position as **young** (potentially **naive**) felt like an attempt to reconstruct the **mentor/mentee** or **novice/expert** relationship by contrasting Leah's **idealism** with Rebecca's **realism**.

Interactive Frameworks

Leah drew on three interactive frameworks to address this tension with her MT. She shared many stories about interacting with her mentor teacher. Often, she directly questioned Rebecca's choices or disagreed with her, **advocating** for a different perspective. For instance, she advocated that William could not be placed at the back of the classroom because of his

vision needs–a point that Rebecca eventually conceded. Within Leah's advocating framework, she asked questions and made suggestions to support students.

However, when Rebecca disciplined William while Leah led the class, Leah chose not to bring it up with Rebecca. Instead, as she said, she prioritized her relationship with Rebecca so it would be a "good relationship." Thus, Leah constructed a framework built on conflict avoidance and **relationship maintenance**.

Additionally, Leah drew on a **sidestepping** interactive framework by stepping around her MT when Rebecca stepped in, not overtly challenging her but instead using indirect strategies to teach how she wanted. In Charlotte's words, Leah found ways to "slyly maneuver" to get things done when her MT tried to intervene.

Discourses

In her reflection on "a good relationship between us," Leah drew on discourses of noninterference and niceness. First, her tension stemmed from her mentor teacher's interference in her teaching. Then, Leah chose not to discuss the moment with Rebecca, avoiding confrontation. In Rebecca's rationale, she shared that she thought having a conversation would "put that relationship at risk" (Meeting 3a, Reflect, line 39). This rationale wove together noninterference and niceness discourses. Leah wanted to avoid discomfort and potential fallout with her MT regarding a misalignment, so she chose to stay quiet to maintain "a good relationship." While Leah did not define "a good relationship," it appeared to be built on being friendly and collegial without collaboration or criticality.

However, when Leah sidestepped Rebecca's interventions in "She just speaks from the back of the room," she subverted discourses of noninterference and niceness. Like Rebecca, Leah chose not to speak to the other teacher, instead addressing her directions to students. She recognized the instability of her positioning while redirecting students to listen to her rather than her mentor teacher. However, the move highlighted how working within the discourses of noninterference (not directly interfering with her mentor teacher) and niceness (not *directly* challenging, even if some discomfort was felt) enabled Leah to sidestep her MT.

Alignment

Leah's alignment with Rebecca was tenuous. The two never agreed regarding relationships with students or managing student behavior. Neither did Leah appreciate the

authoritative suggestions Rebecca offered her. However, Leah constructed alignment within the figured world of student teaching by **avoiding confrontation**. Nevertheless, she did not stop there. She worked within the figured world of teaching to advocate for students, even if she felt like she had to sidestep her mentor teacher to do it. Even in less supportive settings, Leah slyly maneuvered, drawing on dominant interactive frameworks and discourses in teaching to carve out a teaching space for herself in the classroom.

5.6.4 Cross-Case Analysis

These cases reflect the balance between mentorship and personal teaching development during student teaching. Charlotte's, Eva's, and Leah's cases illustrate strategies for navigating misalignment with MTs, revealing the nuanced relational dynamics student teachers must navigate. Importantly, each PT navigated their tensions differently depending on how they perceived their figured worlds, highlighting how these complexities contributed to their professional growth.

5.6.4.1 Navigating Mentorship

Across all three cases, Charlotte, Eva, and Leah navigated the challenges of negotiating their positioning within the student teaching setting amidst different mentor teacher/mentoring dynamics. Each PT navigated tensions between their philosophies and MTs' practices, particularly stepping in. Navigating these tensions impacted how Charlotte, Eva, and Leah enacted their various positions within the classroom. Charlotte sought to take on more responsibility and assert herself as the lead and sole teacher, moving beyond the co-teaching model. Aligning her approach to classroom management with Harper's allowed her to facilitate this shift, even when she avoided direct conversations. Eva wanted to forestall Jen's attempts to save her by intervening during class discussions, effectively balancing the mentorship and independence she needed. Together, they co-developed an approach that allowed Eva to practice and receive support with autonomy. Lastly, Leah faced fundamental philosophical differences with her MT, Rebecca. The two could not reconcile their different approaches to the classroom environment. Leah avoided direct confrontation while subtly maintaining her approach to building relationships with students.

5.6.4.2 Figured Worlds and Storylines

The PTs navigated the figured worlds of student teaching and classroom teaching simultaneously, even though they were often at cross-purposes. Each PT constructed storylines that allowed them to balance the rights and responsibilities afforded by their positions in each space while maintaining alignment with their mentor teachers.

5.6.4.3 Interactive Frameworks and Positions

Each PT negotiated their position within the classroom using different interactive frameworks: Charlotte positioned herself gradually from mentee to lead teacher by embracing a non-confrontational framework rooted in gradually taking on more responsibilities through initiative, not explicit, clear communication. Eva shifted her position through open dialogue, developing a new dynamic positioning between herself and Jen that respected Eva's need for independence with Jen's desire to help. Most of all, Leah exemplified multiple positions within multiple worlds with competing centers of gravity and at cross purposes. She positioned herself as an advocate for students and a non-confrontational mentee at the same time. Thus, Leah worked within Rebecca's authoritative framework for mentoring while finding opportunities to sidestep in her position as a teacher.

5.6.4.4 Discourses and Alignment

These cases displayed the interplay of discourses of individualism, noninterference, niceness, and collaboration. All three MTs drew on individualistic discourse by characterizing teaching as an individualistic profession. Charlotte and Eva recognized how they would be on their own as teachers. Leah, likewise, constructed student teaching as an opportunity for independent practice with support when needed. Both Charlotte and Leah relied on discourses of noninterference and niceness to navigate their tensions. While they both planned to speak with their mentor teachers, neither did, characterizing the conversations as "weird" (Charlotte) or harmful to the student teacher/mentor teacher relationship (Leah). However, Leah did subvert noninterference and niceness discourses to support students in the classroom. Of the three PTs, Eva was the only one to draw on a collaborative discourse for teaching, blending her individualistic perception of her *future teaching* with her immediate need to be in a hybrid independent/collaborative instructional environment.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how PTs navigated tensions with their mentor teacher. I focused on three cases of how Charlotte, Eva, and Leah navigated their mentor teachers "stepping in," or intervening during instruction. Stepping in was a particularly critical moment for PTs and this study because, as a concept, it illustrated the multiple pitfalls that PTs had to navigate: multiple worlds and cross-purposes. All three PTs considered their MTs stepping in as stepping *on* (their toes). To navigate their tensions and construct alignments, PTs followed in step (Charlotte), stepped with (Eva), and sidestepped (Leah). For Leah, especially, this meant maintaining a "good relationship" that did not appear particularly "good" at all. Teaching culture often does not reflect the kinds of open communication, collaboration, and flexibility that we might imagine (Ghousseini et al., 2021). Notably, Charlotte, Eva, and Leah all characterized their MTs' approaches to mentoring as aspects of who they were. So, the question for them was not as easy as "How do I get my mentor teacher to change how they are mentoring?" It resembled, "How do I get my mentor teacher to change who they are?"

This sentiment evokes one of the implicit constructions of the research design in Kavanagh et al.'s (2023) study of mentoring preferences. Mentor teachers in Kavanagh et al.'s (2023) study displayed preferences for mentoring practices that appeared independent of the sociocultural context. In other words, mentor teachers did not exhibit a preference for dynamic, situation-dependent mentoring. However, Charlotte, Eva, and Leah expressed preferences that their mentorship changed over time in response to their needs. These differences created tensions for PTs and their MTs across the figured worlds of student teaching and classroom teaching. Ultimately, practices (and rights and responsibilities) changed responsively to the context. The prevalence of "stepping in" requires TPPs employing gradual increases in responsibility (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to consider how PTs and MTs constantly reposition themselves over time. Heterogeneous approaches to teaching and mentoring along with power relationships may contribute to misalignment within a teaching culture that often relies on the dominant discourse of individualism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy. In essence, these instances of "stepping in" illustrated the messiness, uncertainty, and ambiguity of student teaching that PTs contended with. Ultimately, PTs and their MTs had to be everyone, everywhere, all at once, as both considered their positions within multiple interactive frameworks within and across figured worlds and PTs considered their place within the future figured world of their teaching.

Chapter 6 “It’s Like a Closed Door, Behind a Closed Door": How Preservice Teachers Balanced Privacy and Collaboration to Navigate Professional Tensions

6.1 Introduction

> And [Field Instructor] shared something with me, and she said it again last night. But behind closed doors, what happens in your classroom? As long as it's the best for you students, that's what you have to do. And I think that's just what I've been thinking about is how I'm being compromising now. But next year, whatever, I'll be able to able to do what is best for my students and for myself more. (Tracy, Meeting 7)

> And then also I feel like a big piece of advice I've gotten, because I've been doing a lot of observations in Milton lately, the past week or so, is kind of once you close your doors, you just do what you have to do and do what's best for your students. And there's not so much that's public like it sometimes feels in student teaching. (Charlotte, Meeting 7)

By Meeting 7, the PTs were winding down their student teaching assignments. During “Greetings and Thought Questions” at the beginning of the meeting, I asked, “What’s different about making changes and/or enacting your values as a student teacher compared to a teacher of record?” The ensuing discussion yielded these two quotations from Tracy and Charlotte, who used the language of closing or closed doors in the classroom. They received this advice to close their doors from experienced teachers. However, as Charlotte pointed out, this advice did not apply as much to student teaching because of how “public” it is. Tracy, Madison, and Charlotte continued talking about their experiences, highlighting the challenges of being observed and evaluated while they taught in someone else’s classroom where that person had significant power over them.

Nevertheless, PTs found ways to navigate this near-constant surveillance through how they approached navigating policies. PTs talked about navigating policies differently than they discussed navigating MT relationships. In particular, they drew on discourses of privacy and

noninterference by **closing the door**–*figuratively*–to intentionally or unintentionally ignore class and school policies. Like the field instructor and veteran teachers who gave Tracy and Charlotte that advice, the PTs perceived actively ignoring policies as a strategy to make changes in the classroom through subversion.

However, their decision to navigate policies by figuratively closing the door was not a first choice. In fact, Charlotte referred to closing the door as a "worst-case scenario" for teachers (Interview 2). Instead, she spoke about how "the way to actually bring about a more diverse and just and equitable classroom is to have many players on your team" (Interview 2).

In this chapter, I explore this tension between the privacy typically associated with teaching and the openness and collaboration that the PTs imagined could create a more just society. First, I will explore a second way PTs talked about navigating tensions during student teaching: how they navigated policies. To do this, I situate their strategies within figured worlds, storylines, and frameworks they articulated during Meeting 7 (see above for the start of the conversation). Then, I examine how PTs navigated policies, drawing on the metaphor of a "closed door" to reimagine how PTs constructed figured worlds of the classroom that often existed simultaneously with/in their MTs' figured worlds.

In the second part of the chapter, I transition to examining the findings for research question 3: How did participating in a problem-of-practice group support PTs in navigating tensions? To answer this question, I explore the figured worlds and storylines of the group, the interactive frameworks PTs and I drew on, how we positioned ourselves and each other, and the discourses we took up and challenged. In particular, I compare two scenes, one in Meeting 3a and one in Meeting 5, to interrogate how PTs were supported in navigating tensions.

6.2 Research Question 2: How Did PTs Talk About Navigating Tensions During Student Teaching?

In Meeting 7, PTs described their figured worlds of student teaching and teaching that led them to seek privacy. This discussion between Tracy, Charlotte, Madison, and I contextualized how PTs navigated tensions with policies by ignoring them rather than having conversations with their MTs.

6.2.1 Comparing Being a Student Teacher to a Teacher

In Meeting 7, I asked a "Greetings and Thought Question" about the differences between making changes and enacting values as a student teacher compared to a teacher of record. Tracy, Madison, Charlotte, and I shared (Eva did not attend Meeting 7, and Leah joined up toward the end of the conversation). In the discussion, PTs characterized student teaching as a time of less authority when they would need to compromise on their values while in someone else's classroom with their rules. By contrast, the PTs thought of a teacher of record as having more or complete authority over the classroom, with the ability to "close the door" and do what would be best for students. I refer to the following Tension scene below.

Tension Scene 11: "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5, EXCERPT)

Line	Speaker	Text
36	Tracy	I think ultimately it's not really my classroom
37		There's somebody else that's responsible for this
38		and they're more experienced then
39		I think being a new teacher, you automatically default, oh, they know what's best
40		They've been around doing this for a long time
41		Even if it's a practice that's out of date or maybe something that you don't necessarily agree with
42		And I think I also compromise, too, to avoid conflict with my mentor
43		There's been a few times where I've just been like, okay, yeah, sure, whatever
44		I'll just do that in order to keep our relationship stable,
45		which is more of a personal, I don't know, a personal thing
46		But yeah, I definitely think because it's not ultimately my classroom, there's somebody else that's responsible for it
47		And so making sure that what's happening is comfortable for them
48		because they're the ones that are going to have to deal with it when I leave,
49		if that makes sense
50	Madison	I would agree with that
51		I also think what Charlotte talked about with how it feels like it's more public when you're student teaching in the classroom is part of it too
52		Because it's like we have-
53		we're observed by people from RSU
54		and we're also observed by our mentor teachers
55		and we're, I don't know about you, but when I'm at school following my mentor teacher around,

56		I feel like I'm following her around and people are looking at me as someone following behind her and not just another teacher there
57		So I think there's lot of differentiation between the two roles
58		where it's like I'm not, like Tracy said, not at the same level of, I guess, authority in the classroom
59		Cause it really is ultimately hers
60		and she's been there longer and at the school longer too
61		I think that's part of it
62	Charlotte	Yeah, I agree with what both Tracy and Madison were talking about
63		I think there's just a lot of pressure, too
64		Like Madison was talking about
65		you are literally being graded by the person whose classroom you're in
66		And I think that adds a layer of not wanting to cause them to have negative fear feelings towards you
67		because that could disrupt your own future success
68		And then, I don't know,
69		when we had to film lessons and things like that, it just feels kind of constantly being on display,
70		which to me at least can get really uncomfortable
71		And I feel like I sometimes made compromises just because I didn't,
72		I don't know,
73		I was just, I don't feel like I have the decision-making power in this situation to do what I actually want to do

Tracy shared first. As a student teacher, she talked about being "persuaded to not make changes or to compromise in my changes" (line 3). In other words, Tracy felt like she acquiesced to her MT's expectations often–something she would be less persuaded to do as a teacher of record. Then, interestingly, she shared how her field instructor told her, repeating later during class, that "behind closed doors, what happens in your classroom? As long as it's the best for your students, that's what you have to do" (line 8).

Madison agreed with Tracy. She added that for her, the most significant difference was the "feeling of authority" and "experience" of being a teacher of record (line 12). Following that assertion, Madison shared a story of asking her MT, Astrid, for "advice" when she was really asking for "approval" (line 14). In other words, Madison framed her request to do something as needing advice, even though she did not need advice. Madison reiterated the point about having "complete authority" (line 17), expanding how teachers "know everything that's going on instead of just your one unit or the few months that you've been there" (line 18), an apparent contrast between teachers and student teachers.

Charlotte spoke next, shifting topics slightly to discuss a negative aspect of student teaching: the unrealistic dependence on her mentor teacher, Harper, to help her solve problems, which she would not have in the future. Charlotte characterized this as *unhelpful* because, while more difficult, working alone will "make me better at my job" (line 25).

Charlotte's second contribution echoed the advice Tracy received from the field instructor: "Once you close your doors, you just do what you have to do and do what's best for your students" (line 29). Then, Charlotte differentiated student teaching from the advice to "close the doors," highlighting how "public" (line 30) student teaching felt.

Then, I shared, reiterating Tracy's and Charlotte's quote about closing the door and asking what about student teaching made that so difficult.

Tracy answered, sharing how "ultimately, it's not really my classroom" (line 36). To Tracy, not only was it not her classroom, but the person to whom the classroom belonged also had more experience, which led her, as a "new teacher," to "default" to their practices (line 39), even if the practice was outdated or incompatible with her values.

Tracy also added that she would "compromise" to "avoid conflict with my mentor" (line 42) and "keep our relationship stable" (line 44). In other words, Tracy learned to let some aspects of how she wanted to teach go to avoid conflict. She reiterated her point about it not being her classroom. The mentor teacher is responsible for it, and it is the responsibility of the PT to ensure "what's happening is comfortable for them" (line 47) because the PT will leave, but the MT will remain.

Madison agreed with Tracy, then returned to Charlotte's point about student teaching feeling "public" (line 51). She brought up being observed by the program and mentor teachers as evidence. Then, she described herself as "following" her mentor teacher around (line 55) and "not just another teacher" at the school (line 56). To Madison, these points took away from her authority as a student teacher. Like Tracy, she described the classroom as "hers" (line 59), referring to her mentor teacher, Astrid.

Charlotte shared again last, describing the "pressure" (line 63) of "literally being graded by the person whose classroom you're in" (line 65). Like Tracy, Charlotte did not want to cause her MT to have negative feelings toward her because of the evaluative power to "disrupt your own future success" (line 69). Returning to the point of being graded, Charlotte described how

student teaching "feels kind of like constantly being on display" (line 69), which can be "uncomfortable" (line 70) and lead to making compromises because of the power dynamic.

6.2.1.1 Analysis

Figured Worlds

PTs illustrated what they perceived as differences between the figured worlds of student teaching and teaching when the two overlapped and were separate.

Storylines

Within the overlapping figured worlds of student teaching and teaching, PTs described storylines where they felt pressured to compromise and appease their mentor teachers as authority figures in their classrooms. Charlotte described this as "just boxes" she had to check, molding herself "really weirdly." (Meeting 5)

In the imagined figured worlds of their future teaching (where they were no longer PTs), PTs described how they would have at least more, if not "complete authority" (Madison). To illustrate this authority, Tracy and Charlotte shared storylines about closing the door to do what is best for students.

Positions

As the person who asked the question, I constructed two positions that PTs had not discussed frequently throughout the study: preservice teacher and teacher. In other words, rather than the challenges of preservice teacher and mentor teacher dynamics or preservice teacher and colleague tensions, preservice teacher and teacher were temporally related without ever interacting.

PTs described teachers as an "authority," whereas student teachers were implied to be guests. The repetition of the classroom not belonging to the PTs emphasized a guest/host dynamic where the guests felt obligated not to make too many changes because they were temporary tenants. This positioning was only further complicated by the evaluative position assigned by Charlotte to mentor teachers, which, alongside requirements to record themselves, led to a feeling of being on display. In other words, Charlotte pointed out how PTs were observed and evaluated within their positions as novice teachers. Much of her discomfort probably stemmed from the power dynamic resulting from this positioning, and it was never

reversed. MTs and university instructors were not required to record themselves and be evaluated–and when they were, their evaluators (the PTs) had no *real* power. Charlotte further emphasized the discomfort of being "a student to my mentor" and "a teacher to these students" (lines 7-8).

Interactive Frameworks

The PTs offered two interactive frameworks, one for student teaching and one for teaching. Within the student teaching interactive framework, PTs described compromising their values, picking their battles, and limiting their interventions in the classroom.

On the other hand, PTs perceived this compromising framework would no longer exist during teaching, mainly because they could focus on their relationship with students (teacher/students) rather than teacher and any other subject position. The anticipation of being able to "close the door" as a teacher allowed this "complete authority" to manifest.

Discourses

PTs' discussions of the differences between student teaching and teaching drew on discourses of privacy, individualism, noninterference, and niceness. The crux of the difference between the two focused on whether they enjoyed their own private space (teaching) or were a guest in someone else's classroom (student teaching). This reasoning relied on individualistic and privacy discourses because it treated teaching as something individual teachers did siloed into their classrooms, not something teachers do collectively and collaboratively. By extension, teachers had a right and responsibility to do what was best for their students, including relying on privacy to maintain authority in the face of challenges or conflict. Second, discourses of noninterference and niceness permeated PTs' discussions of compromise and relationship maintenance, demonstrating their unwillingness to challenge systems that left them feeling disempowered and uncomfortable.

Alignment

While PTs mostly maintained alignment through compliance and compromise, they also found small ways to construct their own classrooms within their mentor teachers' classrooms, often in response to class and school policies.

6.2.2 Navigating Policies

PTs did not engage in complete cycles of navigating policies. Instead, they often identified policies they had tensions with or reflected on how they navigated them. The exceptions to these identify or reflection scenes included Tracy, who brought a tension to the group that included policies, and Charlotte, who retained her tension with policies after repeatedly seeing a student disciplined with no positive impact.

Significantly, Eva experienced the opposite tension when navigating policies from the other group members. Charlotte, Tracy, Madison, and Leah wanted to ignore or enact class or school policies more liberally. For example, Tracy discussed partially ignoring her placement's strict, no-tolerance cell phone policy. However, Eva described the opposite tension as she thought her mentor teacher's policies were too lenient, particularly regarding phone and headphone usage.

6.2.2.1 Subverting Policies: The Rationale

When PTs discussed navigating class or school-level policies, they rationalized their choices based on working to best support their students and considering to what extent they would enforce the policy in their own classrooms.

_Do_ What is Best for Your Students

Participants talked about subverting policies to "do what's best for students" and teach in ways that aligned with their values. Tracy, Charlotte, Leah, and Madison all gave supporting students as their reason for subverting mentor teacher and school-level policies. For example, in Meeting 5, Tracy shared how sometimes she ignored her mentor teacher's cell phone policy to "save those relationships with students." She thought of enforcing the policy as "not the hill that I want to die on." Tracy further emphasized that she would focus on saving student relationships over enforcing a policy she did not plan to enforce in her classroom.

6.2.2.2 Navigating Policies in and outside of instruction

PTs navigated policies *in* and *outside of* instruction. The PTs did not feel they could directly confront their mentor teachers (or other colleagues at the school) over every tension they experienced. However, navigating policies during instruction with, ostensibly, their mentor teacher or another school colleague observing and evaluating them differed from navigating policies outside of instruction. The PTs navigated policies related to discipline, cell phones, class materials, grading, language, and more. See the table below.

Table 11: Policies PTs Navigated During Student Teaching

During Instruction	Outside of Instruction	Curriculum
Discipline (Charlotte, Madison, Leah, Tracy) Cell Phone Policy (Tracy, Leah) Materials / Supplies (Charlotte)	Late Work/Revision Policies (Madison, Leah) Grading (Leah, Tracy) Language Choices in Writing (Tracy)	Content (none) Texts (none)

Outside of Instruction

Leah, Madison, and Tracy discussed navigating policies outside of instruction. For example, Leah and Madison addressed the issue of not following their mentor teachers' late work policies. Specifically, Leah shared, "My mentor teacher has a [late work] policy, and I'm really bad at following it, but it's completely intentional" (lines 64-66). She then laughed before adding that she had been grading everything for a considerable amount of time. Leah did not know if she was "going totally against it or like she doesn't care that much" (lines 71-72). She did not think she would get in trouble but felt like she might.

Leah's reflection on navigating this wobble about her mentor teacher's late work policy illustrated how she took "charge" of "everything" concerning grading—a specific aspect of teaching outside instruction. Her mentor teacher, Rebecca, did not oversee or provide feedback on how Leah graded. As a result, Leah did not know whether she would "get in trouble" or not (line 74). In response to that feeling, Leah recognized her own "justifications and that kind of stuff" (line 76) for how she graded, which she could share if Rebecca noticed what she was doing. Significantly, Leah expressed that her choice to ignore the late work policy was "intentional" (line 66).

Not enforcing a late work policy allowed PTs to empathize with students. For example, Madison shared how she disagreed with the rationale of late work policies that prepared students for college. Treating juniors and seniors like college students did not make sense to Madison. "What role are you asking them to fill if they're still in high school but you're treating them like college students?" She asked (Meeting 5).

Tension Scene 12: "I'm really bad at following it, but it's completely intentional" (Leah, Meeting 5)

Line	Speaker	Text
63	Leah	I was also thinking about late work in terms of not agreeing with certain policies

64	because my mentor teacher has a policy
65	and I'm really bad at following it,
66	but it's completely intentional (laughs)
67	because I don't agree with it
68	And very early on I was put in charge of grading
69	Like I graded everything
70	and I have been for a while
71	And I am like-- I don't really know if I'm going totally against it
72	or like she doesn't care that much
73	So I don't think I'm going to get in trouble for not following it,
74	but I still like have that feeling that I'm going to get in trouble
75	And-- I don't know,
76	I have my own justifications and that kind of stuff,
77	but every student is different for different justifications

Additionally, Tracy navigated her mentor teacher's policy toward language in formative writing assignments. Tracy shared how she treated formative and summative writing differently, focusing on whether she was "able to read it" (line 5) as opposed to needing "grammar and writing" to be "perfect" (lines 1-2). In other words, Tracy distinguished between formative "practice" and summative writing. She acknowledged that "it's important to practice decent grammar" (line 7) but did not penalize students or give excessive feedback regarding language.

Tension Scene 13: "I knew what they were just trying to say" (Tracy, Interview 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Tracy	And also, I think with a lot with grammar and writing,
2		it had to be perfect
3		And if it was a formative to me,
4		I didn't think that was very important
5		I was able to read it
6		I knew what they were-- just trying to say,
7		yes, it's important to practice decent grammar
8		and it's important to make sure that your spell check is done,
9		but if it's not a summative,
10		I didn't really see how that was very important
11		This is practice,
12		I don't know

13	That's just, it's my perspective on that, I guess

In both instances, PTs working outside of instruction on grading and providing feedback to students were given sole authority over the task. As a result, they used their discretion to ignore policies with which they disagreed. For Leah, actively ignoring her mentor teacher's late work policy made her feel like she might "get in trouble." Nevertheless, the lack of oversight and surveillance concerning grading, assessment, and feedback enabled PTs to navigate policies subversively by actively ignoring them.

During Instruction

Just after reflecting on how they navigated policies outside of instruction by ignoring them, PTs reflected on how they similarly navigated policies *during instruction*. Interestingly, PTs used essentially the same strategy to navigate policy tensions during instruction as they did outside instruction. For example, Leah described her struggle with her mentor teacher's phone policy. She said, "[Rebecca] very much pays attention to whether or not students are putting their phones on the wall. I totally forget it like every single day, and I barely glance at it" (lines 107-109). Leah went on to question whether her forgetting to check for phones reflected her "actual values" (line 115) before transitioning into a small story about being told by "other teachers" that her patience stems from being a "new teacher" (lines 117-118). However, Leah dismissed the point. She said, while laughing, "I don't really care about it as much as you do" (line 120). She questioned whether she might "have less patience with that over time" (line 124) but was unconvinced.

Tension Scene 14: "I totally forget it like every single day" (Leah, Meeting 5)

Line	Speaker	Text
105	Leah	I've actually been struggling with the same thing a lot
106		because again, my mentor teacher has a phone policy
107		and very much pays attention to whether or not students are putting their phones on the wall
108		I totally forget it like every single day
109		and I barely glance at it
110		And again, I agree
111		it's not something that I like--
112		it's not the hill that I want to die on and care that much about

113	So I totally agree with that
114	and like I've been really struggling with that
115	because I don't know if it's a reflection of like my actual values
116	or if it's just I have like--
117	people tell me, other teachers are like, oh, you just have a lot of patience right now
118	because you're like a new teacher
119	And I don't know how to phrase it as like, no,
120	I just don't really care about that as much as you do (laughing)
121	If I see a phone I really don't like--
122	I just say, put it away
123	And I-- they might be right
124	I might get-- have less patience with that over time
125	But I don't know

Tracy similarly shared her approach to White Oak Woods' phone policy. While Tracy ignored the policy, she recognized that her mentor teacher knew she was not "actively taking phones" (line 127) in alignment with the policy. Acknowledging Cheryl's knowledge, Tracy said that "having my mentor teacher allowing me to be able to do that and giving me that freedom to implement things" (lines 133-134) was cool and helpful. Here, Tracy acknowledged that her mentor teacher knew, which differed from how Leah did not share about Rebecca observing her forgetting to enforce the policy. This difference may have emerged from Cheryl's co-teaching presence in the classroom compared with Leah's depiction of Rebecca as absent from all but one class period. Thus, Leah seemed to work during instruction but outside of supervision, while Tracy worked during instruction while supervised. However, unlike Leah, Tracy characterized how her mentor teacher gave her "freedom" to make small changes in areas like classroom management without stepping in. Ultimately, Tracy's relationship reflected openness and collaboration (if not spoken), whereas Leah often worked outside her mentor teacher's surveillance as she subverted policies.

Tension Scene 15: "We're both very different but she gives me that freedom" (Tracy, Meeting 5)

Line	Speaker	Text
126	Tracy	I think too, if it was such a big deal to my mentor,
127		like I know she knows that I'm not actively taking phones

128	I think if it meant that much to her
129	that she would say something to me,
130	but I think it's cool to see how she lets me handle things
131	And I think that's kind of going back to the original question that we talked about today
132	or one of the questions was like, what has supported you in making changes?
133	And I think just like having my mentor allowing me to be able to do that
134	and giving me that freedom to implement some things
135	like yes, there are things that I obviously can't change
136	and that I'm not going to change while I'm taking over,
137	but little things like that, and like with especially classroom management,
138	we're both very different,
139	but she gives me that freedom,
140	which I think has been really helpful

6.2.2.3 A closed door, behind a closed door

Tracy shared one of the most provocative responses about navigating tensions when she described "a closed door, behind a closed door," "in your mentor's classroom" (Interview 2). Naming her goal as benefiting the student teacher's relationship with students while not disrupting the classroom community, Tracy reimagined the advice she and Charlotte received to essentially "close the door and do what's best for your students." To Tracy, a student teacher could conceivably construct a closed door *behind* their mentor teacher's closed door. In other words, the PT could create a private classroom within their mentor teacher's already private classroom. The PT could draw on the same relationship between privacy and autonomy to make changes and avoid surveillance.

The above examples of intentionally ignoring policies reflect this sense of privacy while under surveillance. For Leah, she could construct the classroom she wanted in her mentor teacher's absence. In contrast, Tracy appeared to rely on a(n) (un)spoken agreement between herself and Cheryl that she could enact policies with discretion. Tracy acknowledged this (un)spoken agreement when talking about the closed door behind the closed door: "And then if you're questioned about it, I think you can be honest…" (Interview 2, lines 9-10). Tracy's attention to surveillance and her rehearsing of an "honest" response reminded me of how the

metaphor of doors functions in literature to be openings into other worlds, such as Bishop's (1990) metaphor of texts as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors.

Tracy recognized the ephemeral aspect of this classroom within a classroom that she could construct as a student teacher. Its existence depended on the mentor teacher (a) not questioning it and/or (b) not requiring the student teacher to change their actions. In the scenario, Tracy said if required, she would "go back" (line 15), highlighting the power of mentor teachers to determine what student teachers do in their classrooms ("your mentor's classroom").

Furthermore, Tracy highlighted how PTs could use rhetorical strategies to respond when questioned. She opted to "be honest" (line 10) and say, "I think I'm still doing what you're asking me to do, but it looks a little different and this is what I think is best" (lines 11-13). Here, Tracy's honesty emphasized how, while the way the practice looked might appear different, she was still meeting the set expectations.

Tension Scene 16: "A closed door, behind a closed door" (Tracy, Post-Interview)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Tracy	Yeah, I think if there are ways that aren't going to be harmful to students
2		and things that you think would benefit your relationship with them in a healthy way
3		and not disrupt the community in your classroom,
4		I think it's worth doing
5		I think there are maybe even behind closed doors in your mentor's classroom
6		I think there are still things that you can do
7		that it's like a closed door, behind a closed door in order to to do these things
8		So I think it's worth doing
9		And then if you're questioned about it,
10		I think you can be honest and say,
11		I think I'm still doing what you're asking me to do,
12		but it looks a little different
13		and this is what I think is best
14		And if it's something that your mentor requires you to change
15		Then fine, go back,
16		but you at least tried
17		and it's like, I think it's worth trying honestly

In contrast, Charlotte argued that creating a community where all stakeholders participate and know what is happening was the best way to create a "more diverse and just and equitable

classroom" (line 6). Despite receiving and repeating the advice to close the door as a teacher, Charlotte depicted closing the door as the "worst-case scenario" (line 5). Charlotte contrasted the ideal situation, "to have many players on your team" (line 6), with the district where she did her field experience before student teaching. In her ideal teaching setting, community and family members would feel connected with the school through open houses where students shared their work and learned about what was happening in class. However, Charlotte's experiences before student teaching led her to foresee challenges in this public, open, and transparent approach to education. She shared how community members were "trying to ban books that say gay in them" (line 17), emphasizing how they chose to do this "at night and on the weekends" (line 19). While the legislation did not pass, Charlotte still felt she would need to gauge the community's values before opening up her space.

Tension Scene 17: "To have many players on your team" (Charlotte, Interview 2)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Charlotte	I mean, I definitely have heard that as advice
2		and I think we have talked about that in methods
3		and there are different articles that talk about it
4		And I think for me, I would rather that not have to happen
5		I think it's worst case scenario you can do that,
6		but I also think the way to actually bring about a more diverse and just and equitable classroom is to have many players on your team
7		And I talked a little bit about engaging the community,
8		making people who don't have a kid in the school system care about the work that we're doing in the school system
9		because when people feel like they have that connection and not necessarily that they have a say, but that they're involved,
10		they care more about it
11		They're more passionate about what you're doing and what the students are doing when they actually know what goes on
12		So I think in an ideal situation, I would want parents to know what we're reading
13		and for students to go home and tell them about all the assignments and all the stuff that we talked about
14		And for like community to be able to see student work examples, see their projects, see speeches that they've written and things like that
15		But I don't know,
16		it's, it's very hard

17	I think the district that I did pre-student teaching in, like [district name], they were trying to ban books that said the word gay in them from the public library
18	and it didn't pass,
19	but that's what people were going in on their free time at night and on the weekend to try to do is ban books that say gay in them
20	And it's like, I don't know,
21	I feel like I would need to gauge that based on where I was at
22	But Yeah

6.2.3 Analysis

6.2.3.1 Figured Worlds

PTs described *three* figured worlds in how they navigated policies: the figured world of student teaching and the figured world of classroom teaching. Additionally, navigating policies brought the figured world of the local community to the fore.

6.2.3.2 Storylines

PTs navigated policies along two main storylines. In the first, PTs actively ignored policies while avoiding surveillance, such as when Leah and Madison ignored late work policies. I referred to this as "a closed door, behind a closed door" (Tracy, Interview 2). In the second storyline, PTs were free to use discretion when enacting policies. For instance, Tracy described the freedom her mentor teacher afforded her when ignoring the school cell phone policy.

6.2.3.3 Positions

Unlike when PTs navigated tensions with their MTs, PTs who navigated policies were "in charge" (Leah) or leading class. They rationalized their decisions through teacher/student positioning, focusing on how they supported students. They were present while their mentors were either absent or lenient. In other words, the student teacher/mentor teacher positions shifted to accommodate how PTs discussed navigating policies and making teaching decisions. MTs still had power over PTs, but this power was limited by MTs' surveillance capacity. Interestingly, Leah noted how her more lenient classroom management decisions led her to be positioned as a "new teacher" compared to the stricter, more experienced teachers.

In contrast, Charlotte's ideal setting of having many players on her team as a teacher repositioned her and the classroom as open and public rather than closed and private. However,

Charlotte positioned families and community members as surveillant and potentially harmful in some contexts.

6.2.3.4 Interactive Frameworks

The primary interactive framework PTs used to navigate tensions with policies was discretionary noncompliance, which meant they actively ignored policies. Within this framework, PTs faced the consequences when their noncompliance was found out. In contrast, Charlotte offered a collaborative framework where stakeholders played an active role in a public-facing classroom. However, she acknowledged the reality of this framework was often dependent on shared views between teachers and community members.

6.2.3.5 Discourses

Navigating policies inside or outside instruction while avoiding surveillance drew on a privacy discourse. For example, Tracy referred to "a closed door, behind a closed door" as a way to teach and support students within the mentor teacher's classroom. When surveillance could not be avoided, PTs relied on discourses of individualism, and, although implicit, noninterference and niceness. For example, Tracy spoke about her MT affording her the "freedom" to try things out. Tracy did not specify whether she talked to Cheryl about this freedom, possibly relying on implicit discourses of noninterference and niceness when her choices did not cause harm to students.

6.2.3.6 Alignment

Alignment was on tenuous footing for PTs. They acted with temporary authority in their discretionary noncompliance, recognizing that, at any moment, their MT could deconstruct their classroom within a classroom. While at times the classroom within a classroom was built on privacy ("a closed door"), it also existed when MTs afforded PTs freedom to try out ways of teaching, an echo of the expectation PTs had during student teaching to "try and fail." Charlotte's ideal/real contrast highlighted how, when public, alignment required creating shared goals with stakeholders, something she and the other PTs did not have practice with.

6.3 Research Question 3: How Did Participating in a Problem of Practice Protocol Group Support Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers in Navigating Tensions During Student Teaching?

To answer research question 3, I draw first on how PTs responded to the question during Interview 2: "What do you feel like you got out of participating in the study?" Then, I contextualize their responses within the context of how PTs talked about student teaching and the program at RSU. I end the chapter by comparing two moments from meetings using the combined framing/positioning framework to examine how PTs were supported to navigate tensions.

6.3.1 Benefits of Participating in the Group

All five PTs shared positive reflections on participating in the group. They described it as a setting different from others where they could share their experiences and listen to others concerning student teaching while in community. Additionally, PTs appreciated the collaborative problem-solving process the group afforded. Furthermore, PTs liked that the group prepared them to navigate similar tensions in their future teaching. The group aligned with PTs' beliefs that student teaching should be a place to "try and fail" (Eva, Meeting 3b) and "practice what you're passionate about; what you think is best for students" (Tracy, Interview 2).

6.3.1.1 "Suffer Loudly": Sharing Student Teaching Experiences

PTs felt supported in sharing and listening to each other's student teaching experiences. The experiences in the group were validating. For example, Eva described group meetings as a "space to reflect and unpack everything" (Interview 2). She went on:

> And I'm not saying that because this is being recorded, I dead ass did enjoy getting to hear more from you and hear other students' experiences as well. That in itself is a learning experience, if that makes sense.
>
> Getting to hear other student teachers' experiences was very validating. Knowing that I'm not the only one that's struggling at times or some of the issues I faced. Other students were facing it too. And it's normal and it's okay to open up about these things and get support. This is such a silly, I don't know, mantra, but we always tell our students, don't suffer in silence. Suffer loudly. Let us help you. If you don't know what's going on or

> how to deal with something, suffer loudly. Let us help you figure it out. And so I guess that's really what doing this brought out of me. (Interview 2, Eva)

Eva commented that sharing her experiences and sharing in others' experiences was validating because she was not alone in the issues she faced. She used the mantra "Suffer loudly" to describe the alternative to suffering in silence. "Let us help you," she repeated. Other PTs echoed Eva's comments, emphasizing how the group allowed them to tell their stories and "hear about what other people are doing and what other schools are like" (Madison, Interview 2), then "come together as a group to talk about it" (Charlotte, Interview 2).

6.3.1.2 Practical, Collaborative Problem-Solving

PTs also shared how the group collaborated to solve practical problems they experienced during student teaching. For example, Charlotte shared:

> [The group] was a place where we can talk about what's happening in the field and kind of problem solve, but different [from seminar] because I think it was a lot more focused on…what we wanted to do and what was getting in the way of that and why it was getting in the way" (Interview 2).

Similarly, Leah shared how she tended to "just go along for the ride and just do what other people are doing" (Interview 2), but the group challenged her to engage actively in problem-solving.

Co-constructing New Knowledge

PTs' collaborative problem-solving also led to new ideas. Madison described how people in the group raised thought-provoking insights. For example, she said the concept of "purposefully ignoring some policies" was interesting because she had not noticed she was doing it until it came up during group meetings (Interview 2). In their discussions, PTs often added to each other's points of view, offering new perspectives and ideas based on their own experiences and what they wanted.

6.3.1.3 Future Work as a Teacher

Several PTs also discussed how group participation would benefit their future teaching. For example, Eva's comment about not suffering in silence highlighted her wanting to continue collaborating with others in her teaching. Similarly, Tracy shared how the group was "really

good in preparing me for working with colleagues" (Interview 2) because she learned to solve problems and ask others for help when needed. Tracy admitted, "It's not something I'm really good at. I don't really like to ask for help" (Interview 2). However, the group helped her think about collaboration, which meant asking for help and offering help to others.

6.3.2 Contrasting the Group with the Field Seminar/Program

All of the PTs shared a field seminar course with one instructor during student teaching. The undergraduates (Leah, Madison, and Charlotte) had different field observers, but Eva and Tracy had the same retired teacher for the seminar and observations. Eva shared how the field instructor strongly advocated for her in the program. Similarly, all the PTs shared how they felt their instructors supported them. However, Eva and the others characterized the field seminar as serving different purposes from the meetings.

6.3.2.1 The Field Seminar: Complementary Resources

The field seminar and group meetings served different functions for PTs. While group meetings brought the PTs together to share stories and collaboratively problem-solve, the field seminar often offered PTs "tools" and "resources" they might use in their classrooms. Eva contrasted how sharing "so many good resources to use" would many times leave "no time for us to talk about our own experiences" (Interview 2). As a result, the two settings complemented one another, offering distinct experiences for PTs in support of their professional development.

6.3.3 Contrasting Cases

Now, I explore two cases investigating how participating in a problem of practice group supported Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers to navigate tensions during student teaching. In the first case, I return to Leah's scene, "a good relationship between us," to analyze how PTs shared experiences and collaborated to co-construct new knowledge. This scene is significant to me as a researcher and educator for my *non*intervention while Leah, Madison, and Charlotte discussed Leah's decision. In the second case, during Tracy's tension discussion, I examine how my intervention contributed to the group co-constructing knowledge around navigating policies.

I defined my role with participants as a facilitator and group member. As an experienced secondary ELA teacher, their former instructor, a researcher, and a white, able-bodied cis man, I sought to interrupt traditional power dynamics and avoid centering my perspective or positioning

myself in an evaluative role while centering the ELA PTs' perspectives, treating them as experts in their contexts. I facilitated meetings, asking clarifying questions and summarizing ELA PTs' discussions. I offered my perspective, but only if participants specifically requested, which they sometimes did (often after meetings). I saw this structured researcher role as enabling me to demonstrate care and dignity in my relationships with the preservice teachers in addition to mutual reciprocity and respect, aspects of Paris and Winn's (2014) conceptualization of humanizing research. However, I often wobbled about withholding my perspective, imagining the speculative consequences of my (in)actions.

6.3.3.1 Case 1: Leah (Meeting 3a)

Here, I return to Leah's wobble update that I analyzed as part of her "stepping in" case in Chapter 5. In her sharing during Meeting 2 and Meeting 3a, Leah positioned William as a legitimate classroom community member (Shalaby, 2017). Leah expressed frustration at how the situation of Rebecca "stepping in" to discipline William played out and her options for rectifying the situation.

Here is the critical moment: Leah wanted to know why her mentor teacher wrote up William, But Leah chose not to engage Rebecca in a conversation over her questions. She said:

Tension Scene 18: from "A Good Relationship Between Us" (Leah, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Leah	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
2		And I feel bad partially
3		because I feel like I am kind of still prioritizing my relationship with my mentor teacher
4		because I could put that relationship at risk by blatantly coming out and having a conversation about it.
5		Like, I don't appreciate how you treat this specific student.
6		But I am still to some extent protecting myself in that way and protecting my relationship with her
7		to make sure that she still likes me
8		and will, it'll be a good relationship between us
9		because I know that if I say that it won't be.
10		So, I don't know.
11		I still feel like I'm trying my best to not be like that
12		and maybe publicly, publicly defending the student instead of her in those situations,

13	but I don't know.
14	But I appreciate what you said.

When analyzing how Leah positioned herself and her mentor teacher in this narrative, I noted how Leah wobbled about her advocacy for William and maintaining a quote "good" relationship with her mentor teacher. Her feeling that she had to "prioritize" (line 3) one relationship over another led her to experience misalignment. As a result, Leah prioritized a "good" relationship with her mentor teacher built on norms of noninterference. However, their arguably "good" relationship enabled Leah to maintain her footing across the figured worlds of student teaching and teaching (in someone else's classroom).

Examining this interaction in the group, I noticed how she drew on an interactive framework of sharing experiences. For example, she shared how she "could put that relationship at risk" (line 4). Similarly, she evaluated her actions, lamenting she was "trying [her] best to not be like that" (line 11). She also imagined how she might broach the topic with her mentor teacher ("Like, I don't appreciate how you treat…" line 5).

Leah also maintained a tenuous alignment with how Madison, who spoke before her, positioned Leah as worthy of admiration. While appreciating Madison's comment (line 14), Leah expressed negative emotions and doubts. For instance, she described feeling bad (line 2), contrasting what she wanted to do with her choices ("but I am still… line 6), and, additionally, doubt and hesitation (lines 10 and 13). Lastly, Leah did not feel like her actions represented who she wanted to be, sharing, "I'm trying my best to not be like that" (line 11), offering alternatives again for how she could have prioritized William's wellbeing rather than her relationship with her MT (line 12).

Now, I want to pause here because this was a critical moment for me. I wanted to say something. I wanted to question Leah's decision not to question her mentor teacher. As a teacher educator, I considered Leah's rights and responsibilities as a student teacher with her mentor teacher. Their relationship was based on mentorship, which should allow for asking clarifying, if not critical, questions. However, Leah's micro rehearsals demonstrated that she brought a critical framework to the interaction. Similarly, she could not be certain Rebecca would rely on the same mentorship framework. What if, instead, Rebecca took Leah's questioning as a challenge? Upon later reflection, the moment was more complex than I initially understood.

I empathized with Leah's dilemma and the three ELA PTs' shared perspectives about their limitations as student teachers. I also wanted to support Leah. Was listening a form of supporting Leah, Madison, and Charlotte? I wavered, ultimately withholding my questions and suggestions. When I've shared what Leah said with teacher educators, they often suggest that I should have intervened. "What *does* it mean to maintain "a good relationship" with someone if you can't be honest and open with them?" I could have asked.

I recognize that my choice not to interfere was grounded in my design choices. However, my decision also made me wobble as a teacher educator. I reflected on how my silence may have perpetuated injustice, allowing dominant discourses of whiteness and norms of noninterference to go unnamed and unexamined as I avoided the potential discomfort of speaking up. But I also recognized that my choice reflected my understanding, respect, and trusting of Leah's perspective, and acknowledging that she is an expert in her experiences.

There were many choices between listening and challenging Leah's decision, too.

- I could have shared my own experience, similar to Leah's.
- I could have shared my wobble with the group, modeling flexibility, vulnerability, and openness.
- I could have asked a question, such as "What does it mean to have a "good relationship" here?

Each possibility fractally expands into infinite as I wonder what outcome each decision would have on the group in the immediate interaction and long-term. Mapping out the continuum of speculative possibilities of this moment made me consider how I related to the participants and wobbled with a participant/observer binary.

Therefore, rather than assume, it is essential to know what happened next.

Instead of speaking up, I listened.

Madison and Charlotte agreed. Madison said, "We're [student teachers] restricted because of the relationship we have with our mentor teachers and just the position we're in where we're really guests in the schools."

Charlotte, who taught in the middle school for the same district, shared that other teachers considered Leah's mentor teacher uncollaborative (line 26). Charlotte added that not having confrontation as an option required having to "figure out all these ways to slyly maneuver" to make changes (line 32).

Tension Scene 19: "You Have to Figure Out All These Ways to Slyly Maneuver" (Charlotte, Meeting 3a)

Line	Speaker	Text
24	Charlotte	Yeah, I totally agree with what Madison said.
25		And I just want to add, if it's any consolation,
26		your mentor teacher has a reputation even at the middle school for being incredibly difficult to work with and just not at all a collaborative person.
27		So I don't want you at all to think that you are doing anything wrong
28		because from everything that I've heard that is pretty solidly on her.
29		And with that in mind, I think I totally agree that it seems like coming out and just confronting her would probably damage that relationship.
30		So it is- I think it probably takes a lot out of you.
31		I know it takes a lot out of me when you don't have that confrontation as an option
32		and you have to figure out all these ways to slyly maneuver and come up with plans
33		to sort of like get what you want done in the classroom or with anything really.
34		But yeah,
35		I don't really know if I can add any suggestions at least with this particular situation.
36		Except maybe it will be a good thing if this student gets a fresh start and knows that you're still on his team if he needs you.
37		And maybe even you can have that conversation with him privately.
38		Like, Hey, I know the way you're treated here isn't fair
39		and I want the best for you in this other classroom
40		and I have your back if you need anything.
41		Just kind of prioritize that relationship maybe over blowing up your mentor teacher relationship.

Charlotte responded to Leah and Madison by engaging in two interactive frameworks. As she replied, she shared experiences and worked to collaboratively solve problems. She brought insider information, sharing how Leah's mentor teacher "has a reputation…for being incredibly difficult to work with" (line 26). She also empathized with Leah, admitting, "I know it takes a lot out of me when you don't have that confrontation as an option" (line 31). In addition, she worked to solve problems collaboratively, suggesting that, *without confrontation*, "you have to figure out all these ways to slyly maneuver" (line 32) to "get what you want done in the classroom" (line 33). She gave the example of having a private conversation with the student

(line 37), highlighting how Leah could sidestep her mentor teacher to attempt to maintain a good relationship with William.

Charlotte also built alignment through agreement, making emotional and physical connections, and echoing what she heard from Madison and Leah. She agreed with Leah's depictions of her tension multiple times (lines 24, 28, and 29). Similarly, she developed a shared experience of the mental and physical difficulties of having to figure out how to slyly maneuver to navigate a tension ("It takes a lot out of you / "a lot out of me" line 30-31). Lastly, she echoed Leah's and Madison's language of priorities ("prioritize that relationship maybe…" line 41).

Leah's reflection and my nonintervention caused me to wobble about my role in the group. To explain how I acted on my wobble, I turn to Case 2 during Meeting 5.

6.3.3.2 Case 2 Tracy (Meeting 5)

In contrast to my nonintervention weeks earlier, during Meeting 5, I intervened during Tracy's planning discussion.

Tracy shared a tension she experienced about how to support a new student. She described how the student had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). He was reading at a kindergarten or first-grade level, and Tracy and her mentor teacher, Cheryl, had no support for him. On top of his needs, he had also been placed in a challenging class.

Tracy wanted to know how to support him and make him feel comfortable. Frustrated, she shared that she and her mentor teacher did not know where to start.

Group members offered excellent questions and suggestions. Madison suggested having him buddy up with a friendly and outgoing student to feel welcomed and support his learning while ensuring they do not stigmatize him when giving him different work. Charlotte asked about other building resources and pointed out the difficulties of supporting students with attendance or transportation issues because they could come early or stay after school. I asked about the student's emotional state. She described him as nervous but excited to start at a new school while talking to her. However, he did not speak to other students as much and ate lunch alone, leading her to think of him as shy and slightly overwhelmed at the newness.

At that point, the conversation was slowing down. I connected Tracy's experience with my time teaching and asked the PTs:

How does this relate to our ideas of how we think about caring for students in our class? So what suggestions would you make based on how you feel about what's important in your classroom related to students?

Tracy responded, “I feel like the most important thing is establishing a relationship with him and making him feel comfortable to even ask questions or to work with us.”

Then Leah, returning from a few minutes away from her computer, asked about support from Special Education teachers and staff, which led to a productive conversation between Leah and Tracy about the limited resources available to support the student and wonderings about how to accommodate or modify instruction for him. During this exchange, Leah and Tracy discussed the student’s IEP as a policy they needed to understand and follow. However, Tracy, having read his IEP, struggled to understand how giving him the blanket accommodation of extra time for assignments and tests listed in his IEP would support his learning in the classroom.

I worried that the conversation’s focus on modification versus accommodation in IEPs would distract from Tracy’s possibilities for supporting the new student. Recognizing a stuck point where Tracy felt focused on providing him with the support listed in his IEP, I intervened again:

Tension Scene Excerpt 20: "Who Will Stop You?" (Chris, Meeting 5)

Line #	Speaker	Text
172	Chris	Okay. I have a question for you, then.
173		Going back to this idea of where you can do things and where you can't do things,
174		What's to stop you from making modifications for this student?
175		or I guess a better different way to, I could say it is who will stop you?
176	Tracy	Yeah,
177		I guess nobody really,
178		I think my mentor is open to just doing whatever we have to do for him.
179		So yeah, I guess nothing really.
180	Chris	So, okay. Follow-up question.
181		Tracy, if you could do whatever you wanted with the student for the rest of the year,
182		what would you do?

In this excerpt from Tracy’s tension scene, I drew on the collaborative problem-solving framework of question and answer to shift the group’s discussion from one topic to another. In addition to the collaborative problem-solving strategies of sharing ideas that occurred during

Leah's reflection scene, planning scenes often included consultants (group members) asking clarifying and probing questions of the presenter. Here, I asked three questions: "What's to stop you from making modifications for this student" (line 174), "Who will stop you?" (line 175), and "If you could do whatever you wanted…what would you do?" (lines 181-182). Tracy responded to these questions with some hesitation ("I guess," lines 177, 179).

Since I did not often contribute to planning, I tried to build from previous ideas and echo an existing framework. For example, earlier in the meeting, we discussed closing the door and doing what was best for students.

However, I also noticed that my questioning approach was more teacherly and rhetorical than other participants. The PTs often grounded their questions in the practical. For example, Leah asked about the resources and tools available regarding the student's IEP and the Special Education staff. By asking a hypothetical question ("What's to stop you…" line 174; "If you could do whatever you wanted…" lines 181-182), I positioned myself differently. Was I contributing from a position as an equal group member or a position of power? I do not know.

To build alignment with the other group members, I tried to build from others' ideas as I entered the conversation. For example, after stating I had a question, I said, "Going back to this idea…" (line 173). This demonstrated that I had been listening to and valuing PTs' contributions and choosing to build from those ideas. Similarly, as I phrased and rephrased my question, my framing of the question echoed the existing "close the door" framework PTs had developed. In other words, my question, "Who will stop you?" (line 175) referenced Tracy's and Charlotte's points about the relationship between autonomy and privacy for teachers—how the isolation they experienced in their classrooms was both beneficial and challenging, as Tracy's situation highlighted.

In response to my questions, Tracy said she wanted to get to know the student better to develop assignments that fit his interests and needs. She also acknowledged that she did not want him to feel embarrassed, something Leah and Charlotte echoed when discussing giving him alternative assignments. It would be difficult to fit in as a new student and even more difficult if others determined he was being treated differently. Charlotte also emphasized the importance of getting outside help to support the student.

Madison contributed last. She questioned why it mattered that the student had to do similar work to the other students if no one was checking in on the situation. She said, "And

maybe success for the student right now is not going to be looking the same as success for other students."

In her action plan, Tracy sought to collaborate with other teachers to develop student goals. She also wanted to make him feel comfortable and ensure that other teachers were building relationships with him. Significantly, Tracy's plan incorporated ideas from multiple group members. My attempt to focus on Tracy's initial idea of making him feel "comfortable" and developing a relationship with him was one of many suggestions she considered as she developed her own ideas.

In this second case of Tracy identifying a tension, I contributed much more to the discussion than when Leah reflected on her tension. Now, I analyze group dynamics in across cases through the combined framing/positioning framework.

6.3.3.3 Cross-Case Analysis

Figured Worlds

Group meetings occurred over Zoom in their own "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) figured world and crossing over into multiple other figured worlds. Group meetings took up explicit norms and goals set and revised collaboratively through explicit and implicit interactions between participants. Aspects of the figured world of the university teacher education program, student teaching, and K-12 classrooms were also part of the figured world of group meetings.

Storylines

In the figured world of group meetings, PTs identified tensions, made plans to navigate them, and reflected on their actions. Reflection storylines like Leah's focused on what a prior presenter did to navigate their tension. In Leah's case, other PTs responded by offering empathy, contextualizing Leah's tension, and co-constructing new knowledge. Planning storylines followed a structure of a presenter sharing a tension, followed by clarifying questions and suggestions by group members, followed by me asking the presenter to sum up their plans. Importantly, PTs did not explicitly challenge each other's ideas in these storylines.

Positions

I want to highlight several positions in group interactions within and across these cases. The prescribed positions during inquiry group discussions included **presenter** (the group

member who shared) and **consultant** (the group members who listened, asked questions, and made suggestions). Additionally, I prescribed and resisted the dichotomy I created between myself as a **facilitator** and **group members**. As the facilitator, I initiated meeting segments, including the movement in discussions from identifying to planning. Although I initially conceived of the facilitator role as an **observer**, similar to an **observer/participant(s)** positioning, these moments demonstrated how I implicitly (Case 1) and explicitly (Case 2) challenged my self-positioning during discussions and adopted a more participatory position rooted in being one of the group members. Specifically, my reflection on Case 1 highlighted my own tension about feeling like a **group member**. I hesitated to insert myself into the discussions while positioning the PTs as knowledgeable, practicing teachers. When I did, such as in Case 2, I wanted to come from the position of a **teacher** offering questions and ideas to other **teachers**, *not* a **teacher educator** making knowledge claims about what **PTs** should do. As group members, the PTs took up positions as **teachers,** talking with other **teachers**. Centering PTs' knowledge meant not treating them like students or myself as a teacher educator, even if that was the prior positioning that existed.

Furthermore, in Case 2, I attempted to position myself as an **experienced teacher** speaking with **novice teachers**. For example, I explicitly said, "It's a situation that I've experienced in multiple years of my teaching." Especially given my history with the PTs and our relational social identities, little difference existed between the positioning I hoped to avoid (teacher educator/student teacher) compared to what I sought (experienced teacher/novice teachers). Analysis of my interactions here highlighted my need to develop flexible relational positioning with PTs to humanize them and me, avoiding the traditional observer/participant binaries to embrace play and messiness (Green, 2014). Green illustrates the sense of play she feels by doing "double dutch methodology" as a participant observer. To think of these interactions as "play" allows opportunities to embrace the tensions and explore them further with others rather than upholding rigid structures that may function to uphold the walls between us in the group. Often, I sense a lingering desire to know and to be a knower when not knowing and unknowability can be just as powerful and joyful and playful when working with others.

Interactive Frameworks

Group Discussions of tensions followed an interactive framework of dialogic interaction. Dialogic interaction was based on the following sub-frameworks that I drew from PT's described benefits for the meetings:

1. "Suffer Loudly": demonstrating empathy for oneself and others. Group discussions centered on sharing with and listening to others, and group members were attentive to each other.
2. (2) Collaborative Problem-Solving: sharing experiences, asking clarifying and probing questions, and offering suggestions.
3. (3) nonhierarchical: when a group member shared, they had authority, and others listened. No group member had inherent authority over others. In practice, PTs often agreed and empathized with each other, offering similar narratives. During planning, they shared alternatives to what was proposed. However, they did not directly challenge ideas–instead, these alternatives often shifted topics while still working within the frameworks PTs were using.

Discourses

Three discourses—niceness, individualism, and practicality — played a significant role in how group members interacted to navigate tensions in their student teaching.

Niceness: Hand in hand with PTs' displays of empathy for one another, they refrained from directly challenging each other's thinking. This approach to group interactions demonstrated the challenges of caring for others while maintaining criticality. Replacing care with a discourse of niceness may have led group members to reify harmful deficit ideologies about teaching and students. Group members did not directly challenge each other's thinking. Instead, they offered suggestions that the presenter often took up.

Individualism: One of the central tensions PTs experienced was between individualistic and collaborative discourses for teaching. Leah illustrated in Case 1 how her MT's lack of collaboration led her to adopt an individualistic approach to collaboration by maintaining a "good" relationship built on not discussing hot moments. However, both PTs and I dreamt of collaboration. Leah and I wanted her to critically collaborate with her mentor teacher. Group members suggested that Tracy collaborate with Special Education staff and teachers to develop plans for her new student. In fact, during planning, PTs often *made plans to work with others*

toward collective goals after receiving suggestions to discuss and collaborate from group members. In Case 2, Tracy's wobble scene highlights the need for individual and collaborative actions to support students and teach effectively.

Practicality: PTs focused on what was practical in line with their goals of "making changes" in response to their tensions. What could *they* do, individually or collaboratively, to affect change? The dominance of this discourse in discussions highlighted how out of place my hypothetical question ("If you could do whatever…" lines 181-182) felt upon analysis. PTs critically engaged with one another and teaching by situating their discussions within particular figured worlds developed individually and collectively. Yet, these critical engagements were subtle and not unpacked (unless by me during debriefs or reviews).

Alignment

In case 2, group members created alignment by sharing similar views on the topic. Even when I intervened, I did so from my perspective as a teacher. While my language choices reflected a didactic instructional mode, I still drew on frameworks (e.g., "close the door") that PTs introduced.

The group's location outside of the university or classrooms allowed it to take on a different meaning. The PTs treated it less as research or student-ing and more as an opportunity to share stories and collaborate with each other.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how PTs navigated tensions with policies in their student teaching. While they often saw policies as things they had to enforce, PTs used their discretion to actively ignore some policies when afforded privacy or freedom. In fact, Tracy advised creating a classroom within a classroom with a "closed door, behind a closed door." However, privacy was not the first choice; instead, it was a last resort. Charlotte's worries about opening her classroom to a harmful community are even more prescient today as state and federal legislation gives family and community members (and students and colleagues) authority to challenge the texts teachers read, the content they teach, and the strategies they use to teach them.

In the second half of the chapter, I examined how the problem of practice protocol supported PTs in navigating tensions. PTs named being able to tell their stories and hear from others, collaborative problem solving, and preparing them to work with future colleagues as

benefits of the group. Then, I examined two scenes with PTs discussing their tensions to analyze how PTs were supported. Similar results to PTs responses yielded having opportunities to speak and listen, collaboratively working toward solving a problem, and practical responsive advice that could be applied in current situations and future teaching.

Notably, the group meetings complemented what PTs did in their university coursework (field seminar) and student teaching. In the university setting, PTs were learning equitable teaching strategies that they might apply in their future teaching. Similarly, in their student teaching placements, PTs were learning how to teach through practice and mentorship. However, neither of these settings offered PTs opportunities to talk explicitly about student teaching and navigating the tensions they encountered during student teaching. Furthermore, this study has shown that some PTs rarely had opportunities to meaningfully collaborate with colleagues toward shared goals, which the group enabled them to do.

PTs constructed and collaborated to build interactive frameworks they could use to resolve tensions in their student teaching and professional relationships. These were not *my* ways, as I had initially anticipated in developing the study. As a white male teacher educator who is multiply privileged by my identities, these findings demonstrate that I must work to understand better and align with the interactive frameworks that the PTs in this study and my teaching develop. Understanding what I meant when I wrote that I wanted to support students in navigating tensions is key. I did not want them to take on *my* framework for navigating tensions. Instead, I hoped they would collaboratively develop their own in response to their contexts. Ultimately, they did. The results were messier and more ambiguous than the "clean" approach I sought.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction: Research Problem and Objectives

I set out in this study to better understand the tensions Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers experienced during student teaching, how they navigated those tensions, and how to support them. I situated my research within a problem space common for SecELA PTs interested in advocacy: PTs enter field placement classrooms intending to work in ways that align with particular personal and programmatic visions for teaching and learning. However, they experience professional tensions as they attempt to navigate the multiple settings, identities, and expectations of university coursework, student teaching, and K-12 classroom teaching. In short, PTs' contexts mediate how they enact teaching practices. Commonly referred to as the two-worlds (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) or the multiple-worlds pitfall (Smagorinsky et al., 2013), PTs feel pulled in many directions at once by competing centers of gravity. The existing body of research on how SecELA PTs navigate tensions focuses primarily on how contextual factors support or constrain PTs to enact pedagogical practices in K-12 classrooms that they learned in their university coursework.

However, this existing research centers on university-based teacher education programs and the knowledge produced there. Furthermore, this research does not adequately investigate how critical stances taught in university-based teacher education programs differently position PTs within their professional preparation, particularly during student teaching–where PTs are expected to apprentice into the profession through gradually increasing responsibility. Instead, I sought to center the knowledge SecELA PTs produced through their experiences. What tensions did they identify? How did they plan to navigate those tensions? How did they follow through on their plans? Why or why not did their plans match their actions? By examining these questions, I shifted the focus toward PTs' experiences in contexts.

My objectives were to support preservice teachers in successfully navigating the tensions they experienced during student teaching. I sought to understand PTs' strategies to navigate tensions to meet this objective. Understanding how they navigated tensions would enable me to

support them and other preservice and novice teachers in navigating complex, often conflicting, and competing contexts to teach in ways aligned with their values. This included practical strategies for PTs and teacher educators (including university-based instructors and mentor teachers) as well as suggestions for coursework and field experiences, teacher education programs, and the more extensive policy landscape.

I initially planned to focus on curricular and instructional practices because prior research in English Education emphasized the wide range of approaches to curriculum and teaching available in Secondary English. However, PTs quickly shifted the study's focus toward navigating professional tensions, such as complex and dynamic relationships with their mentor teacher or navigating potentially harmful school policies. These tensions were rarely isolated, though. Thus, I sought to recognize how these different tensions PTs navigated wove together and how PTs drew on particular interactive frameworks and Capital-D Discourses to maintain alignment with others across multiple figured worlds, positions, and storylines. An unforeseen inquiry that developed from these analyses was exploring how student teaching and teaching more broadly were constructed and framed through teacher preparation and working to reframe student teaching and teaching to align better with reform-oriented professional goals. Lastly, I sought to understand how participating in the group supported participants in the study to navigate tensions and how that knowledge could be applied to new and different contexts.

In the next section, I summarize the study's key findings by research question.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings by Research Question

7.2.1 Research Question 1: What Tensions Did PTs Navigate During Student Teaching?

To examine research question 1, I analyzed 152 tension scenes PTs discussed during interviews and group meetings. This analysis yielded three major categories of tensions: professional tensions, instructional tensions, and classroom environment tensions.

7.2.1.1 Navigating Professional Tensions

PTs most often talked about navigating professional tensions. Professional tensions included how they managed relationships with their mentor teacher and colleagues, used their discretion when enacting policies, interacted with families and community members, and perceived themselves as teachers. Significantly, nearly half of all tension scenes involved PTs navigating tensions with their mentor teachers. These tensions included misalignment in

mentoring, teaching, and classroom environment practices. For example, Charlotte, Eva, and Leah wobbled about responding when their MTs stepped in while they led instruction. Instructional and classroom management tensions included approaches to grading and preferences for the type of classroom that best supported student learning. Ultimately, PTs' focus on tensions with MTs demonstrated their sense of student teaching as relationship-based, with PTs being matched with MTs, not schools. As a result, MTs sometimes functioned as clear or ambiguous gatekeepers to their classes, classrooms, the school, and the profession more broadly.

PTs also navigated professional tensions related to policies, colleague relationships, families/communities, and teacher identity. PTs reasoned with their role in enacting policies they believed were harmful to students, especially when those policies were already in place in their classrooms before they started. Colleague relationships also played a role with PTs such as Tracy. Tracy's attempts to navigate her co-teacher's approach to supporting students proved difficult, even when she approached the situation from multiple perspectives.

Significantly, PTs did not identify tensions with families or community members, nor did they identify tensions with their teacher identity, except when prompted. By teacher identity, I specifically refer to the intersection of personal identities, such as race and gender, with a professional identity as a teacher. The lack of surfaced tensions did not signal to me that PTs did not experience tensions related to these professional topics. Instead, it highlighted how talking about families, community members, and teacher identity was not immediately salient for white women teaching in schools that followed traditional relationships between schools, families, and the community.

7.2.1.2 Navigating Instructional Tensions

Additionally, PTs navigated instructional tensions related to teaching practices. These tensions included planning/curriculum, instructional activities, and feedback, assessment, and grading. Especially during Interview 1s, PTs frequently identified tensions with planning and curriculum. However, PTs rarely moved from identifying these tensions to resolving them, feeling stymied by their contexts. For example, Tracy brought up how she felt pressure to conform to what other teachers on her 8th-grade team wanted to do, even if she disagreed. Similarly, Tracy identified her MT and school as leading her to conform to existing curricula rather than attempt to make changes.

Instructional activities played a minor role in the tensions PTs experienced. Through small stories in their talk during interviews and meetings, PTs demonstrated that they made many small instructional changes. However, I did not discern how PTs navigated instructional tensions by observing their teaching. Madison most frequently discussed tensions concerning instructional activities. She wanted students to collaborate more and give effective feedback on each other's writing. Additionally, two PTs reflected on how they used instructional activities to build relationships with students.

Lastly, PTs navigated feedback, assessment, and grading by identifying existing grading practices in the classroom and reflecting on how they resolved tensions, often by actively ignoring existing grading policies. While Leah and Charlotte experienced a lack of clarity around grading, Eva and Madison felt burdened by the expectations of International Baccalaureate rubrics and standards-based grading.

7.2.1.3 Classroom Environment Tensions

Over ⅓ of the tension scenes related to the classroom environment. Classroom environment tensions referred to classroom management/discipline or building relationships with students. PTs like Leah, Tracy, and Eva shared similar management/discipline tensions as they felt they had different classroom management styles and values than their mentor teachers. However, whereas Leah and Tracy generally described themselves in more permissive and compassionate terms than their MTs, Eva worried her MT was too tolerant of students' behavior. In contrast, Charlotte shared a classroom management style with her mentor teacher, Harper, but felt tension with the school administration's approach to disciplining one of the 6th-grade students in her class.

Tensions concerning relationships with students included focusing on building relationships with individual students and tensions with other aspects of teaching that affected relationships with all students in the classroom. For example, Leah attempted to build a strong relationship with a student, William, despite her mentor teacher's less supportive relationship with him. Leah, Charlotte, and Tracy zeroed in on individual students to consider how best to support them. Tracy also emphasized how classroom management policies, such as White Oak Woods's zero-tolerance phone policy, could significantly impact relationships with students.

7.2.1.4 Other Noticings

No Two Contexts Alike

No two PTs navigated the same tensions. In other words, no two contexts were alike. Even in the same district (Leah and Charlotte) or at the same school (Eva and Madison), PTs' interactions with their contexts led them to identify and work through different tensions.

Entangled Tensions

Tensions often merged to form complex knots that PTs had to untangle. For example, professional tensions concerning "stepping in" often related to the setting of student teaching, threading through the cross-purposes pitfall at the same time they wove together with instructional and classroom environment tensions of classroom teaching. As a result, PTs had to navigate taking up multiple positions in multiple interactive frameworks within and across the settings of student teaching and K-12 classrooms, often in conflict, at the same time.

7.2.2 Research Question 1a: How Were These Tensions Reflected in Program and State Policy Documents?

To examine research question 1a, I applied the tension codes from PTs to program and state standards. Then, I used prepositioning analysis to determine how policies that laid out the expectations for student teaching constructed positions and storylines within frameworks that may have contributed to the tensions PTs discussed. Lastly, I explored how these policy documents articulated concepts of "tension" related to differences, challenges, or conflicts specific to professional differences.

7.2.2.1 Standards: Instructional Practices

Most frequently, standards documents at the program and state levels focused on instructional practices. This emphasis ranged from 121/134 of the ELA standards to 25/45 program standards and 15/28 state professional standards. However, for the program, focusing on standards specifically evaluated during student teaching, the ratio increased significantly to 18/22. State standards, explicitly focused on secondary English language arts, focused on specific pedagogical knowledge for instruction. In contrast, program standards, generalized to all secondary content areas, provided a high-leverage practices approach.

7.2.2.2 Standards: Professional Practices

The second most prominent standards category across the three documents focused on professional practices. Nearly half of the professional knowledge and skills (13/28) and 15/45 of the program standards applied to professional practices, while 15/134 of the ELA-specific state standards did. These standards involved collaborating with colleagues, building relationships with families and the community, being knowledgeable about state and federal policies, and developing a particular teacher identity. However, none of the standards related to professional practices were evaluated during student teaching, which mainly focused on planning, observation, and reflection cycles.

7.2.2.3 Standards: Classroom Environment Practices

Classroom environment practices were infrequently found in the program and state standards documents, although they were present across all three. While classroom environment practices were the least written about of the three categories, those standards focused explicitly on social justice-oriented approaches to managing the classroom and building relationships with students that went beyond traditional discourses of "management" as authoritarian discipline and relationships as strictly teacher/student.

7.2.2.4 Prepositioning: Preservice Teacher and Mentor Teacher

Policy documents focused much of their prepositioning on preservice teachers and mentor teachers. In general, a PT was a novice working with an expert MT. MTs were also hosts or directors, controlling the space and directing PTs. In fact, the program handbook highlighted the relationship between novice and student by taking on a didactic tone toward PTs. In effect, PTs were welcome in the program if they followed directions and met expectations. In contrast, state expectations positioned PTs as active in a collaborative mentoring process. Nevertheless, this collaboration felt stymied by the nonreciprocal expectations of observation and summative evaluation. In other words, mentor teachers' evaluations of preservice teachers had consequences for PTs' professional future, whereas preservice teachers' evaluations of mentor teachers *may* lead the program to look elsewhere for future MT volunteers. Regardless of intention, these policy documents did not present preservice teachers as knowledge experts or agents in their preparation to teach.

What complicated the novice positioning of the PT was the expectation to "increase responsibility for teaching and learning through legitimate participation." Legitimate participation meant being a teacher to students and a mentee or apprentice to their mentor. The didactic program language and nonreciprocal expectations set out by the state overlooked changes in the positioning of the mentorship relationship within student teaching.

RSU's evaluation tool illustrated the tension with shifting relationships between PTs and their MTs during student teaching. The tool used three criteria to determine proficiency: skill, intentionality/frequency, and independence (p. 4). Aligned with the view of student teaching as taking on increasing responsibility through legitimate participation, the evaluation tool created an expectation of eventually independently teaching specific practices at the right time. Complicating this idea of independence is the expectation that PTs took advantage of all the support available to them as they continued to develop as teachers. Thus, the evaluation tool offered a perspective on teaching that emphasized independence, characterizing a well-started beginning teacher as someone who no longer needed support and collaboration.

7.2.2.5 Prepositioning: Program and Schools

Program and State policy documents differed in how they positioned programs and schools. State clinical expectations described the relationship between university programs and schools as a "mutually beneficial" "partnership." Meanwhile, RSU's handbook constructed the relationship as more hierarchical, with the program determining the expectations and requirements for success in the program and student teaching.

7.2.2.6 Professional Heterogeneity

Program and state policy documents largely ignored professional heterogeneity, the range of possible professional frameworks and ideologies available in teaching secondary English Language Arts and mentoring preservice teachers. While standards embedded expectations for advocacy and addressing student inequities, little attention was given to potential misalignments in achieving these goals. For example, state ELA standards addressed standard language ideology without marking it as a potentially problematic and challenging concept to teach students in a society where standard language ideology is the dominant view on language teaching in schools. In contrast, program standards did not address justice as explicitly, opting for subjectively "safer" terms like "student-centered."

Differences in approaches to teaching, mentoring, and collaboration broadly with colleagues, families, and community members created professional tensions that the standards documents did not explicitly address. This lack of attention to professional differences could leave PTs to navigate complex professional realities with implicit and unresolved tensions. While some standards approached communicating across differences, they were far outweighed by a dominant image of pedagogical content knowledge. As a result of this focus, PTs may have had minimal strategies to navigate a profession working to maintain a professional identity amid deskilling and deprofessionalization.

Furthermore, the policy documents' emphasis on independence may have contrasted with the reality of teaching's collaborative and context-dependent nature. This push for independence amid the opportunity to foster an increasingly collaborative profession created additional challenges for PTs aiming to align their practices around collective action and shared goals.

Ultimately, these documents highlighted why PTs in the study may have experienced inevitable professional, instructional, and classroom environment tensions during student teaching. The documents reflected the dissonance between hierarchical, individualistic expectations set by program and state policies (and teaching culture) and the collaborative, multifaceted realities of teaching.

7.2.3 Research Question 2: How Did PTs Talk About Navigating Tensions They Experienced During Student Teaching?

To explore research question 2, I used a multicase design to explore how Charlotte, Eva, and Leah navigated tensions with their mentor teachers. Furthermore, I analyzed how all PTs navigated class and school policies.

7.2.3.1 "A Good Relationship Between Us": How PTs Navigated MT Relationships

Charlotte, Eva, and Leah navigated tensions of their mentor teacher "stepping in" during instruction. However, each PT perceived the "stepping in" differently. Charlotte recognized Harper's co-teaching uptake of classroom management as a split of responsibilities. However, Charlotte appreciated Harper's modeling and planned to manage student behaviors similarly. Eva framed Jen's stepping in as supporting her and ensuring students were learning. Yet Eva also sought to try and fail to teach independently because she knew she would need to lead the class on her own when she no longer had Jen to support her. As she said, "I will be by myself

eventually." In contrast, Leah conceived Rebecca's stepping in as an imposition in mentoring and teaching. Leah's lack of alignment with Rebecca regarding teaching was exacerbated when Rebecca stepped in as a form of mentoring. Instead, Leah preferred to teach on her own in her own way.

These differences between how Charlotte, Eva, and Leah framed tensions with their mentor teachers reflected how they constructed the figured worlds of student teaching and classroom teaching. In the figured world of student teaching, PTs were expected to demonstrate proficiency by taking on increasing responsibility for teaching while receiving support from their mentors. In contrast, the figured world of classroom teaching emphasized independence and personal responsibility for instruction and classroom management. These worlds were often at cross-purposes because student teaching emphasized mentorship and practice while classroom teaching focused on independence and individual responsibility.

The dominant storyline of student teaching concerning instruction was one of compliance with the expectations and norms of their mentor teacher. The traditional apprenticeship model positioned MTs as experts and PTs as apprentices. PTs' tensions with mentor teachers highlighted their misalignment with this traditional model, both in terms of instructional modeling and mentorship. PTs wanted to balance mentorship with a desire for independence and practice in their positions as classroom teachers. Leah, for example, attempted to balance her need to maintain a "good relationship" professionally with her mentor teacher while enacting her values in her teaching role.

I described Charlotte's, Eva's, and Leah's approaches to maintaining alignment as following in step, stepping with, and sidestepping, respectively. Following in step referred to Charlotte adopting a non-confrontational framework and gradually taking on more responsibility through observation and imitation of her MT's practices. Charlotte used this strategy to transition responsibility for classroom management from co-teaching to independent lead teaching. Stepping with meant engaging directly with mentor teachers to create mutual understanding and shared strategies for mentorship. For example, Eva co-constructed a support strategy with her mentor teacher through a shared signal she could use to ask for help while leading the class. Lastly, sidestepping referred to avoiding direct confrontation and finding alternative ways to align teaching practices with personal values. For instance, Leah avoided confronting her mentor

teacher, instead choosing to interact directly with students and, flipping expectations, "model" for her mentor teacher for how she should treat students.

I add here that Tracy's decision to confront her co-teacher illustrated a fourth approach PTs used to navigate relationships with colleagues. However, the different dynamics and lack of "mentorship" in the relationship led me not to include it. I would classify Tracy's approach as "calling in" because she invited her co-teacher to collaborate to support students in the class. Nevertheless, Tracy admitted that any changes were short-lived as the co-teacher quickly reverted to previous teaching practices after any collaborative interventions.

When PTs navigated relationships with their MTs, they often drew on discourses of noninterference, niceness, and individualism.[5] In terms of individualism, all three PTs constructed teaching as individualistic and independent, trying to balance this individualism with the collaboration afforded by student teaching (at least for Eva and Charlotte). Charlotte and Leah ascribed to noninterference as it entwined with niceness by avoiding potentially thorny conversations that may have led to negative feelings between themselves and their MTs. However, Charlotte and Leah also drew on these discourses to navigate their tensions. For example, Charlotte stepped up after following in step without ever discussing the shifts in expectations and responsibilities with her MT. Importantly, Leah's sidestepping drawing on noninterference and niceness was best illustrated when she and her MT gave directions to students instead of discussing instructional moves with each other. In that instance, Leah relied on discourses of not interfering in another teacher's practice and avoiding potential conflict to teach in ways that aligned with her values.

7.2.3.2 "Close Your Doors…And Do What's Best For Your Students": How PTs Navigated Policies

PTs approached navigating policies differently from how they navigated mentor teacher tensions. Similar to navigating mentor teacher tensions, PTs described storylines where they felt pressured to compromise and conform to the policies enacted by their mentor teachers and schools. For example, Charlotte described the process of student teaching as "just boxes" she had

[5] Castagno's (2019) edited volume, *The Price of Nice: How Good Intentions Maintain Educational Inequity*, investigates the relationships between niceness and race, gender, and geography. Of note for this study is the predilection of white women to be nice and Midwesterners to engage in a particular kind of niceness called "Midwest nice."

to check, requiring her to mold herself into a certain kind of preservice teacher. Furthermore, in contrast, PTs perceived their future teaching contexts as settings where they would have more, if not "complete authority" (Madison) to teach how they wanted.

However, rather than focusing on maintaining relationships with their MTs, PTs navigating policy tensions constructed storylines concerning actively ignoring policies while *avoiding* surveillance or being afforded the freedom to use their discretion when enacting policies. PTs actively ignored policies while avoiding surveillance by choosing policies that existed outside of the classroom and not under the eyes of their mentor teachers. For example, Leah and Madison did not assign penalties for late work. Leah took over all grading early in the semester, allowing her to use her discretion to implement or ignore her mentor teacher's grading policies. In comparison, ignoring policies *during* or *inside* instruction required absent or lenient MTs. Leah shared how her MT was often absent from class, allowing her leniency concerning the school's cell phone policy (phones go in the phone cubby). Meanwhile, Tracy shared how Cheryl gave her the "freedom" to teach differently, highlighting examples of the phone policy and noise levels during independent work time.

The primary interactive framework PTs used to navigate tensions with policies was discretionary noncompliance, which drew on discourses of privacy and individualism dominant in teaching. In contrast, Charlotte offered a collaborative framework where stakeholders played an active role in a public-facing classroom. However, she acknowledged that the reality of this framework was often dependent on shared views between teachers and most community members.

Navigating policies inside or outside of instruction while avoiding others' scrutiny drew on privacy discourse. Privacy discourse for PTs echoed advice for their future teaching to "close the door" and do what was best for students. Tracy expanded on the metaphor of the closed door, elucidating that PTs could construct closed doors *behind* closed doors in their mentor teachers' classrooms. When privacy was not an option, PTs relied on discourses of individualism, and, more implicitly, noninterference and niceness. Some MTs, like Cheryl, offered PTs opportunities to develop their own approaches to teaching. Without openly communicating about these differences, PTs would have relied on discourses of noninterference and niceness rather than collaboration. It was unclear in Tracy's case whether she spoke with her mentor teacher about their professional differences concerning policies and whether they made plans together to

address those differences, although Tracy was the only PT who described her teaching with her MT as co-teaching *throughout* the semester.

PTs maintained alignment while navigating policies on shaky footing. They acted with temporary authority in their discretionary noncompliance, recognizing that their MT could deconstruct their classroom within a classroom at any moment. Charlotte's ideal/real contrast highlighted how, when public, alignment required creating shared goals with stakeholders. She and the other PTs did not practice constructing this alignment.

7.2.4 Research Question 3: How Did Participating in a Problem of Practice Protocol Group Support Secondary English Language Arts Preservice Teachers in Navigating Tensions During Student Teaching?

To explore research question 3, I drew on PTs' responses during meetings and interviews concerning their takeaways from participating in discussions and the study overall. Then, I contextualized those responses by examining two meeting excerpts using the combined framing/positioning analysis.

7.2.4.1 Benefits of Participating in the Group

PTs identified three main benefits to participating in the group. First, PTs described the benefits of having a setting to share their student teaching experiences, especially the tensions they were experiencing. Eva named this "suffer loudly," instead of keeping quiet. Second, the group functioned as a setting for PTs to solve their practical problems from student teaching collaboratively. In doing this work, they co-constructed new knowledge, such as developing strategies for navigating tensions. For example, Charlotte contributed the language of "slyly maneuver" to describe Leah's sidestepping of her mentor teacher and even offered additional information about how other teachers talked about Leah's mentor teacher at her school site. This practical, collaborative problem-solving worked well because the group shared a vision for navigating tensions. Lastly, PTs discussed how they foresaw participating in the group benefiting their future teaching. I interpreted this as the group allowing PTs to talk through professional tensions, such as co-teaching with colleagues, without it being part of any class or evaluation.

Importantly, the group complemented PTs' existing field seminar and the work of their field instructors. The field seminar and group meetings served different functions for PTs. Where the group meetings offered opportunities to talk through tensions and problem solve, PTs' field

seminar offered PTs tools and resources they might use in their classroom. The field seminar also covered all required program expectations. Furthermore, while field instructors advocated for PTs and acted as a go-between for the program, PTs, and mentor teachers in schools, I worked solely with the PTs, allowing me to focus on them.

7.2.4.2 Comparing Multiple Cases of Intervention

The group meetings offered PTs a third-space where they could discuss the RSU's teacher education program, student teaching, and K-12 classroom teaching. This setting allowed PTs to share experiences and co-construct knowledge outside of the immediate tensions of these contexts.

Group meetings followed specific, explicit storylines. During the main part of meetings, PTs identified tensions, collaborated to plan navigation strategies, and reflected on outcomes. Sharing stories and ideas with each other enabled PTs to empathize with each other's challenges and develop potential solutions collaboratively. The start and end of meetings took on a more instructional model, with starting thought questions and opportunities for PTs to ask me specific questions after meetings ended. I wanted to preserve the main chunk of meetings so that PTs could speak with each other.

During discussions, PTs took on the roles of presenter and consultant. The presenter shared specific tensions they encountered. Consultants asked clarifying questions and offered feedback and suggestions. These positions were explicitly defined in the first meeting as roles for the PTs. As part of these positions, PTs simultaneously cast themselves as teachers discussing with other teachers. Their questions and suggestions stemmed from their developing expertise as professionals.

In contrast, I positioned myself as the meeting facilitator rather than an instructor or authority figure. I aimed to minimize the traditional power dynamic brought about by my previous experiences with PTs as their instructor/teacher educator, my current experiences with PTs as a researcher, and my positionality as a white man. However, I experienced tensions with my self-positioning when PTs shared certain ideas, such as when Leah talked about not talking with her mentor teacher about disciplining William (Case 1) or Tracy and the group planning how to support the new student in her class (Case 2).

The leading interactive framework across both cases was dialogic. The presenter's centrality in discussing their tension offered them a position of authority, which they shared with

others as they invited questions and suggestions. PTs often built off one another's ideas, offering suggestions in line with existing lines of thinking. These discussions were characterized by empathizing with peers, collaborative problem-solving, and non-hierarchical exchange of ideas.

This framework made me rethink how I wanted to contribute to the group. In my nonintervention during Leah's reflection, I positioned myself primarily as a teacher educator who wanted Leah to challenge her thinking. In contrast, during Tracy's identification and planning of her tension with how to support her new student, I positioned myself as both a teacher educator and former teacher. I wanted to challenge PTs' thinking about how to support the student because I worried they might get stuck within a framework of policy compliance. While I felt comfortable positioning myself as a consultant, my choices did not position me as an equal partner. For example, I said, "I want you all to think a little bit more about this" before sharing that I had experienced the same situation in my teaching. My moves during the discussion highlighted how I wobbled between positioning myself as a thought partner and an educator. When I intervened, I drew on frameworks (e.g., close the door) that PTs had introduced, reframing the discussion around an existing group framework. I am still unsure what this positioning should look like and how best to support PTs in a role during group meetings. Nevertheless, avoiding the positioning of an evaluator brought on by being a field instructor, course instructor, or mentor teacher softened any potential power dynamic that may have made my choices feel instructor-ly to PTs.

Regarding discourses, PTs engaged in collaborative discourses, sharing openly and vulnerably with each other. At the same time, they focused on what was practical on an individual level: what could they do to make changes in their student teaching placements? I facilitated this discourse by framing the group to participants, focusing on their capacity to enact change individually (as opposed to theoretical discussions of institutional barriers). The structure of the group also allowed PTs to engage in noninterference discourses. Each member could choose what and how much to disclose to others without the possibility of discomfort from the other members infringing on their teaching settings.

7.3 Discussion of Findings by Research Question

7.3.1 Research Question 1 Discussion

7.3.1.1 Competing Entangled Ideologies and Frameworks

Findings from Question 1 confirm existing research that describe tensions as emerging from competing ideologies and frameworks within particular contexts (e.g., Fowler-Amato et al., 2019; Smagorinsky et al., 2013). PTs in the study navigated tensions brought on by competing centers of gravity related to professional practices, instructional practices, and classroom environment practices. This study extended and bridged studies of instructional and curricular tensions (e.g., Dunn et al., 2018; Macaluso et al., 2016) with those examining the complicated, dynamic interactions between student teachers and mentor teachers (e.g., Rubin, 2018) within and across settings of learning to teach. These interactions highlight differential mentorship preferences for PTs and preference shifts over time. This knotty tension for PTs complicates existing research in which mentoring preferences of mentor teachers are primarily constructed as static (Kavanagh et al., 2023). These preferences aligned more closely with the integrated approach to mentoring put forth by Orland-Barak and Wang (2021), which draws on different approaches to mentoring depending on in-the-moment exigencies.

7.3.1.2 Curriculum

I anticipated that making changes to curriculum would be central to the study, as reading texts that represent diverse perspectives and creating authentic assessments are central to social justice curriculum in ELA (Limlamai, 2022, 2023). However, PTs frequently identified but rarely acted on tensions with curriculum and planning. This finding was most prominent in Tracy's case. Importantly, Tracy was the only PT to student teach at a school with a student population comprised of majority students of color and low standardized test scores. Yet all PTs experienced barriers to changing curriculum. Eva and Madison felt curtailed by the expectations of international baccalaureate. Charlotte entered a classroom setting with existing curricular routines related to grammar and language. Tracy was told by her mentor teacher to abandon her attempt at a creative summative assessment in lieu of a standard five-paragraph essay. Leah had to react to her mentor teacher's approach to forward planning. None of the PTs had carte blanche to create and teach a curriculum from scratch.

7.3.1.3 Expanding The Classroom Community

PTs experienced no direct tensions with families or community members. This departs from prior research on PTs' experiences with families that depicted families as deficits,

particularly in urban schools (Barnes, 2020) and more recent depictions of families and community members as potential adversaries (e.g., Ellis & Goering, 2023). However, these findings align with historic experiences of interacting with families and community members during student teaching, which are minimal. Nevertheless, families and community members now play an outsized role in the classroom. For example, PTs were aware of and had indirectly experienced anti-DEI sentiments. However, a mentor teacher handled the only instance where a parent shared these sentiments. Since this study took place, vocalizing anti-DEI sentiments has increased alongside legislative oversight. PTs' dearth of experience working and communicating with families and communities demonstrates a teaching framework that continues to act like shutting the door is possible when it is not (Ranschaert, 2023). This finding highlights a gap in the increasingly public profession of teaching addressed in analysis of policies in the next question.

7.3.2 Research Question 1a Discussion

7.3.2.1 (Student) Teaching as Independent

For the most part, program and State policy documents constructed student teaching, and teaching more broadly, as independent. Instructional practices dominated program and state standards, which focused on PTs developing pedagogical content knowledge for teaching (state standards; Shulman, 1987) or enacting high-leverage practices (program standards; Ball & Forzani, 2009; TeachingWorks, n.d.). This perspective of teaching as independent aligns with the prevailing image of a teacher in front of the classroom instructing students (Korthagen, 2004). Similar to McDonald's (2008) findings that assignments in social justice teacher education programs framed social justice through individualistic discourse, the program's evaluation tool singled out independence as a key criteria for proficiency.

This emphasis on developing independence contradicts collaborative teaching models prevalent in contemporary education literature (Ghousseini et al., 2021; Little, 1990). Communicative, collaborative, and community-focused standards and expectations across policy documents could be shifted from the periphery to the center.

7.3.2.2 What do policies have to do with it?

The analysis of how policy documents reflect PTs' tensions contributes to a growing body of literature that examines the multiple roles policies and legislation can and do play in

preservice teachers' professional training (e.g., Ervin & Gannon, 2024). The state standards and expectations analyzed in this study reflected progressive expectations for preparing Secondary English Language Arts teachers. As teaching increasingly becomes embedded in policy discussions, these findings highlight how PTs and teacher educators must be aware of and can leverage policies in their practice.

7.3.2.3 Novice Positioning

This study adds to critical analyses of PT positioning during student teaching (Rubin, 2018). Within an apprenticeship model, preservice teachers move from the periphery to the center in a community of practice as they take on increasing responsibility for teaching (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, critical approaches to teacher education, particularly what Cochran-Smith (1991b) referred to as critical dissonance, deconstruct what is central in the community of practice. In other words, teacher education programs position PTs to critique and challenge the teaching in schools. At best, this leads to collaborative partnerships between PTs and MTs as they work together to challenge inequitable practices, what Cochran-Smith called collaborative resonance. This study highlighted the dissonance baked into policy documents, where PTs were simultaneously expected to follow the expectations of their mentor teacher while working to offset the inequities of schooling. These policy documents treated the content of learning to teach as unified and fixed when the situation is much messier. Without collaborating MTs, PTs had few opportunities to challenge the traditional hierarchical model of student teaching.

7.3.2.4 University, School, and Community Partnerships

Aligning coursework and field experiences has long been known as a fundamental need to build program coherence and support PTs' development (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Comparing program and state policy documents illustrated different approaches to building partnerships that enabled program coherence. Following a university-centered high-leverage practices approach (TeachingWorks, n.d.), RSU's teacher education program sought to prepare PTs with practices they could enact in the field. Thus, the partnership followed a model of transferring knowledge from the university to K-12 schools. By contrast, state documents emphasized a mutually beneficial partnership co-constructed between university programs and schools. These different conceptualizations of the relationship between university-based teacher

education programs and schools are bound to lead to tension (Zeichner, 2010) and deserve further study.

7.3.2.5 Professional Heterogeneity

PTs' experiences with various competing approaches to English Language Arts, mentoring, and professionalism were largely absent from policy documents for the program and state. This finding demonstrates the contrast between literature that illustrates the variety of approaches to teaching English Language Arts (e.g., Beach et al., 2016; Brauer & Clark, 2008; Macaluso et al., 2016; Muhammad, 2020) and mentoring (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021) and standards that portray the subject and its preparation as unified, fixed, and unchanging. Even state standards focused on explicitly critical approaches to English Language Arts did not account for the variety of perspectives PTs would encounter. PTs familiar with pseudo-collaborative approaches to professionalism (Hargreaves, 2000) as students in their teacher education programs may noticeably struggle as they experience the culture and language of performance management in schools (Sachs, 2016).

7.3.3 Research Question 2 Discussion

7.3.3.1 Compliance, Slyly Maneuvering, Critical Collaboration, Explicit Challenge: Exploring the Middle

PTs slyly maneuvered within their settings to navigate tensions while maintaining alignment within and across figured worlds. These strategies represent the strategic flexibility PTs need to navigate complex political school contexts (Williamson & Warrington, 2019). The strategies PTs used, specifically the different ways to "step" in relation to their MTs and actively ignoring policies, contribute to research that examines how PTs work within their contexts to enact teaching aligned with their goals. Research examining restrictive contexts for learning to teach emphasizes how frequently PTs comply with existing practices, even if they view those practices as harmful (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). I see this as a way of maintaining alignment in contexts where compliance feels like the only option. Furthermore, in general, teachers do not critically collaborate with each other, instead often relying on norms of noninterference and niceness in their interactions (Ghousseini et al., 2021; Little, 1990a). This is a problem for PTs navigating contexts mediated primarily by their mentor teachers. As a result, at the other end of

the continuum of activism, which looks like a fork, PTs can potentially lead to misalignment if PTs call in (call to collaborate) or call out (challenge) teaching.

However, in the middle and in the moment, PTs can draw on several strategies to enact teaching that aligns with their values while working within the system and maintaining alignment, even if on shaky ground. Recognizing how secondary ELA and student teaching are discursively (re)constructed can allow PTs to find "footholds" in a field and settings constantly under construction (McKenzie et al., 2017). I see maintaining step with their mentor teachers and actively ignoring policies as similar strategies to adapting curriculum to state standards and emphasizing that connection when speaking with potential objectors. Ultimately, PTs finding ways to get even one foot in the door as they embrace tensions and uncertainty may have advantages for their self-efficacy and retention (Stewart et al., 2019).

7.3.3.2 Maintaining Step

Mentor teachers stepping in has long been considered a form of mentorship (Schwille, 2008). Stanulis and Russell (2000) found that "jumping in" was a form of mentoring within a framework of conscious collaboration in learning to teach. However, studies of mentoring preferences demonstrated that many mentor teachers perceived "stepping in" as "stepping on" the toes of their preservice teachers (Kavanagh et al., 2023). These approaches to noninterference in a PT's practice followed a personal growth approach to mentoring, where mentor teachers encouraged but did not intervene during instruction (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). In this study, PTs' tensions revealed a more nuanced view of stepping in. Rather than static, favored approaches, PTs shifted their preferences toward MTs stepping in over time and dependent on the situation. Early on, some PTs preferred co-teaching models and the support provided by stepping in. However, their preferences adjusted toward independence. Still, by the end of student teaching, three PTs taught independently, one co-taught with her mentor teacher and other co-teachers, and one facilitated a hybrid independent/co-teaching model. These preferences highlighted how PTs sought mentoring practices that responded to their developing and dynamic needs (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). These needs were primarily framed within the expectation that PTs would be without support in their future teaching, facing a precipice as they left the safety of their program for the classroom.

However, not all PTs can rely on conscious and critical collaboration with their mentor teachers. Often, PTs attempt to find footing in the middle ground between compliance and

misalignment. Charlotte found this alignment by following her mentor teacher “in step.” Leah “sidestepped” her mentor teacher to tenuously find her footing while still maintaining her commitments to teaching. Eva found her alignment by “stepping with” her mentor teacher. Cross-analysis of these cases demonstrates how PTs can navigate complex, conflicting, and shifting relationships with their MT alongside their own needs and commitments.

7.3.3.3 Discretionary Noncompliance

PTs in the study openly shared about actively ignoring class and school policies to do what they thought was best for students. Their discretionary noncompliance stemmed from two interactive frameworks they drew on: a privacy framework best illustrated by the phrase “close the door and teach” and an autonomy framework characterizing student teaching where PTs have some freedom to practice teaching in ways they see fit.

An internet search for the phrase “close the door” yields many blog posts on the drawbacks of closing the classroom door. Ayers et al. (2015) explain how closing the door draws on the value of independence and its relationship to autonomy. Closing the door functions literally to afford privacy, safety, and limit distractions from the outside world. Metaphorically, closing the door represents the departure from traditional teaching methods, often avoiding the surveillance of authority figures to center student needs and explore social issues. Furthermore, closing the door responds to teachers' real fears today: community backlash and being fired (Ranschaert, 2023). Ranschaert found that PTs described justice-oriented teachers as “bold individuals who overtly and consistently deconstructed current events and school policies to unearth systemic issues” (2023, p. 380). Yet PTs in Ranschaert’s study could not reconcile this vision with the kinds of teachers who could keep their jobs.

PTs constructing “closed doors, behind closed doors” (Tracy) demonstrated how they could use their discretion for when and how to ignore or shift policies. This professional practice “in the middle” was contained within their student teaching classroom doors. However, PTs also conceptualized how they would convey information about their teaching decisions to others, seeking the ideal situation of having the classroom extend far beyond the walls of the school “to have many players on your team,” as Charlotte said. At the same time, they recognized that their contexts could work to constrain such openness and collaboration. These literal and metaphorical doors reminded me of Bishop's (1990) metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Remixing the metaphor, PTs constructed their classrooms to be “read” by mentor teachers,

colleagues, families, and community members. Closing the door enabled PTs the independence to support students while also illustrating to PTs that they would need to respond to other stakeholders. Considering the vision of speculative figured worlds PTs can create is important for reform-oriented teaching.

Additionally, PTs drew on the expectations that they would practice teaching, trying and failing during student teaching to actively ignore some policies, particularly during instruction. Kavanagh et al. (2023) pointed out how most MTs in their study preferred not to interfere with PTs' instruction, instead focusing their mentoring on outside-of-the-action moves such as planning and debriefing. Their findings demonstrate norms of noninterference and niceness that characterize teaching culture (Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Ghousseini et al., 2021). Furthermore, these characteristics are representative of a personal growth approach to mentoring (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021), in which MTs focus on supporting PTs emotionally rather than giving feedback on their teaching. Tracy's example of shifting her mentor teacher's policy toward silence during independent work highlights how PTs can draw on these norms of student teaching and teaching to ignore or change how they enact policies while leading instruction.

7.3.3.4 Drawing on, Subverting, and Challenging Dominant Discourses

PTs drew on various dominant discourses in teaching to navigate their tensions. These included individualism, noninterference, niceness, and privacy (Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Ghousseini et al., 2021; Kavanagh et al., 2023; Little, 1990a, 1990b; Lortie, 1975). As a result, PTs could maintain alignment within and across systems, as their actions would fit within expected storylines and interactive frameworks. PTs also subverted these norms. For example, Leah chose to mirror her mentor teacher's choice to give directions to students during instruction. Her contradictory directions from the front of the room functioned to re-establish her as the authority and enable her to continue teaching aligned with her values. This interaction illustrates how Leah subverted the discourses of noninterference and niceness that frustrated and limited her perceived opportunities in other moments.

Many teacher educators argue for greater collaboration, taking collective action, and creating shared goals in teaching. Ghousseini et al.'s (2021) metaphor of breaking the fourth wall illustrates how these discourses limit critical and collaborative professionalism. However, PTs worked within figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) dominated by these discourses, revealing

how the burden of changing schools was often placed on individuals, particularly new teachers (Zeichner et al., 2015).

7.3.3.5 Increased focus on the sociopolitical context of the profession

The professional tensions PTs experienced and how they navigated them reveal an increased focus by PTs on the sociopolitical context of the profession. PTs were aware of how power moved within and between systems and how the contexts of schools supported and constrained particular ideas of professionalism (i.e., how to be a teacher, teacher-ing). PTs' tensions reflect those of teacher educators similarly navigating tensions to prepare PTs for the current sociopolitical contexts they will encounter (Roegman et al., 2021). This includes the relationship between teacher education programs and the schools they prepare PTs to enter as novice teachers, the relationships between teacher education programs and mentor teachers, and the continuing support of PTs once they complete their programs.

Furthermore, teacher educators have called for greater attention to sociopolitical discourse in preparing new teachers (Behizadeh, 2024). This focus on sociopolitical context departs somewhat from the recent (re)turn toward practice-based teacher education (Forzani, 2014; Grossman et al., 2009; Grossman, 2018; Zeichner, 2012), more closely aligning with Kavanagh's (2022) argument that practices cannot be separated from their contexts. As teachers are increasingly called upon to justify their decisions to stakeholders outside of their classroom, PTs' sociopolitical contexts increasingly mediate their learning to teach. In other words, the awareness/application gap (Pasternak et al., 2018) reveals that opportunity alone does not mean PTs will enact equitable and just teaching and that teaching is increasingly mediated by contextual factors known and unknown to PTs. Preparing PTs to navigate these sociopolitical contexts individually and collaboratively is central to preparing new teachers (Lillge & Knowles, 2020).

7.3.4 Research Question 3 Discussion

7.3.4.1 Problem of Practice Groups

Informal and formal, course-based, and third-space inquiry groups (in this case, Problem of practice groups) have supported PTs in a variety of ways (Behizadeh et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2020; Lillge & Knowles, 2020). In this study, PTs described the benefits of sharing their experiences, collaboratively problem-solving immediate challenges, and developing strategies

for navigating their future professional contexts. In essence, PTs felt like they could share openly with their colleagues and that their colleagues would listen and provide supportive and helpful responses to professional tensions. This aligns with research examining the benefits of "embracing the wobble" (Fecho et al., 2005), including with preservice teachers (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Stewart et al., 2019; Stewart & Jansky, 2022).

Conceptualizing the group within a third-space (Bhabha, 1994) in the liminal space of Zoom outside of and between the university or K-12 teaching spaces removed the group from the traditional relationships of universities, schools, and communities that complicate critical relationships in formal educational settings (Zeichner, 2010). Importantly, co-constructing the group meetings with participants meant that I did not dictate what counted as acceptable knowledge. This resulted in PTs often navigating through tensions from the middle, balancing the expectations of maintaining professional relationships with teaching in ways aligned with their professional values. Noticeably, this was a much more practical than "critical" approach. As a result, PTs did not evoke their identities except when explicitly prompted, aligning with other research in which privileged social identities remained hidden (Haviland, 2008; Lillge & Knowles, 2020).

Despite these differences, the group still engaged in many of the "critical talk moves" common to critical conversations (Vetter et al., 2018, 2020). For example, looking back over the Tension Scenes in Chapters 5 and 6, strategies Vetter and colleagues (2018) delineate of noticing and naming, relating, expressing dilemmas, strategizing, questioning, sharing and listening, and hedging were common during wobble discussions. These discursive strategies were part of the "problem of practice" structure of the group. This structure, along with other contextual factors, afforded and constrained how the PTs navigated tensions. For instance, the group's focus on taking action individualized PTs' tensions, whereas many critical conversations focus more on understanding how those tensions may relate to structural and systemic factors.

Comparing discussions in the group to Vetter et al.'s (2018) list of critical talk moves highlights the potential for messiness and ambiguity when discursive strategies may be at odds with each other in critical conversations. We met for 1.5 hours every other week during an intensive student teaching semester. We had to be "productive" by having multiple PTs move through cycles of identification, planning, enactment, and reflection by discussing wobbles as problems of practice. However, I still wonder how the imperfect approach of the group arose in

response to constraints, such as time and interest, and how the tensions discussed in the group reflected the construction of the group within a particular sociocultural and historical setting.

7.3.4.2 Shared Settings, Shared Roles, Shared Texts/Practices

Trepper et al. (2023) offered the design principles of shared settings, shared roles, and shared texts to bridge the gap between the multiple worlds of teacher education programs and K-12 schools. I would conceptualize group meetings as a tool for supporting PTs to bridge the gap between PTs' experienced figured worlds and those they sought to create. The group functioned as a shared setting. With some uncertainty, I took on shared roles with the participants in the group, although I took some time to self-position myself as a group member and not just a facilitator. While I initially introduced texts and practices to the group, most of the group's "texts" were narratives of tensions that PTs brought from their experiences. Each group member (except me) took turns as the presenter and consultant, taking the time they needed to work through their tensions. These choices enabled PTs to discuss their tensions openly with one another without fear of evaluation or embarrassment.

My self-positioning in the group and the tensions I experienced when PTs shared ideas that I wanted to challenge, either as a teacher educator or an experienced teacher, reflect the tensions Trepper et al. (2023) identified when sharing roles with mentor teachers. The teacher educators reflected that they did not want to challenge a potentially problematic idea in the shared setting when they were supposedly on equal footing with the classroom teachers. Such a move could evoke the traditional hierarchy between universities and schools, breaking the tenuous "shared roles" that bridged the two settings. However, the teacher educators admitted they wanted to police the content brought into the space. A variety of discursive strategies are available to teacher educators facilitating such conversations, including sharing narratives, asking questions (calling in), and directly challenging ideas (calling out). However, I was not, nor am I now, an expert in other people's experiences (Kingsland, 2024). As a white man experiencing multiple privileged and powerful identities, I must be aware of how my presence automatically positions me in certain ways that I must work to counteract. My choices during the two cases reflected my attempts to defer to PTs (Leah's case) or draw on their existing frameworks to reframe a tension (Tracy's case). I sought not to silence but to uplift their expertise in each of these moments, although with different strategies. My decisions and

rationales add to the conversation around discursive interaction in problem-posing, what roles teacher educators play in the process, and to what extent it serves the aims of PTs.

Lastly, I noticed in writing this the differences between myself and PTs concerning the discourse of niceness. Perhaps because I am a white man and was raised in a society to be that way, or because I taught at a Title 1 school in South Los Angeles where there did not seem to be time for niceness (shout out to Ms. M for being direct!), or for so many other reasons, my default approach to working with pre and inservice teachers has not been to be "nice." I am often direct and blunt. Meanwhile, PTs' talk about navigating tensions was full of niceness discourse. Teacher educators have investigated the power of niceness to sabotage culturally responsive teacher education (Bissonnette, 2016). Similarly, niceness is racialized, gendered, and geographic, as I noted earlier (Castagno, 2019). I continue to reflect on what these differing approaches to niceness mean for myself as I interact with teachers who may have been personally and professionally socialized to engage in nice discourse. Not knowing how to best interact with PTs to support them in navigating tensions has been unsettling.

7.4 Implications

Here, I list the implications of this study.

7.4.1 For Preservice Teachers

7.4.1.1 Finding Footing: Strategic Navigation

PTs in the study were asked to be everyone, everywhere, all at once. They were mentees to mentor teachers, teachers to students, and activists. Across the settings of student teaching and classroom teaching, PTs worked to maintain alignment with their contexts as they navigated the tensions within and between those multiple often conflicting and competing centers of gravity. To maintain alignment, PTs found their footing in the middle. They did not need to conform to the image of compliance on one end or explicit activism on the other. Instead, they worked within the interactive frameworks, storylines, and discourses available to position themselves to resolve their tensions in meaningful ways to support students. This often meant maintaining collegial professional relationships while slyly maneuvering to make small changes. This study illustrated highly detailed strategies PTs used to navigate their tensions, which can help empower preservice teachers.

7.4.1.2 Developing Adaptability to Sociopolitical Contexts in the Profession

PTs' tensions were driven by the sociopolitical contexts currently facing the profession. However, none of these contexts were the same, illustrating how micro-level contexts mediated PTs' learning to teach. Preparing PTs with the pedagogical content knowledge or high-leverage practices necessary to effectively teach cannot be separated from these contexts. Therefore, PTs should be prepared to adapt their approaches when working in diverse settings and to meet mentor teacher's expectations. This adaptability is crucial for navigating entangled professional, instructional, and classroom environment tensions.

7.4.1.3 I Will Be By Myself Eventually: The Power of Problem of Practice Groups

Eva's words stick with me as I consider the implications of this study for preservice teachers. What does it mean that PTs think of teaching as independent? Will they face a precipice of support after student teaching? I cannot fault this perspective. Eva's decision to co-construct a hybrid independent/collaborative approach to instruction with her mentor teacher reveals how preservice teachers can maintain their independence while collaborating with colleagues. However, this relationship was the result of careful planning and alignment between Eva's needs and the support Jen could offer as a trauma-informed educator. That structure did not occur because of a PT's facilitation alone.

What was just as powerful for me was Eva's admission that she "deadass enjoy[ed]" getting to hear from and share with others. Preparing to be a teacher is exhausting work. Especially during student teaching, PTs are often asked to teach nearly full-time while attending classes, all for little to no pay. Perhaps because of this arrangement, PTs rarely, as Eva said, "suffer loudly" with one another, their teacher educators, or other teachers. But there is joy and knowledge in working through problems of practice as a teacher with other teachers. I do not think this group was anything special: it was neither highly technical nor did it require a large lift from PTs, which makes it a great template for PTs to self-start their own problem of practice groups or for programs to create cross-cohort groups. These groups would not prevent the isolation of teaching, but they might offer an outlet for frustrations and joys. Teacher education programs can work with schools to develop problem of practice groups with PTs and teachers. Importantly, PTs have minimal time and energy to address these professional tensions as they move through the day-to-day of planning, teaching and assessment. Being offered opportunities to develop protocols and share and listen to others in an action-oriented setting may support PTs

and beginning teachers in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain their footing across multiple interactive frameworks and settings.

However, the peripheral aspect of these professional tensions illustrates a potential challenge of implementing these groups. Usually, in group meetings, PTs were not "planning" in the sense of planning for instruction. Instead, they reflected on and planned their professional interactions, rehearsing small conversations and discretionary moves concerning how they related to students, mentor teachers, colleagues, administrators, families, and policies. This planning differs from the traditional planning mentioned above. For example, Madison's tension concerning student collaboration yielded planned activities while Leah planned how she might respond to her mentor teacher. Regardless, they chose to do this work together. Discussing these moments of teaching requires embracing ambiguity and uncertainty, trust and vulnerability. It is important and messy work. Ultimately, finding ways to make the group's work meet multiple stakeholders' aims is key.

7.4.2 For Teacher Educators

7.4.2.1 Frameworks for Navigating Tensions

Teacher educators should work with PTs to co-construct frameworks that help PTs identify and address tensions between different frameworks and ideologies across settings. As developing professionals, PTs need encouragement to critically reflect on the relationship between their values and the values present in their contexts and opportunities to develop strategies for navigating those sociopolitical contexts. These frameworks should not presuppose a "correct" or "best" way to navigate these tensions. In this study, we started this process. Had I continued meeting with PTs, we could have talked about and developed our theories further, situating them within the larger frameworks of navigating tensions available in the continuum between heavily constrained and ideal settings.

7.4.2.2 Facilitating Open Dialogue

Establishing places for open dialogue allows PTs to share experiences and collectively seek solutions. In this study, that setting occurred over Zoom and outside of university coursework. The group fostered a sense of community and collaboration that differed from PTs' experiences in university and K-12 settings. Prioritizing PTs' needs in co-constructing settings can help reposition PTs as professionals and advocates rather than students and incompetent.

Inevitably, this may make teacher educators uncomfortable, as it shifts power from teacher educators toward PTs who may harbor deficit ideologies. Teacher educators should embrace this potential discomfort.

7.4.2.3 Research as a Form of Support

Currently, many teacher educators who research the enactment of teaching practices within and across contexts conduct observations and interviews with preservice teachers. These observations and interviews often occur for years as PTs transition into first- and second-year teachers. These observations and interviews can function as support for new teachers. New teachers can rely on teacher educators as mentors in these situations. Similarly, researchers can and do often mentor. For example, interview questions and observation debriefs often prompt critical reflection and guided thinking. It is important to reflect on the kinds of support we offer as researchers, and how that support matches the needs of new teachers.

7.4.2.4 Modeling

I mentioned my wobble about intervening when Leah discussed not speaking with her mentor teacher about disciplining a student. While I discussed it here, I missed the opportunity to share my wobble with the group. As teacher educators, we must model how to navigate tensions. I have often heard teacher educators talk about tensions they navigated while teaching with preservice teachers. However, these narratives are in the past tense and rarely call on the messiness of the first years of teaching. Modeling navigating current tensions can demonstrate that we are lifelong learners without all the answers.

7.4.3 For Mentor Teachers

7.4.3.1 Dynamic Mentorship

Mentor Teachers are the most important part of teacher education. While they are just one part of the context of student teaching, they mediate how PTs engage with all other aspects of their teaching context. PTs in the study had a variety of different needs and preferences when it came to mentoring. These needs and preferences changed over time and in response to different aspects of their context. Research on mentoring reveals that mentors have little formal training and often rely on their own experiences being mentored as models (Clarke et al., 2014). These experiences often rely on dominant norms in teaching that limit critical colleagueship and

collaboration (Ghousseini et al., 2021). Like the strategic flexibility that PTs must engage in, mentor teachers must adopt flexible, responsive approaches to mentoring. These approaches should consider the evolving needs and preferences of preservice teachers. Engaging in co-teaching and open communication can help bridge differences and support PTs in developing their practice. Shifting collaboration in the profession begins with MTs and teacher educators being willing to position PTs as collaborators and partners in their professional development.

7.4.4 For Teacher Education Programs

7.4.4.1 Shared Settings, Roles, and Texts: Democratizing TE

Universities continue to center themselves in the preparation of new teachers. Debates around programmatic coherence often rely on schools adopting practices driven by universities. However, this centrality does not reflect the history of a profession built on practice (or the interweaving of theory and practice). As a result, preservice teachers currently take on much of the burden of applying new practices in classroom teaching (Zeichner, 2010). Often, they are tasked with navigating the critical dissonance of teaching against the grain rather than the collaborative resonance of working with like-minded educators (Cochran-Smith, 1991a).

However, student teaching can function as a partnership between universities and schools. Developing shared settings, shared roles, and shared texts/practices (Trepper et al., 2023) should be paramount for teacher education programs interested in supporting PTs to learn to teach across contexts. Schools, and particularly mentor teachers, must become equal partners in the work that they are already doing the most of. PTs spend more hours with their MTs than they do in the rest of their coursework combined!

7.4.4.2 From Individual to Collaborative: Balancing Definitions of Teaching to Include Collaboration and Community

Nearly all data in the study constructed teaching as a solo act. The program's evaluation tool, especially, emphasized independence. Independence hardly characterizes the ideals of teacher education and teaching in the 21st-century. Teachers collaboratively make decisions with students, co-teach with colleagues, and bring in family and community members as partners in teaching. Teachers must also utilize state standards, school and district curricula, and local and state policies. Doing all of this while navigating multiple competing frameworks and ideologies is anything but independent.

Teacher Education Programs must work to comprehensively include these expanded sociocultural and sociopolitical conceptualizations of teaching into their curricula. I would posit that the commonsense structure of teacher education programs requires significant revision–not toward some practice- or theory-forward approach to teaching but toward a collaborative approach to teaching. In this sense, everyone is an educator. Balancing this collaborative and community-focused approach with existing practices could more accurately reflect the work of teaching.

7.4.4.3 Supporting Novice Teachers Throughout Their Development

Teacher education should not end when PTs complete their programs, leaving novice teachers to a precipice of support. Many states have implemented induction programs to support new teachers that have positive impacts, including increased teacher retention, improved teacher quality, and student achievement gains (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The main lever of induction is most often mentoring from an experienced teacher (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). For the state in question for this study, three years of mentoring from a "master teacher" and 15 days of professional development constitute induction. However, the qualifications for mentorship, expectations for mentor training, and the expectations of the relationship between mentors and new teachers are left up to districts, leading to high variability.

Importantly, while teacher education programs should work in partnerships with schools to co-construct mutually beneficial student teaching experiences, there are no expectations for partnerships after preservice teachers complete their credential program. Teacher education programs must recognize the continued role they can play in supporting novice and experienced teachers. This means bringing PTs into local and national organizations such as the National Writers Project (NWP) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) where they can continue to grow professionally in community with other educators. It also means designing programs to offer support in and through the beginning years of teaching. Learning how to be a teacher is a continuous process, and programs can support new teachers with the settings to build community, collaborate, and work toward shared goals of teaching to improve social and educational outcomes for all students.

7.4.4.4 Toward Steady Footing

The PTs in this study appreciated navigating their wobbles with peers in the group's third space. Importantly, the group's aims complemented their coursework, student teaching, and K-12 teaching experiences. PTs had a place to inquire critically and collaboratively into their practices as teachers. The group meetings offered PTs what Cochran-Smith (1991b) referred to as "critical dissonance." The program developed a variety of strong critical perspectives in PTs. However, this critical perspective led to dissonance between coursework, student teaching, and K-12 teaching. If schools reproduced existing inequitable practices, then PTs had to work "against the grain." Considering the multiple worlds perspective (Smagorinsky et al., 2013), a critical dissonance programmatic approach means that PTs had work against the grain in their program, too. Fragmented settings led to multiple figured worlds, multiple interactive frameworks for teaching and learning to teach.

Some programs cannot adopt a more democratic approach to preparing new teachers. They struggle to find mentor teachers to work with their programs each semester. For those programs, this study demonstrates the need to understand better how PTs, teacher educators, and other stakeholders are positioned and positioned themselves as they navigate the multiple worlds of preparing secondary ELA teachers. If researchers focus on PTs wobbling, they must also recognize how the ground moves beneath PTs' feet. Programs without other options should embrace this movement, finding ways to work toward steady footing. What are the structures and systems within control? How can teacher education programs break from habits to make things weird and to embrace the unexpected? I do not think steady footing rises from standardization, the fixing of things in place. Instead, it comes from creating structures with flexibility that bend and offering guardrails to support everyone involved in embracing the messiness of the wobble.

7.4.5 For Research

7.4.5.1 A New Framework for Analyzing Tensions: A Foot in the Door

This study demonstrates a new framework for analyzing this sociocultural process that complements activity theory. The combined framing/positioning framework adapted from Bruneel and Vanassche (2021) draws on framing theory, positioning theory, critical discourse analysis, and figured worlds to analyze how PTs navigate tensions within and across multiple figured worlds. On their own, framing and positioning analyses are helpful for analyzing

tensions (Gordon, 2015). Together with an analysis of Capital-D Discourses (Gee, 2011, 2014), the theories provide a rich and illustrative framework for analyzing how PTs navigate tensions through discursive interactions.

Particularly, Goffman's (1986) concept of "footing" offers both a theoretical tool and metaphor for how PTs navigate tensions as they learn to teach. When brought into conversation with Fecho et al. (2005) and Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen's (2015) wobble, a "footing" framework can build on the metaphors of movement: shapeshifting (Hallman, 2015), waltzing (Smagorinsky et al., 2002), and finding footholds (McKenzie et al., 2017).

This framework offers a complement to activity theory that emphasizes discursive interactions within and across settings.

7.4.5.2 A New Metaphor for Movement Within and Between Multiple Worlds

As a result of this framework, I offer a new metaphor for PTs navigating tensions: "superposition" across multiple overlapping figured worlds. Rather than conceptualizing a PT as an astronaut being pulled by the gravity of different planets as they move through space, this framework highlights how PTs are always simultaneously in multiple settings. So, PTs may be more similar to interdimensional travelers than astronauts. Stuck in between in the liminal setting of student teaching, PTs exist in superposition. Superposition is helpful for research that closely examines the interaction on a micro-conversational level and for thinking about how PTs perceive themselves.

7.4.5.3 Exploring the Third Space to Support Preservice Teachers (to Navigate Tensions)

Research must attend more acutely to the positioning of PTs within programs, especially as programs evaluate PTs based on their enactment of programmatic practices. In this study, I identified programmatic hierarchies and roles as potential contributors to how PTs talk about navigating tensions. PTs were hesitant to discuss potentially charged topics with their mentor teachers. Similarly, their coursework often focused on meeting program requirements rather than PTs' needs or goals. These findings demonstrated that PTs did not feel like their programs were designed to support their development. See Charlotte's comment that matching with a mentor teacher was "just boxes" she had to fill. More research needs to focus on creating and exploring third spaces to support preservice teachers.

Similarly, as teacher educators work to support PTs, they must interrogate their positioning in these third spaces. Teacher education programs are not the center of literacy learning and practices. Teacher educators must develop ways to teach and research that acknowledge our peripherality. How can teacher educators share control of these spaces? How might this nontraditional model have its own tensions? The kinds of steering or guidance offered by teacher educators requires further examination. In presenting this work, I expressed my tension and discussed with other educators the challenge of not correcting or offering guardrails. What happens when teacher educators treat PTs as knowledgeable, no longer deficitizing them? What happens when PTs feel trusted to make decisions? What are the teacher educator tensions that result from relinquishing (a narrative of) control to preservice teachers? To mentor teachers and administrators?

7.4.5.4 Individualism, Noninterference, Niceness, and Privacy: The Discourses Educators Live By

The two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) has a large hold on how educators perceive and talk about navigating tensions. However, researchers have illustrated how collaborative culture in teaching may support or inhibit particular ways of learning to teach (e.g., Ghousseini et al., 2021). This study demonstrated the persistence of those discourses across settings. Nevertheless, these Capital-D discourse are rarely acknowledged when researchers focus on the differences between university and school expectations. More research must highlight discourses *in interaction* across settings to break the "fourth wall" that these two worlds have built in their observation of one another. How do teacher educators not figure that we are already participants in these other settings? Stakeholders' construction of the teacher education program, student teaching, and K-12 schools deserves further research. How do we conceptualize these spaces? How are our conceptualizations constructed by or constructive of the discourses we live by?

7.5 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study stem from decisions made during the study's development and implementation.

7.5.1 Context-Dependence

Due to the contextually situated nature of navigating tensions during student teaching, this study is limited by the parameters of those exact settings. The study occurred during a specific historical time, within and between social and cultural settings at RSU, K-12 school contexts, and in our inquiry group Zoom meetings. For instance, I joined the SecELA program team in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, just after the program lead left for another institution. As a result, administrators, lecturers, and graduate students oversaw the program for several years until a faculty member was established as the new lead. This situation represents a unique context to study how PTs navigate tensions. Ultimately, the study's context-dependency operates as a limitation.

7.5.2 Study Length

One of the calls for research in teacher education has been more longitudinal studies of how PTs develop into novice and then experienced teachers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). Much of the research focuses on one course, the transition between methods and student teaching, or briefly engages with novice teachers in their first years of teaching. Recently, Smagorinsky and Long (2024) published an eight-year longitudinal study of one ELA teacher's developmental path through multiple contexts. This study did not present a longitudinal analysis, instead opting to focus in-depth on PTs' experiences during student teaching. As a result, I can offer no implications for how participating in the study or working with the group supported Leah, Charlotte, Madison, Eva, and Tracy in their early teaching careers. As of the completion of manuscript in Summer 2025, Leah, Charlotte, Madison, Eva, and Tracy are all still teaching.

7.5.3 The Danger of One Perspective

Another limitation of the study was the perspectives I had as a researcher. Through interviews and group meetings, I fully engaged with PTs' perspectives concerning their student teaching. However, I knew little about the perspectives of their mentor teachers, field instructors, students, or colleagues. Conducting interviews, classroom observations, and surveys could have yielded information about others' perspectives. My initial visits to schools to meet with PTs and MTs hardly sufficed. This information could have helped to construct a more nuanced perspective toward PTs' contexts as they navigated tensions. For example, Leah's field instructor told me off-hand that Rebecca had called her *the best* student teacher she ever had. Similarly, during my visit to Leah's placement at Milton HS, I actually met William, who introduced

himself to me. I vividly remembered his smile and his wearing American flag cowboy boots when Leah brought him up. Engaging with more perspectives could have offered a rich tapestry of experiences.

7.5.4 Reported Narratives as Artifacts of Practice

Another limitation of the study was PTs' decisions concerning the artifacts they brought to meetings. While lesson plans, student work, or recordings of teaching would have been rich texts for group discussion and analysis, only one participant, Madison, brought in an artifact representing her tension that extended beyond a narrative. My decision to leave this process open to participants enabled them to make decisions but limited the variety of resources I could analyze.

7.5.5 Additional Limitations

As a first-time researcher, I am sure there are many other unseen and unforeseen limitations to this study. I welcome the opportunity to discuss them with educators and researchers.

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

7.6.1 Expanding the Group (to Include Mentor Teachers)

Much of PTs' tension navigating strategies hinged on how they perceived their mentor teacher as mediating the context of student teaching. How would incorporating mentor teachers into group discussions of tensions support preservice teachers and mentor teachers during student teaching? How could they work as partners in navigating these complex situations? I would be interested to what extent PTs would express the same kinds of tensions, or whether those tensions would conceal tensions with their mentor teacher, and vice versa.

I would be interested to see how much messier and full of tensions the group becomes when members come from different positions and power hierarchies.

7.6.2 Continuing with the Group Into the First Years of Teaching

A longitudinal study of how problem of practice groups and their members work over time would align with similar research that has examined how new teachers' contexts mediate their enactment of teaching practices (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2013; Smagorinsky & Long, 2024).

7.6.3 Program Assignments as Tools

Preservice teachers may use program assignments as tools to act when they experience wobbles. For example, Athanases et al. (2015) found that implementing a data-based model of teacher inquiry for a course provided opportunities for PTS to enact adaptive literacy teaching in their student teaching sites. Similarly, Windschitl et al. (2021) determined that some science PTs in their study only had opportunities to teach during their mandated edTPA lessons. Additionally, Williamson's (2013) high-leverage discussion assignment, where students were tasked with enacting a discussion in their placements, demonstrates the potential power of course assignments to push PTs to enact certain kinds of teaching in their placement classrooms.

PTs in this study did not have content-specific courses or program assignments during student teaching. As a result, they felt little tension between program and K-12 classroom expectations. While assignments may function as a tool to provide agency to PTs during student teaching, they may also catalyze tensions between disparate frameworks for teaching. With the imbalance of power between programs and K-12 schools, I am concerned about how programs may use assignments as tools to exert control over K-12 classrooms. Without these assignments being shared across settings (Trepper et al., 2023), teacher educators and PTs may continue to struggle to bridge the gap between settings during student teaching (Peltier et al., 2021) Instead, these tensions may exacerbate existing tensions—MTs could perceive program interventions as unhelpful or inappropriate. Ultimately, more research should investigate the tools available for PTs during student teaching and how those tools position various stakeholders across the contexts of teacher education programs, student teaching, and K-12 classrooms.

7.6.4 Using the Combined Framing/Positioning Framework to Examine Classroom Interactions

This study illustrated the utility of the combined framing/positioning framework for analyzing PTs' reported speech about their contexts (third-order positioning) and group interactions (second-order positioning). Researchers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers could use this framework to analyze classroom interactions between PTs, MTs, students, and other classroom stakeholders. One of my suggestions to PTs in the study was to record conversations with their MTs, which proved too uncomfortable for them. Nevertheless, I think it would be helpful to understand how the framework could demonstrate shifts in framing and positioning across cycles of planning, teaching, and reflection in classroom observations.

7.6.5 Footing and Frame Alignment

Future research should develop footing as a metaphor and discourse tool in teacher education interactions. Teaching *is* interacting. Navigating heterogeneous frameworks across settings leads to wobbles and requires changing footing. Redefinition, extension, transition, embracing ambiguity—these are all footing strategies ("steps") like those I described in chapter 5 (following in step, stepping together, sidestepping). Collaboration requires navigating tensions between different frameworks. However, frameworks often feel invisible until they are challenged. In other words, when feet go in different directions, people often wobble or trip. Navigating these tensions individually and collaboratively are crucial in the teaching profession. Revised versions of the combined framework that zero in on footing within and across frameworks and settings can support educators to work across differences and build solidarity more productively.

7.6.6 Discourses of Niceness and Noninterference in Teacher Education and Student Teaching

Niceness is an increasingly important topic in education. Researchers have found how the good intentions behind niceness function to maintain educational inequality (Bissonnette, 2016; Castagno, 2019; Gardiner & Weisling, 2024; Pascoe, 2023). Interrogating discourses of niceness requires questioning how "niceness" and "kindness" in interactions aid the improvement of educational outcomes. Considering the potential challenges niceness contributes to collaboration and critical colleagueship (e.g., Ghousseini et al., 2021; Little, 1990) in teacher education programs (Bissonnette, 2016), student teaching (Gardiner & Weisling, 2024), schools (Pascoe, 2023), and education and society more broadly (Castagno, 2019), further studies must examine the relationship between building relationships (i.e., between preservice teachers and mentor teachers; teacher educators, mentor teachers, and preservice teachers), niceness, and critical approaches to the teaching profession. How are these discourses of niceness, noninterference, and privacy linked to concepts of good or effective teaching?

I am particularly drawn to the metaphor of the "fourth wall" as it relates to niceness and noninterference in teaching and teacher education. The separation of performer and audience, and of the performer "on stage" owning the stage, makes me wonder how many fourth walls educators have built and what that means for thinking outside, as Charlotte put it, "the boxes."

7.6.7 Working With Preservice Teachers From Diverse Communities And Backgrounds

This study included participants who identified as white women. Mostly, they agreed with each other on balancing how they navigated the tensions they experienced during student teaching with other goals. They also acknowledged that they did not have to contend with their whiteness in their schools, as whiteness was often the expected norm, at least for teachers, even in schools populated by a majority of students of color. In contrast, I want to share a point Zoe, who identified as Black and biracial, and was an undergraduate in the same cohort as Leah, Charlotte, and Madison, offered during an English Methods class discussion about how to communicate with stakeholders as a teacher, even when misaligned. Zoe listened to a series of classmate and instructor comments about the need to try to understand and treat others' perspectives as valid, even if those perspectives are about how racism no longer exists. Then, she asked, "How do you do that when they're disregarding your identity?" She continued, "I won't be able to sit there and explain why Black lives matter and why wouldn't they matter." Zoe's question and statement demonstrate how hypothetical stakeholders' perspectives directly affected her humanity. Zoe's tensions are different from the PTs in this study. How does a PT in Zoe's situation navigate tensions?

In addition to examining how racially diverse PTs navigate the tensions of their contexts, I am interested in how preservice teachers from other communities and backgrounds navigate tensions. For instance, Leah demonstrated knowledge of her local rural communities. Responding to a hypothetical scenario, she discussed that rural school administrators would offer "more coded" reasons for banning literature with diverse character representation and that she could discern such coded language through conversations with them (Interview 2). Similarly, preservice teachers from other communities and backgrounds, such as immigrant status and linguistic upbringing, may bring new perspectives toward navigating tensions within and between multiple figured worlds.

The addition of preservice teachers from diverse backgrounds and communities would also accentuate the socialized relationships between preservice teachers and their mentor teachers within particular settings. Thinking of one of my former high school students who is about to become an elementary school teacher in California: How did her undocumented immigration status affect how she navigated tensions with her mentor teacher and school settings?

7.6.8 New Professionalism

These wonderings about participants contribute to a broader question about preparing novice teachers to teach "against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1991a; Lane et al., 2003). How do teachers understand "the grain"? Furthermore, what does teaching "against" it in the current political moment represented by polarization mean? The situation appears far beyond the moral reframing approach (Feinberg & Willer, 2019) I considered when designing the study, which involved PTs reframing teaching concepts using others' values (e.g., reading a book with LGBTQ+ characters but focusing on standards in communication with parents, Germán, 2021). Now, PTs must consider what they do and say across multiple modalities. Do they resort to "algospeak" (Aleksic, 2025), changing their written (and spoken) language to avoid tripping automatic detection algorithms that censor specific topics? What does this new surveillance mean for how they develop as professionals and the autonomy they have as preservice and novice teachers?

An aspect largely absent from this study was PTs' rationales for making decisions. As I noted in Chapter 3, PTs valued a variety of justice-oriented principles and teaching practices. However, participants did not justify their choices using quantitative data. Instead, they often drew on qualitative narratives linked implicitly and explicitly to their values. As programs work to develop PTs into certain kinds of professionals (i.e., justice-oriented ELA teachers), integrating multiple kinds of data may support a more robust and inclusive professional identity. Teacher educators and preservice teachers rarely justify pedagogical decision making by attending to social justice (Kavanagh & Danielson, 2020). Further research must examine how principles for teaching, teaching practices, sustained inquiry, data collection, and reflection coalesce in English Education through teacher action research. How do teacher educators, PTs, and classroom teachers respond to the top-down demands of the "dominant accountability paradigm" aimed at standardizing curricula, instruction, and assessment (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018)? How are different stakeholders' beliefs justified?

7.6.9 Continued Study Of "A Good Relationship" And "Close The Door"

The strategies PTs used in the study offer an interesting starting point to examine how and why PTs utilize particular strategies to respond to their contexts. Mapping out the possibilities of interacting during student teaching, especially as it relates to being an educator and activist, is important. As Ranschaert (2023) pointed out, PTs need stories from the middle,

where they find their footing between their real fears and their desires to work toward social justice. Mapping out this work requires listening to and treating PTs as experts in finding balance in their unique, often conflicting and overlapping contexts.

7.6.10 How Much Is This Work About Justice?

One question I want to address as I conclude is, "How much is this work about social justice?" When I designed this study, I anticipated working with Secondary ELA preservice teachers to enact what I imagined as "social justice ELA education." To me, social justice in secondary ELA most often meant cultivating diverse and inclusive classroom texts and creating opportunities for students to learn about and become agents of change regarding social issues. This view aligned with Ladson-Billings's third component of culturally relevant pedagogy, critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2014).

Throughout their student teaching semester, although the participants identified tensions concerning texts and curriculum in their classrooms, they rarely acted on them. I surmised that many of these choices have moved beyond individual teachers in individual classrooms. For better or worse, many curricular decisions seemed to be out of the hands of the preservice teachers. While Madison had the opportunity to implement a summative creative writing assignment in her IB course, Tracy had to shift her creative summative assessment to a five-paragraph essay to help her grade 8 students become more familiar with the testing genre. As I have pointed out in this study, the preservice teachers could not simply close the door and teach how they wanted. They had to co-plan with their department, take up administrative demands, and rely on existing plans and curriculum guides from their mentor teachers, schools, and districts. It was much messier than I anticipated. Autonomy was shared. Agency was conditional, and opportunities were mediated by different contextual factors.

However, many diverse approaches to understanding social justice and justice exist (Limlamai, 2022, 2023), making the concept heterogeneous or polylithic (Limlamai, 2025). Therefore, although texts and content (what I referred to as curricular practices) are central to secondary ELA, focusing the curriculum *on* social justice is not all there is to social justice teacher education. Supporting students to succeed in school and creating positive spaces where students feel like they belong are both also important in justice-oriented English Language Arts.

PTs may have acted upon their tensions in these safer forms of justice work (Limlamai, 2022) to maintain positive relationships with their mentor teacher, colleagues, administrators,

and parents and ensure their success in RSU's program. In other words, creating positive classroom settings and supporting students to succeed academically were "nice" approaches to justice that represented "just good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Thus, the changes made by preservice teachers did not disrupt the existing status quo. Nor were they particularly noticeable as justice-oriented practices.

Within and across university, school, and community settings, how these particular teaching decisions are defined and framed is key. During polarized and contentious times, PTs may need to have their feet in multiple definitions of a situation simultaneously (i.e., multiple interactive frameworks). For example, Leah alluded to her newness as a perceived reason for her lenient approach to classroom management. However, she felt more inclined to her approach to promote positive relationships with students. Similarly, Tracy discussed the ambiguity and messiness of doing what her mentor teacher asked her to do "a little different." These moves hint at the need to embrace uncertainty and wobble in student teaching and into professional careers where stakeholders are not aligned.

As I see it, my early definition of social justice ELA education overlooked these more inconspicuous approaches to justice and equity that PTs engaged in as they identified and responded to tensions during student teaching. These are important. Furthermore, these steps may allow PTs to view themselves as change agents in constrained, divisive, messy contexts.

This study also addresses social justice in the context of student teaching and teaching more broadly. As I outlined in Chapter 2, teacher educators have developed various programs and practices to support preservice teachers in enacting effective teaching practices and navigating tensions. What knowledge matters? Who creates and has access to it? Why? These are key questions for making teacher education more equitable and just. I pointed out how the existing approaches to preparing PTs to navigate the tensions of the multiple-worlds pitfall center university aims. In other words, teacher educators draw on frameworks that more closely represent the aims of programs than the aims and experiences of PTs.

Through this study, I demonstrated how PTs navigated interactions as well as institutional and social structures during student teaching. Working to construct more just worlds requires studying how "social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" with the aim of understanding, exposing, and resisting social inequality (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Through my study of how PTs

navigated tensions, I employed critical analyses to interrogate how relational, institutional, and social power worked across settings to construct frameworks for teaching. PTs figured and were figured by these worlds. In part, justice means drawing on the speculative to imagine what student teaching and teaching can be. Thus, I am interested just as much in what is as what can be. As a teacher educator, I have opportunities to reimagine student teaching beyond dominant discourses and intra- and inter-institutional structures that perpetuate them.

In this second aim, I have more questions than when I started this project. I have tried to embrace a more humanizing pedagogy (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). However, I, like the participants in this study, experience near-constant wobble. How do I find my footing as a teacher educator in these new third spaces? Are some practices "rote" and others "reasoned" (Kavanagh et al., 2020)? In other words, when is enacting a teaching practice nonnegotiable? When should I exert my authority? And, when I do, from what position(s) do I exert it? These last two questions are particularly poignant as I reflect on my social identities and the social identities of the PTs, MTs, and students that I work with.

Diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity may be banned words in 2025, and that makes further critical interrogation of how power plays out even more important. Future research can examine how PTs and teacher educators navigate tensions in their relationships with policies, MTs, other stakeholders within institutional and social systems that they have a hand in constructing. This work will be consequential as legislators and outside stakeholders look to exert their power over these at-risk institutional structures. Likewise, future research should investigate how researchers frame studies that attempt to understand, expose, and challenge social inequities in student teaching. How do we construct frameworks that enable us to maintain our footing across multiple frameworks and figured worlds? How are we constructed by them? Is this future work about justice? It is about wobbling in the worlds we live in, aspiring toward better ones, and taking action. I think so.

7.7 Final Thoughts/Closing Statement

"to take root among the stars" (Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower)

I set out in this study to find ways to support PTs in navigating tensions in their placement classrooms. Along the way, I recognized how I and the field often positioned mentor

teachers and classrooms as deficit by default. Why did I think I knew what I was doing and that they did not?

This project was not solely about supporting preservice teachers in navigating tensions. It became about something else, as well. Studying student teaching supplied the circumstances to imagine other teacher education programs, student teaching(s), and K-12 classrooms. Teacher educators must speculatively imagine new and other figured worlds, aspire to more just and equitable educational outcomes.

At the same time, we must support all educators and students to look up to the stars. This speculative imagining requires us all to find our footing as we wobble. The worlds beneath our feet will try to swallow us up. Nevertheless, we must remember our capacity to construct these worlds and move among them together. The Golden Record sent into space on Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 contained an introduction by UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. In part, he said:

> We step out of our solar system into the universe seeking only peace and friendship—to teach, if we are called upon; to be taught, if we are fortunate. We know full well that our planet and all its inhabitants are but a small part of this immense universe that surrounds us, and it is with humility and hope that we take this step.

I feel fortunate to have learned so much in this process. Even so, it feels like the first step of many. I conclude with two experiences of joy I take with me from this time in my life.

I have enjoyed learning just how much I do not know and might never know and how much is uncertain and fuzzy and funky and weird—how much resists knowing.

The greatest joys of this experience came from working with others. Working with the preservice teachers and the teacher educators who read my work and attended my presentations—everyone I worked with has challenged me to understand teacher preparation and myself as an educator differently. To quote Eva, I deadass did enjoy it.

Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview 1 Questions

Greetings!

1. What is your **full name**?
2. Tell me about your **background**
    a. Where are you from?
    b. What are your **identities** that you feel are relevant to you being a teacher?
        i. Race
        ii. Ethnicity
        iii. Sexual orientation
        iv. Gender identity
        v. Ability (health + physical)
        vi. Religion/spirituality
        vii. Nationality
        viii. Socioeconomic status
        ix. education
3. What's **brought** you to teaching? (and English specifically)
4. Where do you **want** to teach?
    a. Why?
5. Tell me about your student teaching **placement**.
    a. Who is your **MT**?
        i. What are they like?
        ii. How would you describe your relationship with them?
    b. What **classes** are you student teaching?
        i. Tell me about your student teaching classes.
    c. Tell me about your **students**.

        i. What are their demographics?
    d. Tell me about your **school**.
    e. Tell me about your **focal unit**.
6. What's **important** to you about teaching **English**?
7. How do you **communicate** and frame your values as a teacher? (how do you put those into practice)
8. What about your MT's teaching do you want to **emulate**?
9. What are you **wobbling** about in your MT's classroom?
    a. What about your MT's teaching do you have **questions** about or want to **change** in your own practice?
10. Have you tried to **make any curriculum or pedagogy changes** in your mentor teacher's classroom?
    a. If yes, what did you do? What happened?
    b. If not, what might you do?
        i. Why haven't you?
    c. What changes are you planning for your unit?
11. What would you do in this scenario?
    a. You are a student teacher in an 8th grade ELA classroom at a rural middle school. For your focal unit, you want to have students examine social issues such as racism, poverty, and police brutality. You've chosen to read Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* with students. Your mentor teacher normally has students read *The Outsiders* and discuss issues of class, violence, honor, and identity. You know that your mentor teacher is hesitant. She says she is worried that students or parents will complain about the content of the book.
        i. What would you do?
            1. Why? (what is your thinking behind these decisions?)
            2. Stakeholders, administration
12. How do you plan to approach "wobbles" you experience in your teaching this semester? (what about if your MT can't help?)

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview 2 Questions

1. **Part 1: Introduction**
    a. Tell me about yourself.
    b. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
    c. Where do you want to teach? Has this changed?
        i. What criteria are the "must haves" for your future school?
2. **Part 2: Teaching English**
    a. What's important to you about teaching English?
        i. How do you put what's important to you into practice?
        ii. How has this changed?
3. **Part 3: Student Teaching**
    a. How was your student teaching experience?
        i. ***Community***: where was it located? How would you describe the community?
        ii. ***School***: What was your school like? Administration? English department?
        iii. ***Mentor Teacher***: What was your mentor teacher like? What kind of relationship did you have with them? Do you have any stories you'd like to share?
        iv. ***Classes***: What classes did you student teach?
        v. ***Students***: What were your students like? How did you interact with them?
        vi. ***Parents***: How did you interact with parents?
        vii. ***Focal Unit***: What did you teach for your focal unit? How did you go about planning and teaching your focal unit?
            1. What did you learn about making changes to existing classroom structures from teaching your unit?
    b. How much control/agency did you have during student teaching? What limited your ability to do what you wanted to do?

4. **Part 4: Making Changes**
    a. What about your mentor teacher's teaching did you learn from? What do you want to copy in your own teaching?
    b. What about your mentor teacher's teaching did you not want to copy? Why?
        i. What about your mentor teacher's teaching did you want to change?
    c. How did you try to make changes in your mentor teacher's classroom this semester?
    d. Were there times you wanted to make changes, but didn't? Why?
    e. What strategies for making changes in your student teaching and future classroom have you learned? Applied? How might other student teachers use them? How might you use them in your future teaching?
        i. Collaboration
        ii. Subversion (e.g., quiet noncompliance)
        iii. Moral reframing
        iv. Critical questioning
    f. What affordances and constraints did student teaching offer you to teach in the ways you want to now and in your future classroom? (e.g., teaching for social justice, antiracist pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy)
5. **Part 5: Scenarios**
    a. ***Scenario 1***: You are a student teacher in an 8th grade ELA classroom at a rural middle school. For your focal unit, you want to have students examine social issues such as racism, poverty, and police brutality. You've chosen to read Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* with students. Your mentor teacher normally has students read *The Outsiders* and discuss issues of class, violence, honor, and identity. You know that your mentor teacher is hesitant. She says she is worried that students or parents will complain about the content of the book.
        i. What would you do?
        ii. Why? (what is your thinking behind these decisions?)
        iii. Stakeholders, administration
        iv. How would this situation be different if you were a first year teacher (and not a student teacher with a mentor)?

b. ***Scenario 2***: You are a student teacher in a 10th-grade ELA classroom in a majority-white suburban high school. One of the classes you are student teaching, which your MT calls the "low" class, has tracked many of the school's students who don't perform well on standardized tests into one room. This tracking means that the demographics of the class are different than the majority white school. Your mentor teacher has a participation rule: all students receive points for speaking during whole class discussions. As you've been observing and getting ready to teach your focal unit, you notice many of the students in the class, including the English Language Learners, don't receive participation points. As a result, students' grades are not good.
    i. What would you do?
    ii. Why?
    iii. How would this situation be different if you were a first or second year teacher (and not a student teacher with a mentor)?

6. **Part 6: Conclusion**
    a. A lot of the advice for student teachers is to wait until they have their own classroom, then close the door and do what they want. What do you think about that advice, especially concerning the moves from politicians and others to ban books and limit the teaching of curriculum as well as the role of administrators in the classroom?
    b. What have you learned about trying to make curricular and pedagogical changes as a student teacher?
        i. How will this impact your teaching going forward?
        ii. What advice would you give to a student teacher who wants to make changes in their mentor teacher's classroom?
    c. Why did you choose to participate in this study? What do you feel like you got out of participating?
    d. What suggestions would you give me (Chris) for how to take the work we did and incorporate it into the program?

Salutations and Thanks

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form: ELA Preservice Teacher

Information Sheet

How do preservice ELA teachers frame curricular and pedagogical changes in their mentor teachers' classrooms?

HUM#00220546

Principal Investigator: Christopher Kingsland, PhD candidate, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, Associate Professor, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Overview

You are invited to participate in a research study about how preservice ELA teachers communicate about teaching changes they make in their mentor teachers' classrooms. Preservice and beginning teachers often struggle to apply their awareness of how to teach into particular teaching practices (Pasternak et al., 2018). The purpose of this study is to examine how preservice ELA teachers communicate about their attempts to make changes, moving from being aware they want to change something to actually enacting that change through a curricular or pedagogical decision. This research is particularly important at a time when teachers of all experience levels must consider the roles other stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, colleagues, community members, and politicians) play in determining what is taught and how in their classrooms. Communicating in ways that others understand and agree with becomes of the utmost importance. Therefore, we plan to study this phenomenon as preservice English teachers enter the profession during their preparation program.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to

- In part one (September-December 2022): consent to use of recordings from your methods course and assignments as data with no additional requirements

- In part two (January-April 2023: (a) record elements of your planning and teaching practice during your student teaching, (b) attend a biweekly (twice monthly) meeting with other participants to discuss planning, enactment, and reflection on your communication, (c) interview twice at the start and end of your student teaching, and (d) share your weekly teaching reflections.

Benefits of the research

Benefits of the research for participants include support (in addition to that provided by your secondary teacher preparation program) from a teacher educator to aid you in developing strategies to enact curricular and pedagogical choices that align with your values and beliefs about teaching.

Risks and Discomforts

Risks and discomforts are minimal and no greater than normal educational practice. However, in any instance where a person is trying to change practices in a setting, they may meet resistance. Therefore, you will not be asked to try to make any changes you would not already consider if you were not a participant in this study. Furthermore, all identifying markers of participants (i.e., your name, institution, student teaching placement, and other ways you might be identified) will be removed or replaced with pseudonyms.

Compensation

Participants will be compensated $100 for their participation in the study. In addition, food will be provided at biweekly (twice monthly) meetings January 2023 through April 2023.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to continue with any part of the study at any time for any reason. You will also have the opportunity to member-check analyses and findings related to your experiences.

Data Protection

I will protect the confidentiality of your research records by removing identifying markers (i.e., your name, institution, student teaching placement, and other ways you might be identified) or replacing them with pseudonyms. Information collected in this project may be shared with other researchers, but we will not share any information that could identify you.

Questions

If you have questions about this research study, please contact the principal investigator, Christopher Kingsland, at cwkingsl@umich.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, at ebonyt@umich.edu.

As part of their review, the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences has determined that this study is no more than minimal risk and exempt from on-going IRB oversight.

Participant Consent

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Print Legal Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

Investigators are reminded that they should give a copy to the participant and retain a full copy of the consent including a copy of the signature page as part of your research records. Participants must complete all of the required information (printed name, signature and date).

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form: Mentor Teacher or Other Adult

Information Sheet

How do preservice ELA teachers frame curricular and pedagogical changes in their mentor teachers' classrooms?

HUM#00220546

Principal Investigator: Christopher Kingsland, PhD candidate, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, Associate Professor, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Overview

The student teacher in your classroom has been invited to participate in a research study about how preservice ELA teachers communicate about teaching changes they make in their mentor teachers' classrooms. Preservice and beginning teachers often struggle to apply their awareness of how to teach into particular teaching practices (Pasternak et al., 2018). The purpose of this study is to examine how preservice ELA teachers communicate about their attempts to make changes, moving from being aware they want to change something to actually enacting that change through a curricular or pedagogical decision. This research is particularly important at a time when teachers of all experience levels must consider the roles other stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, colleagues, community members, and politicians) play in determining what is taught and how in their classrooms. Communicating in ways that others understand and agree with becomes of the utmost importance. Therefore, we plan to study this phenomenon as preservice English teachers enter the profession during their preparation program.

If you consent to be part of the research study, you will be asked to consent to your image, likeness, or voice being recorded via audio and/or video during teaching events and interactions with your teaching intern, who has agreed to be a participant in this study. If you are a mentor teacher, your teaching intern may also bring examples of your teaching practice (e.g., lesson plans, slides) to discuss during biweekly meetings with other interns and the researcher. Your participation in this study will last from either September 2022 through December 2022, January 2023 through April 2023, or September 2022 through April 2023.

Benefits of the Research

Benefits of the research for participants include support (in addition to that provided by your secondary teacher preparation program) from a teacher educator to aid teaching interns in developing strategies to enact curricular and pedagogical choices that align with their values and beliefs about teaching.

Risks and Discomforts

Risks and discomforts are minimal and no greater than normal educational practice. All identifying markers of participants (i.e., your name, institution, student teaching placement, and other ways you might be identified) will be removed or replaced with pseudonyms for you to remain anonymous in published findings.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to continue with any part of the study at any time for any reason.

Data Protection

I will protect the confidentiality of your research records by removing identifying markers (i.e., your name, institution, student teaching placement, and other ways you might be identified) or replacing them with pseudonyms in public-facing documents. Information collected in this project may be shared with other researchers, but we will not share any information that could identify you.

Questions

If you have questions about this research study, please contact the principal investigator, Christopher Kingsland, at cwkingsl@umich.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, at ebonyt@umich.edu.

As part of their review, the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences has determined that this study is no more than minimal risk and exempt from on-going IRB oversight.

Participant Consent

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Print Legal Name: _____

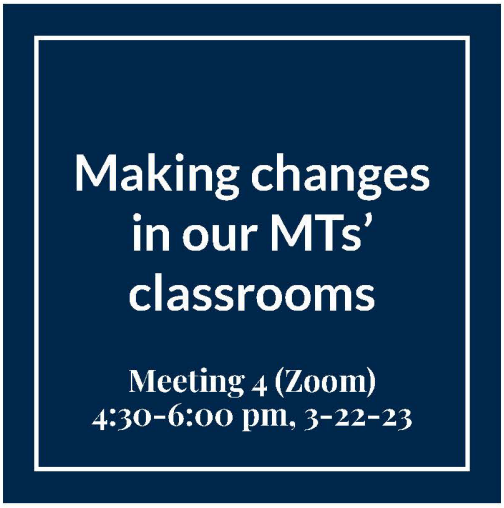
Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

Investigators are reminded that they should give a copy to the participant and retain a full copy of the consent including a copy of the signature page as part of your research records. Participants must complete all of the required information (printed name, signature and date).

Appendix E: Group Meeting Slides

Link to Notes Doc



1

Link to Notes Doc

Agenda

1. Greetings and Thought Question
2. Review Norms
3. Share Changes
4. Wobble Discussions
5. Debrief and Closing



2

Link to Notes Doc

Greetings and Thought Questions

Choose one or more to think about and share out:

A. What's a glow, grow, or slow from your personal or teaching life you're reflecting on since we last met?
B. Review what you've written and the records of practice you have brought. What's important to you? Feel free to write more about wobbles you are experiencing in trying to do new things in your MT's class. Why are you experiencing this wobble?
C. How do you think being white, a woman, or other social identities play a role in how you approach making changes? What about the social identities of your MTs or your students?

3

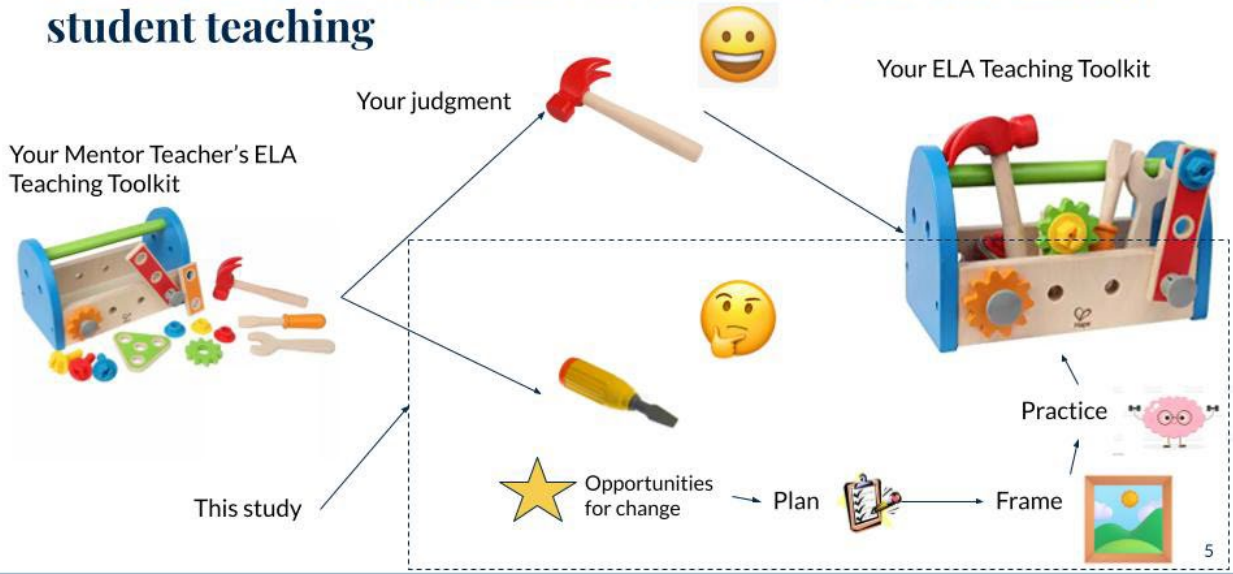
Takeaways from last meetingS

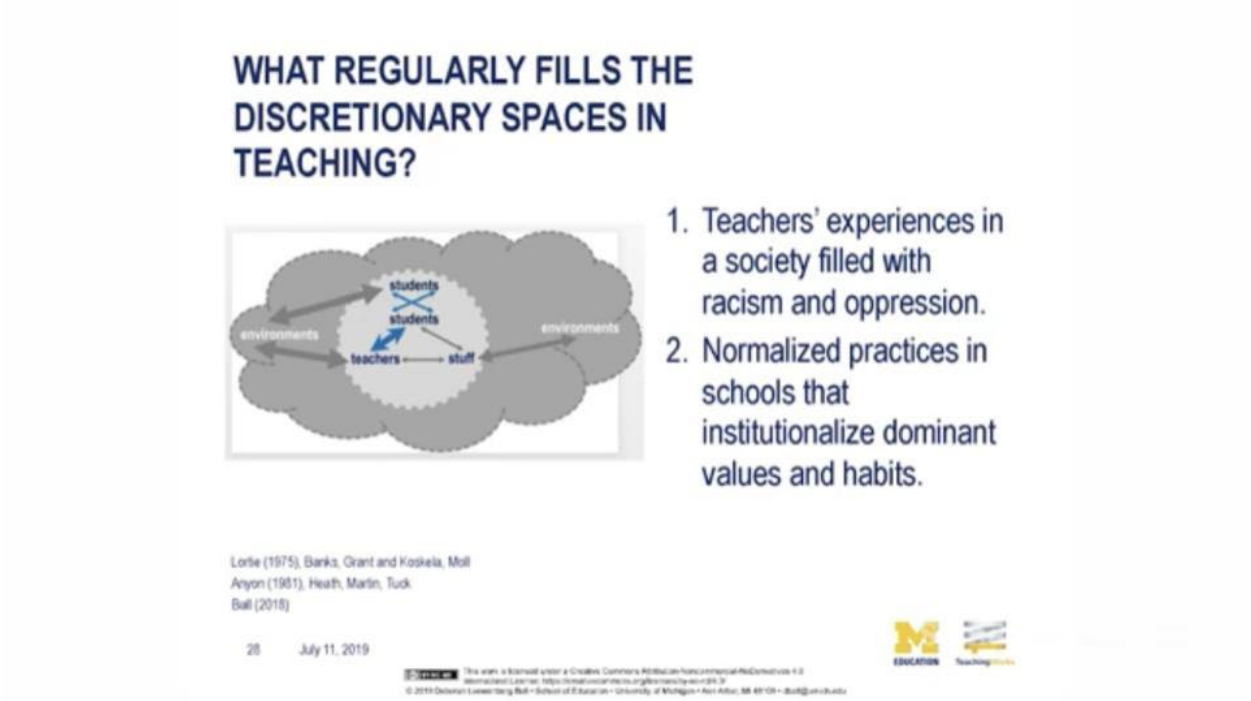
- to not be afraid to ask for help
- to give more grace to myself and my students when things go funky.
- Be willing to be uncomfortable for the sake of the students in trying to collaborate as much as possible. It's a better learning environment for my students.
- To consider things I have control over and things I don't have control over.
- To look forward to how responsibilities change in own classroom.
- To think about what we can do in those spaces that are already set up. Can't go back to when they were freshman or 6th graders. What can I do in 8 lessons? What little things can I do?
- To learn quickly to become more flexible. Let things roll.
- To ask for help and ask for things I want/need. That's more important than weirdness or anxiety.

4

Link to Notes Doc

Developing your repertoire of teaching practices during student teaching





Link to Notes Doc

Meeting Goals

This project's central research question is "How do preservice ELA teachers frame curricular and pedagogical changes they (try to) make in their mentor teachers' classrooms?"

A. To name and explore the wobbles between what we want to do and what is happening in our student teaching classrooms.
B. To examine and discuss these wobbles with care and criticality.
C. To determine how we can (or can't) make changes through our talk and actions.
D. (if time) To practice strategies for making changes in our student teaching classrooms.
E. To reflect on the decisions we make and consider how our strategies might be useful in our future teaching.

7

Link to Notes Doc

Meeting/Discussion Norms

A. Look for opportunities, not problems
B. Listen to understand (empathic listening)
C. Challenge ideas, not people
D. Be present
E. Show care for all people
F. Share noticings, not judgments (we are all vulnerable!)

8

Link to Notes Doc

Share Changes

A. Share your story + record of practice
B. What are you taking away from the process? What are you still wobbling about? Working on?
C. Group comments

9

Link to Notes Doc

Discussion Protocol

1. Presenter (originator of wobble) introduces their situation.
2. Consultants (other group members) ask clarifying and probing questions about the situation.
3. The presenter and consultants discuss possible ways to navigate the situation.
4. The presenter summarizes what the group has discussed and determines next steps.
5. (if relevant) the presenter and group members rehearse (role play, script) how to plan and/or enact their change.
6. The facilitator (Chris) leads a discussion on how the process went. What are the takeaways?

10

Link to Notes Doc

Discussion

Example Clarifying Questions

- What do you mean by…?
- Did I hear you correctly when you said…?
- Who are the stakeholders in this decision making process? What's your relationship with them?
- How are students involved in this process?
- Tell me more about… (e.g., the activity, your students, your MT, etc.)
- (paraphrase). Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?
- Can you give some more context about…?
- Do you have another example?
- What does this look like in your classroom?
- What happened before / after?
- What do you already know about…?

Example Probing Questions:

- Why do you think this is happening?
- How are you considering others' viewpoints and values?
- How are different concepts of teaching English coming together here?
- What about your social identities is relevant?
- How are you positioning yourself and others?
- How might you reframe…? (i.e., to make it less deficit-oriented)
- What do you think would happen if…?
- What sort of impact do you think…?
- How did you decide…?
- What is the connection between… and…?
- What if the opposite were true? Then what?
- Why is this wobble important to you?
- How does this relate to your values as a teacher?
- How does this relate to teaching for Diversity, Inclusion, Justice, and Equity (DIJE)?

11

Link to Notes Doc

Identify next steps + Set Intentions

Next: final interviews with Chris. Set up time (45 min)

Chris will reach out with draft writing for you to comment and respond to (optional)

To do: Share whatever resources you feel are relevant with from student teaching with Chris. This may be recordings, notes you took, lesson plans. Your observation lesson plans and reflections would be helpful!

Closing Questions:

1. How are you thinking about making changes in your MT's classroom this semester?
2. What are you taking away from our time together today?
3. Do you have a preview of what you want to talk about next meeting?
4. As you leave today, what intentions can you set for yourself?
5. Is there anything we didn't talk about today that you want to bring up?

12

Link to Notes Doc

Goodbyes!

Send me an email (cwkingsl@umich.edu) when/if something comes up.

If you're ever on the fence, it's always better to record/collect and *not* need something than to *not* record/collect.

Feel free to ask me questions and share with me. I'll be around!

See you soon!

13

Appendix F: Tensions Codebook

Table 12: Tensions Codebook

Tension Category	Tension	Description	Example
Instructional practices		Actions of planning, teaching, and assessment	
	Planning/Curriculum	Tensions related to planning to teach or concerning curriculum	Well, we want to try these really cool things, but especially since the pandemic, there's a lot of, well, this group is so far behind and we have to teach this, this, and this. And so it's not creating that opportunity where we can really just allow students to grow in, I don't know, just different ways. It's a lot of traditional going back to starting over with grammar and formatting essays and things like that, which they are important, but it's not allowing students to express themselves fully. (Tracy, identify tension, Meeting 1)
	Instructional Activities	Tensions related to instructional activities	I've been having a hard time with having my students actually collaborate with each other when they're discussing. (Madison, identify tension, Meeting 5)
	Feedback, Assessment, and Grading	Tensions related to providing students feedback, developing and implementing assessments,	And also, I think with a lot with grammar and writing, it had to be perfect. And if it was a formative to me, I didn't think that was very important. I was able to read it. I knew what they were. Just trying to say, yes, it's important to practice decent grammar and it's important to make sure that your spell check

		and grading student work	is done, but if it's not a summative, I didn't really see how that was very important. This is practice, I don't know. That's just, it's my perspective on that, I guess. (Tracy, reflect on tension, Interview 2)
Classroom Environment		Actions related to maintaining a positive learning environment	
	Classroom Management/Discipline	Tensions related to facilitating positive student behaviors (broadly)	So one thing that I was talking to her about, which it's so minor, the way that she gets students attention, it's a very soft start to class, like I said before, but sometimes if we really need to get stuff done, I feel like that's just killing so much class time, doing a gentle start. So I was trying to think of ways that I could get students attention more like quicker than waiting for them to wrap up their conversations. (Eva, Identify Wobble, Interview 1)
	Relationships with Students	Tensions related to building and maintaining positive relationships with students	And so I'm trying to do that kind of stuff, but to make him recognize that it's not targeted and he still is really not receptive to that. But the only times that the only times I feel like he is receptive is when he then shares something like a negative comment about my mentor teacher. And I have to somehow navigate that every single time he tries that, which is not the kind of relationship that I want to have with him. So I'm kind of at a weird limbo with that. (Leah, identify wobble, Meeting 1)
Professional Practices		Actions related to being a member of the profession	
	Relationships with MTs	Tensions concerning a	more recently it's been a little bit of a source of confusion or not

		relationship with their mentor teacher	necessarily tension that I'm a little bit different than her. I think she recognizes that I'm not going to do everything the same way as her. And so when she recommends that I do something, she doesn't, and I, I'm not super open to it, she doesn't know really know how to respond to that. And I'm trying my best to phrase it as that's just not what I would do. But then she doesn't really know how else to do it because that's how she does it. (Leah, Identify Wobble, Interview 1)
	Relationships with Colleagues	Tensions concerning a relationship with their colleagues (teachers, administrators, etc.)	So I think also with that, since she's the one making all of this, she gets frustrated that nobody really, none of the other eighth grade team members are helping. And so that can kind of build some tensions. (Tracy, identify wobble, Interview 1)
	Relationships with Families / Communities	Tensions concerning relationships with families and community members	But I don't know, it's, it's very hard. I think the district that I did pre-student teaching in, like [city name], they were trying to ban books that said the word gay in them from the public library and it didn't pass, but that's what people were going in on their free time at night and on the weekend to try to do is ban books that say gay in them. And it's like, I don't know, I feel like I would need to gauge that based on where I was at. (Charlotte, Interview 2)
	Navigating Policies	Tensions with policies at the class, department, school, district, state, or federal levels	I mean, if I did actively ignore something in the classroom, it would be a late work policy, which I think is what we talked about in our group too. …like I feel weird treating juniors in high school college students because they're not. (Madison, Interview 2)

	Navigating Teacher Identity	Tensions with who they are as a teacher	because teaching to majority students of color, I'm having to think about myself and my whiteness and make sure that I'm acknowledging that I do come from a place of privilege. And we've been doing a lot of Reflection on who are the people that teach you? It's mostly white women. Who are the people in power in the United States? It's majority all white men. So just thinking about all of that is just hefty. And that's why I come home so exhausted at the end of the day. Cause it's taking so much mental strain to be like, am I saying the right things? Am I being sensitive and accommodating to every single person in the room? I don't know. It's just a lot. I love it. I'm really happy that I'm getting to lead such an impactful unit, but it's also a lot of pressure. That was a lot. (Eva, Identify Wobble, Meeting 4)
	Reflective Practice	Tensions with enacting reflective practice	

Appendix G: Tables of Tension Codes by Cycle and Tension Codes by Participant

Table 13: Frequency of Tension Codes in Cycle

Code	Subcode	Identify (65)	Plan (40)	Enact (1)	Reflect (46)	Total Frequency
Professional Practices		46	29		36	111
	Colleague Relationships	9	14		7	30
	Families/Communities	0	1		0	1
	MT Relationships	24	15		33	72
	Policies	17	11		9	37
	Teacher Identity	4	0		1	5
	Reflective Practice	1	2		0	3
Teaching Practices		36	9	1	19	65
	Feedback, Assessment, and Grading	11	1		5	17
	Instructional Activities	11	6	1	11	29
	Planning/Curriculum	23	2		5	30
Classroom Environment		21	11		27	59
	Classroom Management / Discipline	12	6		19	37
	Relationships with Students	10	7		12	29

Table 14: Tension Subcodes by Participant

Tension Category	Charlotte (28 scenes)	Leah (33 scenes)	Eva (27 scenes)	Madison (27 scenes)	Tracy (37 Scenes)	Total (152 scenes)
Professional Practices: MT Relationships	11	27	12	5	17	72
Classroom Environment: Classroom Management / Discipline	11	8	7	0	11	37
Professional Practices: Policies	11	4	5	4	13	37

Professional Practices: Colleague Relationships	10	2	1	2	15	30
Instructional Practices: Planning/Curriculum	2	6	2	8	12	30
Classroom Environment: Relationships with Students	7	9	5	1	7	29
Instructional Practices: Instructional Activities	2	2	6	16	3	29
Instructional Practices: Feedback, Assessment, and Grading	3	6	1	5	2	17
Professional Practices: Teacher Identity	1	2	1	0	1	5
Professional Practices: Reflective Practice	0	0	2	1	0	3
Professional Practices: Families/Communities	1	0	0	0	0	1

Appendix H: (Full Text) "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5)

Tension Scene 21 (FULL): "Ultimately it's not really my classroom" (Multiple Participants, Meeting 5)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Tracy	I can share first
2		I was thinking about question C,
3		and I think that the difference for me is that when I share changes that I'd like to make with my mentor, I'm easily persuaded either to not make changes or to compromise in my changes
4		And so compared to now as I'm technically a teacher of record, as I will be I think,
5		I'll be less or less able to be persuaded to make those changes that I think are important, especially regarding my values
6		And [Field Instructor] shared something with me
7		and she said it again last night,
8		but behind closed doors, what happens in your classroom? As long as it's the best for you students, that's what you have to do
9		And I think that's just what I've been thinking about is how I'm being compromising now
10		But next year, whatever, I'll be able to able to do what is best for my students and for myself more
11	Madison	Yeah, I also talked about C
12		and I felt the biggest difference that I could see was the feeling of authority that I assume you have when you're a teacher of record and also experience
13		because I think that leads into that
14		But today I noticed that I was asking my mentor teacher for her advice on something when really I was just asking for her approval,
15		but I didn't necessarily want to be like, oh, can I do this?
16		So I think it's more direct making change when you're a teacher of record instead of a student teacher
17		because you are the one with that complete authority
18		and you know everything that's going on instead of just your one unit or the few months that you've been there

19	Charlotte	Yeah
20		I also thought about question C,
21		and I think even though Harper and I get on very well and don't really have disagreements about things necessarily,
22		I think it does sometimes undercut my own problem-solving skills
23		because when I'm struggling with something, she can just tell me what she would do
24		And I'm like, okay, well then I'll just do that
25		But I think being able to work through things myself will make not necessarily easier, but make me better at my job,
26		I guess
27		And then also I feel like a big piece of advice I've gotten,
28		because I've been doing a lot of observations in Milton lately, the past week or so,
29		is kind of once you close your doors, you just do what you have to do and do what's best for your students
30		And there's not so much that's public
31		It sometimes feels in student teaching
32	Chris	So it's interesting that you all had similar things that you're thinking about right now
33		and Tracy and Charlotte, you have almost the same quote that you gave about close your door and do what you've got to do,
34		do what's best for your students
35		So a follow up I have for that is what about student teaching then makes that more difficult?
36	Tracy	I think ultimately it's not really my classroom
37		There's somebody else that's responsible for this
38		and they're more experienced then
39		I think being a new teacher, you automatically default, oh, they know what's best
40		They've been around doing this for a long time
41		Even if it's a practice that's out of date or maybe something that you don't necessarily agree with
42		And I think I also compromise, too, to avoid conflict with my mentor
43		There's been a few times where I've just been like, okay, yeah, sure, whatever
44		I'll just do that in order to keep our relationship stable,
45		which is more of a personal, I don't know, a personal thing
46		But yeah, I definitely think because it's not ultimately my classroom, there's somebody else that's responsible for it
47		And so making sure that what's happening is comfortable for them
48		because they're the ones that are going to have to deal with it when I leave,

49		if that makes sense
50	Madison	I would agree with that
51		I also think what Charlotte talked about with how it feels like it's more public when you're student teaching in the classroom is part of it too
52		Because it's like we have-
53		we're observed by people from RSU
54		and we're also observed by our mentor teachers
55		and we're, I don't know about you, but when I'm at school following my mentor teacher around,
56		I feel like I'm following her around and people are looking at me as someone following behind her and not just another teacher there
57		So I think there's lot of differentiation between the two roles
58		where it's like I'm not, like Tracy said, not at the same level of, I guess, authority in the classroom
59		Cause it really is ultimately hers
60		and she's been there longer and at the school longer too
61		I think that's part of it
62	Charlotte	Yeah, I agree with what both Tracy and Madison were talking about
63		I think there's just a lot of pressure, too
64		Like Madison was talking about
65		you are literally being graded by the person whose classroom you're in
66		And I think that adds a layer of not wanting to cause them to have negative fear feelings towards you
67		because that could disrupt your own future success
68		And then, I don't know,
69		when we had to film lessons and things like that, it just feels kind of constantly being on display,
70		which to me at least can get really uncomfortable
71		And I feel like I sometimes made compromises just because I didn't,
72		I don't know,
73		I was just, I don't feel like I have the decision-making power in this situation to do what I actually want to do

Appendix I: Tension Scene 22: "It felt like it was just boxes" (Charlotte, Meeting 5)

Line	Speaker	Text
1	Charlotte	I just feel like, at least with me, when I think about teaching and RSU and specifically RSU' teaching program, we stress so much the relationships that we build in the classroom with the students
2		and making sure that we're kind of changing what we do depending on the needs of a particular student
3		But when it came to applying for and going into student teaching, it felt like it was just boxes
4		You kind of had to check and you have to,
5		because we don't have, at least for me, I didn't have a ton of say in where I ended up being placed
6		So it was like I had to mold myself really weirdly, I felt
7		because I was still a student to my mentor,
8		but then I'm also a teacher to these students
9		And it was just like, I don't know, I felt like I was still very much in a student role,
10		but I wasn't being treated as a student
11		in the way that we talk about how teachers should treat students,
12		if that makes sense

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