Complex interactions in student teaching: lost opportunities for learning

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Student teaching is a cornerstone of teacher preparation, yet it remains one of the most difficult experiences to understand. Calls for an ecological approach to research on student teaching prompted this study in which the experience is examined from the perspective of the three key triad members. Using activity theory, this study explores how their interactions in specific contexts shaped opportunities for student teachers to learn to teach language arts. The findings reveal that all members of the triad were simultaneously operating in multiple settings and facing competing demands that shaped their actions and stances. Consequently, there were numerous instances of lost opportunities for student teachers to learn to teach, including sparse feedback on teaching subject matter and few links to methods courses, plus limited opportunities to develop identities as teachers. The structures that frame student teaching and its participants have deep roots in the cultures of universities and schools that must be considered if student teaching is to maximize its potential.

Keywords: teacher education; mentoring; teacher development; activity theory

The power of student teaching is legend. Teachers often proclaim it as the most valuable aspect of their preservice programs, yet ironically, teacher educators often decry it as problematic and cooperating teachers lament that student teachers are not prepared for the realities of schools and classrooms (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Darling-Hammond, Pacheco, Michelli, LePage, & Hammemess, 2005; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Discrepant views of the student teaching experience such as these led to Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1985) notion of the two-worlds pitfall--the clash between goals and visions of learning to teach developed at the university and in the field. In some ways, these dichotomous views of student teaching present rather simple, even if difficult, challenges for productive student teaching. Beyond these tensions are others, involving other actors and other influences that ultimately determine the quality and power of the student teaching experience.

Student teachers' work is done in complex settings where an array of people with varied histories, understandings, beliefs, and perspectives on instruction and curriculum interact. As Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) suggested, "What we learn from studying the process of learning to teach depends on whose voices are being heard" (p. 156). Yet there are many, and sometimes conflicting, voices. What is needed, they claimed, is an ecological approach to research on learning to teach in which the interrelatedness of the pieces in the system are considered in context. At a time when student teaching continues to be a mainstay of teacher education programs, we need to better understand the complex interactions of the key triad members (student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor) as well as other forces that interact to create or constrain opportunities for preservice teachers to learn. In this article, we report on a study in which we examined the multiple interactions and activity settings in which student teachers learn to teach language arts and discuss implications for teacher learning.

Research on Student Teaching

Since 1990, several reviews of student teaching have revealed a growing body of research and calls for new approaches to inquiry. In the first Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Guyton and McIntyre (1990) concluded there were few structures to support cooperation among supervisors, teachers, and student teachers and little connection between the goals of teacher education programs and the student teaching experience. Following that, in the second Handbook, McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) documented progress in establishing

unifying goals for field experiences and coursework. Bolstered by emerging qualitative research methods, these authors found evidence of deeper understandings about the attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of preservice teachers. However, they also called for a more contextual approach to research that would shed light on the complexity of teaching and how student teaching behaviors are shaped. Just 2 years later, Wideen et al.'s (1998) critical review of research on student teaching continued to find a gap between the change agenda of teacher educators and the survival goal of preservice teachers. Moreover, it called for a broader perspective on research that would attend to other actors as well as contextual factors that influence student teaching. Most recently, Cliff and Brady (2005) concluded that recent studies had indeed begun to examine the influence of individual, instructional, and contextual factors on preservice teachers' development. Still, they urged researchers to move toward a more complex conceptualization of the interactive and social nature of developing practice.

Even with this evolution in research frameworks and a growing literature, much of the research on student teaching has continued to examine the experience from the perspective of one, or maybe two, of the triad members, rather than from the interactions among the players situated in a particular context. In part, this may be due to a lack of clarity of roles and communication problems among triad members (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Koehler, 1988; Slick, 1997). This has led some to suggest that triadic relationships are difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. In fact, Simmel (as cited in Veal & Rikard, 1998) suggested that triads are really dyads plus one, whereas Veal and Rikard (1998) suggested that two different, and shifting, hierarchical triads coexist during student teaching, often leaving student teachers in the role of mediating these relationships. Nevertheless, even if these shifting triads or dyads plus one exist, the reality is that all the participants interact indirectly or directly to create opportunities for student teachers to learn their craft. To fully understand these interactions, an ecological, systems-based approach to studying the complexities and interrelations of individuals, institutions, programs, and ideas in context is required.

Among the few researchers who have examined the interplay of triad members within specific student teaching contexts, most find the dynamics to be complicated and challenging, resulting in disappointing professional development for preservice teachers (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Newell, Gingrich, & Johnson, 2001; Slick, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). For example, Borko and Mayfield (1995) investigated the influence of guided-teaching relationships between four student teachers in middle school math classes and their cooperating teachers, as well as their university supervisors. They concluded that although all members of the triad were generally satisfied with the relationships, the university supervisors and cooperating teachers had limited influence on student teachers' knowledge, teaching strategies, and beliefs about teaching. Borko and Mayfield called for clarification of the roles these mentors play along with additional support and preparation for these roles. Bullough and Draper (2004) also noted difficulties in the triad relationship as they examined the tension between a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor who had different views about how one student teacher should teach algebra. Caught in the middle, the student teacher ultimately aligned with the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor stepped back. The result was a "failed triad" in which the cooperating teacher viewed the supervisor as out of touch with schools and the supervisor viewed the cooperating teacher as resistant to change. Along similar lines, Slick (1997, 1998a, 1998b) conducted three case studies of the multiple roles and tensions experienced by supervisors through their interactions and relationships with student teachers and cooperating teachers. As with other studies that explored the dynamics of the triad, Slick called for redefinition of triad members' roles. Newell et al. (2001) went a step further in their study of student teachers in middle school language arts, suggesting that there must be alignment, not simply redefinition, of roles between the student teaching placement and university coursework if student teachers are to appropriate tools learned at the university and develop reflective practice.

The study we report here adds to this emerging body of ecological research on the student teaching experience as an opportunity to learn. We seek to understand the context of student teaching--the complex interactions and

how they shape learning to teach. Our study gives voice to many of the players--university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers themselves--and to the demands, desires, and beliefs of each. We draw upon sociocultural and, more specifically, activity and activity systems theory (Cole, 1996; Engestrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999; Wertsch, 1981) because they allow us to go beyond the two-worlds pitfall and various dyadic relationships that make up the complex settings in which student teachers learn. All the members of the triad are not, we will argue, operating in a single world or even two worlds but instead are coping simultaneously with multiple worlds and the demands of each--a difficult task for even the most experienced educator.

Theoretical Framework

Activity theory provides a way to think about the situative nature of teacher development (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). In general, activity theory asserts that a person's framework for thinking is developed through participation and problem solving in specific environments that are themselves shaped by both present and historical contexts. Engestrom et al. (1999) expanded this notion to include the activity system--an "object-oriented, collective, and culturally mediated human activity" (p. 9). The student teaching experience is a "collective" activity because it involves not just the student teacher but also the cooperating teacher and the students in the classroom in which student teaching occurs, as well as the supervisor and other members of the university community with whom the student teacher has been involved and to whom the supervisor and student teacher are responsible. The ultimate "object," or goal, of student teaching is for student teachers to successfully learn to teach and eventually become independent and autonomous teachers in their own classrooms. Yet the student teaching experience is "culturally mediated" by the visions, expectations, cultural histories, past experiences, tools, and settings constructed and negotiated among all those involved, which complicates the setting even further. As Engestrom et al. argued, the entire activity system must be the unit of analysis. This framework is useful to research in teacher education and teachers' thinking, in general (cf. Grossman et al., 1999, 2000; Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002) and particularly to our work here as we seek to understand how actions and interactions in the activity system contribute to student teachers' developing knowledge and practice of teaching language arts.

Activity theory also calls attention to the tensions and discontinuities that exist among settings (Engestrom et al., 1999). For example, all the participants in our study would agree that they are collectively involved in promoting effective language arts instruction. Although this broad goal creates a common set of expectations, the variety of demands, goals, and tasks embedded in the various activity settings complicates achieving the shared goal in several ways. First, definitions of what constitutes effective language arts instruction differ across settings. Second, different participants in this activity have different primary goals (e.g., practicing new instructional strategies, getting a good grade, covering required curriculum, communicating with parents, evaluating performance, etc.). In addition to this mix of wide-ranging goals and tasks, activity theory posits that each role, each person, comes to the setting with past experiences, beliefs, and knowledge. Thus, understanding the confluence of demands, histories, and expectations (both explicit and implicit) at work in the student teaching experience is essential to understanding the challenges inherent in student teaching. Furthermore, activity theory is instrumental in understanding how teacher identity is developed as student teachers define and solve problems in interaction with others, many of whom hold power over them (Britzman, 1991; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Insights from the pioneering work of Erving Goffman (1959) also help us understand how individuals perform identities in different settings when power and performance are central to success. As student teachers mediate their roles and responsibilities according to expectations defined by different audiences, they are essentially engaged in a variety of what Goffman termed command performances (p. 328) in which they perform identities that are in harmony with the various, and sometimes discordant, situations.

Research Design and Method

This study is part of a 4-year longitudinal study of beginning language arts teachers in which we followed teachers from their last year of teacher education into their first 3 years of full-time teaching (see Grossman et al., 2000; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006). The analysis reported here focuses directly on the student teaching experience.

The Program

Preservice teachers were enrolled in a five-quarter master's-level teacher education program at a Research-1 university. After experimenting for several years with professional development schools (PDS) (Darling-Hammond, 1994) and finding the model too labor- and resource-intensive, the program was restructured, integrating some of the PDS work into a new partner school model. Several student teachers were placed in the same school or department. Efforts were made to build connections between the university and field, although university faculty and supervisors were not directly involved in collaborative work at the school sites. The restructured program was also designed to provide students with a core focus on pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) and reflective practice (LaBoskey, 1994; Schon, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Coursework included lectures, small group activities, planning lessons and practice teaching in class, and coordinated field-based teaching assignments that were guided and evaluated by course professors. Reflective practice was supported through a seminar in which students discussed connections between coursework and field work each quarter they were on campus and as part of coursework itself; course instructors often asked students to explore how lessons might be adapted or changed to be more successful or to fit different situations. Although these activities did not extend into student teaching, the protocol used by university supervisors required students to set goals for lessons that were observed and to reflect on these as part of each debriefing.

Clinical field experiences occurred throughout the program, beginning with a 2-week observation during the first quarter and increasing in time and responsibility until students began a full-time, 12-week student teaching placement in the fourth quarter. During student teaching, interns were expected to take responsibility for planning and teaching for most of the day over a 6-week period; what and how they taught were determined in collaboration with their cooperating teachers. The students also participated in a back-to-school experience before student teaching began in which they

worked full-time with their cooperating teachers for 2 weeks preparing for the beginning of school. As a result, student teachers in this study were quite familiar with the students, cooperating teachers, and structure of their classrooms when they began student teaching. In most cases, they were expected to take a substantial role in the classroom from the first day of student teaching.

Student Teachers

Students in the teacher education program held bachelor's degrees upon entering and were awarded master's degrees after successful completion of the five-quarter program. Because this study was a part of a larger longitudinal project in which we followed teachers from their teacher education program into their first 3 years of teaching, we selected a subset of preservice teachers identified as being most likely to find jobs in the surrounding area. For this study, we selected nine student teachers, four from the elementary program and five from the secondary English program. All five secondary students had undergraduate degrees in English; the four elementary students had degrees in English, history, psychology, and art history. The university field placement

office arranged student teaching placements in partner schools located in urban and suburban school districts within a 20-mile radius of the university, which included a range of socioeconomic communities. (See Table 1 for a description of participants and their field settings; pseudonyms are used throughout the study.)

Cooperating Teachers

Cooperating teachers were selected by the field placement office based on their reputations and recommendations by colleagues and former student teachers. Their prior teaching experience ranged from 3 to 28 years and they had mentored between 1 and 20 student teachers over the course of their careers. They had fairly limited contact with the university, meeting formally with the faculty teaching in the program and the university supervisors once at a beginning-of-year event in which they learned more about the teacher education program, in general, and student teaching, specifically. They also reviewed course syllabi as a means to learn what students were learning on campus and discussed expectations for the student teaching experience. During student teaching, their main contact with the university was through the university supervisors and the field placement office.

University Supervisors

University supervisors were, for the most part, retired school administrators or teachers who held master's degrees and had some prior experience with mentoring or supervision. No specific training was provided by the university, although an experienced supervisor was assigned to mentor all first-year supervisors. All the supervisors at the secondary level had been middle or high school English teachers, and at the elementary level, all except one supervisor had experience teaching elementary school children. Overall, they had 2 to 23 years of experience supervising preservice teachers. To gain an understanding of the pedagogical strategies and conceptual issues the interns were studying in their campus courses, many of supervisors sat in on methods courses. At the secondary level, this meant that supervisors sat in on the English methods course sequence, but at the elementary level, because students took methods classes in each subject area, a few of the supervisors did not participate in any of the literacy classes.

Both cooperating teachers and university supervisors were responsible for evaluating student teachers. An evaluation form, based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC; 1992) standards, was developed at the university and used by everyone involved in the evaluation (see Table 2), although all were encouraged to provide additional feedback as well. The student teachers were familiar with the evaluation form and collaborated with their university supervisors to set specific goals and targets for each of the supervisors' scheduled formal observations. University supervisors observed student teachers in several different schools approximately three times each and assigned final grades for student teaching after reviewing written feedback from each cooperating teacher. Both cooperating teachers and supervisors often provided letters and personal references for their interns that were influential in job interviews and hiring decisions.

Procedures and Data Sources

To gain an in-depth understanding of the complex activity settings in which the participants were immersed, we relied on multiple data sources. We interviewed student teachers both individually and in groups on at least five occasions. The first interview occurred after coursework was completed but before student teaching began, other interviews took place during student teaching, and a final group interview took place after student teaching was completed. The interviews were semistructured, allowing placement-specific and more global issues to emerge from the protocol questions (Kvale, 1996).

In addition, we observed at least three times during student teaching, conducting prelesson and postlesson interviews and collecting artifacts from the lessons. At the elementary level, we observed both reading and writing instruction when possible; at the secondary level, we observed instruction in two classes during each visit. We took detailed field notes during the observations and wrote both descriptive and analytic memos from our notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

We also gathered data from cooperating teachers and university supervisors. We accompanied each university supervisor on a supervisory visit, observed and recorded the debriefing session with the student teacher, and then separately interviewed both the student teacher and supervisor after the debriefing. Similarly, we interviewed each cooperating teacher and observed and recorded his or her debriefing session with the student teachers whenever possible. Finally, we interviewed the instructors and teaching assistants in the language arts methods courses and collected artifacts used in those classes (i.e., syllabi, assignments, course reading packs). All the interviews and the debriefing sessions were audiotaped and transcribed.

Many of us were actively involved in the teacher education program during the time of this study. Aware of the problems associated with studying our own students, we each followed students who had been taught by other instructors. We were not acquainted with any of the students we followed before the study began. In this way, we hoped to protect against bias in our analysis, put all our participants at ease to talk about what they were experiencing, and remove any sense of evaluation associated with our classroom observations. Our combined familiarity with the program and the curriculum used in all the courses, however, were invaluable in understanding and interpreting the data.

Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative. We began by reading the transcripts, field notes, and descriptive and analytic memos to get an overview of each case. We developed codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994), noting participants' goals; features of each setting; and tools used to negotiate meaning, solve problems, and motivate action. Data were triangulated using data from multiple sources, including interviews, observations, and artifacts across the student teacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and language arts methods instructor. We also analyzed the data to determine the goals and content of debriefing sessions between student teachers and their cooperating teachers and between student teachers and their university supervisors. We parsed the transcripts of the debriefing sessions into topical units, coded these, and then tabulated the proportion of exchanges pertaining to each topic.

Based on these data, we created detailed individual case studies for each of the triads. As a team, we read through and discussed each case, crosschecking evidence and identifying critical episodes and quotations to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses within each case. We investigated how individuals within the triad mediated individual and shared goals and how these goals changed or surfaced over time. Team members offered interpretations and additional evidentiary warrant for the claims until a clear pattern emerged. Then we wrote detailed memos considering the interactions among all the participants involved in each student placement, compared across cases, and identified emerging themes (Spradley, 1980). We then returned to the original data, looking for confirming and disconfirming evidence to support themes, consonance and dissonance across settings, and similarities and differences within and across elementary and secondary school contexts.

Findings

Our analyses identified two central themes. First, we found that all members of the triad had to negotiate the shifting terrain of the student teaching experience. Second, we found that opportunities to learn to teach

language arts were few and far between, despite the fact that all participants agreed this was a primary goal of the setting. Although there were differences between elementary and secondary student teaching settings, these themes characterized the experiences of both. Drawing from interviews, observations, and instructional materials, we highlight below the multiple experiences, goals, perspectives, voices, and interactions of the triad members and how these framed opportunities for student teachers to develop conceptual and practical tools for teaching (Grossman et al., 1999).

Negotiating the Terrain

Many researchers have documented how student teachers try to "fit" into their teaching placements, and the student teachers in this study were no exception. However, student teachers were not the only members of the triad to have to negotiate the terrain--cooperating teachers and university supervisors had to as well. All of the members had perspectives on and personal experiences with student teaching that informed their construction of goals, roles, and responsibilities and mediated their interactions with others. In this section, we explore how each member of the triad negotiated the shared terrain and how the interactions shaped opportunities for learning to teach language arts.

The student teachers came with dual goals. On one hand, they viewed themselves as guests in the classroom, there at the invitation of a cooperating teacher who had both experience and power over them, particularly in terms of evaluation and recommendations for future teaching positions. Furthermore, they recognized that the culture of the classroom, curricular goals, and classroom management strategies had been established before they arrived and would continue after they left. Consequently, the goal of fitting into existing norms and practices was highly valued. On the other hand, they had another, sometimes competing, goal to try out some of the concepts and strategies they had learned in their coursework. In the words of one student teacher, that was how she could "see if they [the teaching strategies] actually work."

These tensions between fitting in and experimenting were complicated by placements with cooperating teachers who held a range of beliefs about how student teachers learn to teach and about their own roles as teacher educators. At one end of the continuum was the belief that student teachers learn through mimesis, or mimicking what they see. In these settings, student teachers had little room to develop their own practice and had to fit into a fairly tight mold structured by their cooperating teachers. For example, Hannah's cooperating teacher was impressed because

> she [Hannah] was a great listener ... that was the highest thing on her behalf, because if there's one thing I don't want in a student teacher, and I would suspect most teachers feel this, if a young person comes in and they can't listen. [Interviewer asks, "To you?"] To me-because I'm expecting to have this person learn from me. If they can't look me in the eye and listen and sort of have the right question when I'm done talking, it's like--it's a waste of time.

In this fairly strict, mimetic setting, the cooperating teacher believed that the role of the student teacher was to learn by following him precisely rather than to experiment with a range of pedagogical tools. Only when Hannah

closely approximated the role her cooperating teacher espoused did he step back and let her assume charge of the classroom, confident that everything would remain status quo. Hannah looked for the good in the situation, rationalizing it this way:

> And I've learned to do things his way anyway, and that helps. I also have discovered that a lot of his ideas are really good, it's just I had a hard time seeing that amidst some of his controllingness.... And so I just got over it, and was able to see the good things that he does do and some of his good philosophies.

Allison expressed a similar dilemma, as she was expected to follow faithfully her cooperating teacher's lessons. She commented, "Almost everything in the lesson is hers [the cooperating teacher's]. I guess the only things that are mine in this is [sic] the management, not the lesson.... I don't get to do much of my own stuff, really." Overall, interview and observation data representing this type of mimetic perspective were present in three of nine cases, illustrating not only the cooperating teachers' model of learning to teach but also the adjustments student teachers had to make to succeed in their placements.

Next along the continuum was the belief, held by two of nine cooperating teachers, that learning to teach involves experimentation. Charles's cooperating teacher, for example, called it "grounded experimentation," telling him,

> You just need to take what's out there already and from that you can build what you're going to do and be creative.... Use what's in there and pick and choose what's there. Then, from that, develop your own things--things you want to do.

She scaffolded Charles's experimentation by providing resources, helping him plan, watching him teach, and debriefing his lessons in detail. But she also let him grapple with the decisions, preparing him to consider conceptual and practical pedagogical tools for teaching that he might use once he left her classroom.

The remaining four cooperating teachers also viewed learning to teach as experimentation, but instead of scaffolding the experience, they provided little support, which resulted in an environment of benign neglect. One teacher, for example, left the room when the student teacher taught a lesson, believing that student teachers learn through trial and error and that "you're a natural teacher or you're not." She felt her best contribution to the teacher's development was to offer a classroom, treat the student teacher as colleague, and get out the way. Another cooperating teacher who also left the room reported that he had "lots of things to do outside of the classroom" and did not want to be seen as micromanaging the student teacher. In another instance, the cooperating teacher was present during the lesson but offered no feedback to the intern. In these situations, student teachers had the freedom to try out their own ideas but, as we explore in the next section, the lack of support or feedback from the cooperating teacher reduced student teachers' potential to learn from experience.

These diverse approaches to teaching reflected cooperating teachers' underlying beliefs about how novices learn to teach. Interesting, but perhaps not surprising, the approaches to mentoring student teachers taken by eight of the nine cooperating teachers closely resembled their own histories as student teachers. In addition, all

reported that student teachers learn to teach by observing and teaching, a stance that aligns most closely with both the "mimetic" and "benign neglect" positions on the continuum, which reflected the perspectives of seven of the nine cooperating teachers.

Across all the cases, only Charles's cooperating teacher talked about adjusting her role to meet the needs of her student teacher. She treated him as both a competent colleague and a learner and, in doing so, embraced her role as a teacher educator who shared Charles's goal of trying out new pedagogical strategies as well as learning from her modeling. This cooperating teacher openly questioned and problematized her own teaching as well as Charles's, encouraging him to experiment and supporting his efforts. The other cooperating teachers we observed took a less conceptual approach to guiding student teachers, focusing instead on specific classroom routines, planning lessons, and working with the students in their classrooms. None of the cooperating teachers reported that they had received any kind of professional development to prepare them for their roles as cooperating teachers.

Cooperating teachers' views of learning to teach clearly bore on what and how the student teachers learned. Additionally, the terrain the cooperating teachers needed to navigate within their own schools regarding pedagogical approaches, curriculum materials, and classroom structures also figured into the opportunities available for student teacher learning. Some cooperating teachers struggled with giving up control of their classes, concerned about student achievement, and others were concerned about adhering to mandated curriculum and covering required content expected by school administrators and their grade-level colleagues. Although some approaches left room for student teachers to experiment, others made it nearly impossible for student teachers to try out new instructional strategies. In two of four elementary schools, cooperating teachers were expected to follow specific curriculum materials for reading instruction and were not encouraged to deviate. At the secondary level, three of five interns were placed in classrooms in which content coverage of specific texts or units of study was a priority. The cooperating teachers transferred these pressures to raise student achievement and comply with curriculum mandates to their student teachers, further limiting their opportunities for experimentation. These contextual factors likely interacted with cooperating teachers' views of, and approaches to, working with student teachers--they felt that they could not, or would not, risk negotiating this part of the terrain.

University supervisors also had to negotiate a complex terrain, juggling several competing goals and roles. For the most part, like the students teachers, the university supervisors held the position that student teachers were guests who were "renting space." At the same time, they understood it was a crucial time for beginning teachers to learn. Yet all of the supervisors were reluctant to intrude into the classroom even if it could have been helpful to the student teacher. They had the challenge of keeping peace, providing support, and "smoothing the waters" not only between student teachers and cooperating teachers but also between the university and cooperating teachers/partner schools. Several factors likely contributed to this situation.

First, because all the supervisors were former public school teachers and several of them were supervising in the same districts in which they had taught, they had historical knowledge of how the districts worked and strong affiliations with many of the cooperating teachers and school administrators. In contrast, they were not integrated into university faculty events, did not teach classes in the program, worked part-time, and were poorly paid. Although several supervisors had sat in on courses in the teacher education program and found them helpful, they relied heavily on their own previous teaching experiences when they supervised. Sometimes that experience was more similar to the cooperating teachers' approaches than to what students had learned at the university.

Second, the university supervisors saw their main goal as one of helping students "have a positive and

rewarding experience" in the field, a position reinforced by the university field placement directors who wanted to maintain good relationships with partner schools. The strongest example of this was reported by one of the elementary supervisors who, early in her career, had questioned the value of using materials developed by one of the cooperating teachers. She had raised concern about how student teachers would be able to

> show some of their own ability to plan and teach. And I immediately got called on the carpet by the cooperating teacher who came down here to the university ... and complained about me as a supervisor--that I was questioning their methods and their approach to teaching.... And that immediately taught me never to do anything like that again! ... So you have to be careful not to step on people's toes.

During our study, this same supervisor found herself in a situation in which she disagreed with the pedagogical strategies and classroom climate of one of the cooperating teachers, yet she never discussed these issues with him for fear of stirring up controversy. She did not want to risk upsetting anyone at the school or the university.

The behavior of this supervisor was generally typical of the others in our study. For the most part, they were quite successful in this regard, helping student teachers smoothly navigate the terrain and gaining full endorsement from the university field office as exceptional mentors and mediators. None of the student teachers seemed to feel the pressure with their university supervisors that they felt with their cooperating teachers. All suggested that their supervisors were supportive, and seven of the nine were perceived as helpful. In contrast, the cooperating teachers had little to say, either positive or negative, about the university supervisors. Overall, university supervisors and cooperating teachers operated, in the student teacher's classroom experience, as separate entities.

Performing an identity. Our data suggest that student teachers adopted a common strategy for negotiating the terrain in which they performed an identity (Goffman, 1959) that was at odds with the identities they had constructed or wanted to construct. According to Goffman (1959), the purpose of a performance is to project a particular "definition of the situation" (p. 77) or to maintain a specific "front" (p. 26): In this case, the definition of the situation or front was one of competency and compatibility with the cooperating teacher's expectations. Although it might be helpful in some situations for student teachers to try on new ways of teaching and ways of understanding classroom life, it can also limit opportunities to develop more authentic professional identities. In performing an identity in accordance with their cooperating teachers' image of student teaching, our participants sometimes had to hide their knowledge, beliefs, or pedagogical strategies, at times acting in ways that were inconsistent with ideas they had learned during coursework. For example, Donna, a high school intern, was placed with two cooperating teachers with different pedagogical styles, both of whom reported that she was exceedingly knowledgeable and capable. Yet she felt unable to develop her own teaching style because of the strong personalities and accompanying classroom structures set up by each of them. She told us,

> I think part of the difficulty is that you are in someone else's space and you do have to be someone else to an extent.... I had two cooperating teachers and that wasn't great either, in fact it was schizophrenic.... I wouldn't feel comfortable with anyone [her peers]

> watching me. I would want to ... defend myself saying, "This is not me, this is not me, I don't want to do this."

Similarly, Stephanie, an elementary intern noted,

> I probably spent too much time trying to think how I would teach the lesson in terms of how she would like to see it, rather than in terms of what the kids need.

Most remarkable was that the student teachers became so adept at their performances that their cooperating teachers and supervisors were not even aware there were any conflicts. For example, Hannah's cooperating teacher stated proudly that, "We're a good match ... like she could be saying a sentence and I could come in and finish it." But, in fact, Hannah was frustrated by a lack of opportunity to try her own ideas within the structures he created and by his negative attitude toward children. Stephanie, who was frustrated by a lack of opportunity to do her own planning and by her cooperating teacher's frequent interruptions of her lessons, was nonetheless highly valued by her cooperating teacher, who referred to Stephanie as a colleague with whom she enjoyed mutual planning. These student teachers were hiding in plain sight of the mentors who were supposed to help them. In creating such believable performances as compliant student teachers, they sacrificed opportunities to develop their own teaching identities and often lost confidence in their own abilities.

Student teachers were not the only ones in triad performing an identity--several of the university supervisors did so as well. As revealed in the following section on language arts feedback, several supervisors found themselves in situations where they resisted giving student teachers productive and honest feedback, putting on a front of neutral or positive support for practices they observed. Rather than risk alienating or offending cooperating teachers, these supervisors kept their knowledge and concerns hidden, denying their student teachers opportunities to develop deeper understandings of conceptual and pedagogical tools for language arts and to engage professionally with their mentors about problems of practice.

Lost in the Shuffle: Learning to Teach Language Arts

During student teaching, interns must pull together all they have learned during coursework and field experiences (i.e., classroom management, subject matter understandings, effective instructional strategies, pacing, curriculum selection, etc.), and then they must learn to attend simultaneously to these multiple facets of teaching, implement instruction, and, hopefully, learn from the experience. One important facet is knowledge of how to teach particular subjects, including subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987). However, given the complexities and challenges of taking over a classroom, opportunities to learn to teach specific subjects may become obscured.

In this section, we examine our second major theme--the extent to which student teachers were provided opportunities to develop their understanding of language arts and language arts instruction and the factors that mediated their professional growth. We cluster our findings into two general categories: (a) opportunities student teachers had to practice teaching language arts and (b) opportunities they had for guidance and feedback on language arts instruction. Surprisingly, across all the cases, we found the focus on subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge was minimal and substantially less than in the methods courses where students received feedback from their language arts instructors on lessons they planned or taught before student teaching began.

Opportunities for practice. All the student teachers we followed had many opportunities to practice teaching language arts. However, what they were able to practice and, consequently, what they learned varied dramatically depending on the instructional organization, classroom norms, curriculum materials, and cooperating teacher's stance unique to each classroom and site. Dorothy, for example, taught reading in a heterogeneous elementary classroom, which required that she learn to plan instruction and select materials to meet the needs of students reading at various levels. In contrast, Charles was placed in a school where students were grouped homogeneously, so he did not have to learn to form, manage, and select materials for multiple reading instructional groups. Similarly, student teachers assigned to teach American literature at the high school did not have opportunities to teach writing, and the reverse was also true--those assigned to teach writing classes had no opportunity to learn to teach literature. Furthermore, those who were required to use specific curriculum materials or adhere to teachers' guides (i.e., three of nine student teachers) had little opportunity to determine both what and how to teach.

An analogous situation existed regarding classroom norms for discourse and differentiated instruction. Student teachers placed with cooperating teachers who had fairly traditional classroom interaction patterns (e.g., initiate-respond-evaluate [IRE]) or whole class instruction had difficulty implementing small group work, workshop models, or literature circles. The dilemma was particularly salient in one middle school English class in which the cooperating teacher conducted whole class lessons and required his student teacher to do the same although they both acknowledged that students' reading and writing abilities ranged from 1st- to 11th-grade level, which should have resulted in more differentiated instruction.

In several instances, cooperating teachers mediated the constraints of organizational or interaction patterns by providing additional teaching opportunities or encouraging student teachers to look elsewhere for support. For example, Charles's teacher arranged for him to work with two additional reading groups at different reading levels, counteracting the limiting effects of working with a single homogeneous group. As a result, Charles learned how to prepare and present lessons to students of differing abilities, and because the groups were small and homogeneous, he did not have to contend with a large number of students or a wide range of abilities at the same time. Without this additional experience, Charles would have left student teaching unprepared to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction for the range of reading abilities found in a typical classroom. In two other cases, student teachers took the initiative, with encouragement from their cooperating teachers, to discuss specific language arts strategies with other classroom teachers in their buildings who were more experienced or had different perspectives than their cooperating teachers. These were particularly fruitful experiences for the student teachers.

Equally important, curriculum choices made at the school or classroom level also influenced student teachers' opportunities to practice and make decisions regarding language arts instruction. As we noted earlier, curriculum constraints on cooperating teachers were passed along to their student teachers. In addition to limiting experimentation, they had a substantive influence on student teachers' developing abilities to teach language arts and their abilities to think critically about related issues. Stephanie, for example, had to use a required text with her students because all the second-grade classes were using it. She quickly realized that the material was too difficult for her students, yet she had no choice but to use it. As a result, she read the stories aloud to the students instead of having them read. What was supposed to be a reading lesson ended up being a listening activity. Similarly, Donna's cooperating teacher required her to use specific selections of the high school American literature text and to teach them in chronological order, although Donna was eager to engage students through other genres and culturally relevant texts. Likewise, Bill taught writing using a highly structured program that all the high school teachers at his grade were using, eliminating the need for him to develop lessons and make decisions about how to teach various genres and preventing him from having an opportunity to try approaches he had studied during coursework. When Bill was asked why he was teaching the lesson we were about to observe, he simply replied, "Because they're making me ... the unit is prescribed by the high school

English department for writing instruction, and it must be stuck to. So I'm stuck into it." In these situations, as well as two others, student teachers did not have opportunities to grapple with difficult content and pedagogical decisions, which are among the most important and difficult tasks for beginning teachers, especially in the language arts. Because in many instances student teachers could not alter the curriculum or the classroom context, or were reluctant to ask, some had a broader range of opportunities to practice pedagogical strategies than did others, and some altered instructional practices in ways that violated pedagogical content principles they had learned in their teacher education coursework.

Language arts feedback. The value of student teaching is not simply in having a laboratory for practice but in having knowledgeable others to guide and support learning (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Johnston, 1994b; Schon, 1987). Most valuable are the opportunities that surround specific lessons and locate conversations in the particulars of instruction. Postlesson debriefings with cooperating teachers or supervisors provided one such opportunity. However, in the debriefings we observed, opportunities to broaden and deepen student teachers' understanding of language arts instruction were often lost. There appeared to be two main reasons. First, there simply were not many occasions when cooperating teachers and student teachers had detailed discussions about specific language arts lessons. Second, when discussions did occur between the cooperating teacher and student teacher, or between supervisor and student teacher, they often lacked a substantive focus on teaching language arts.

Data gathered from classroom observations and individual interviews with each of the participants revealed little evidence of systematic postlesson discussions between cooperating teachers and student teachers: Three of nine cooperating teachers opted to be out of the room during the language arts lessons we observed, making it impossible for them to provide specific feedback; one of nine took notes and gave them to the student teacher without discussion; one of six who was present discussed future planning rather than the lesson that had just taken place; and another clearly held the debriefing to accommodate our research, saying that he typically took notes and left them for his student teacher to read.

It is not that cooperating teachers and student teachers failed to discuss classroom matters--they did. They talked frequently, often at the end of the day or in brief exchanges throughout the day, and four of nine teams spent considerable time together planning upcoming lessons. However, these conversations were focused on more general issues instead of specifics of language arts lessons. Although all the student teachers in this study except one were highly rated by their cooperating teachers and viewed as colleagues, these novice teachers yearned for, and could have benefited from, the perspectives and guidance of their classroom mentors. As one intern told us after teaching a language arts lesson,

> My CT [cooperating teacher] was not pleased. She expected me to be perfect. She didn't see it as a learning process.... I needed help to work through mistakes.

Lesson debriefings with university supervisors were more predictable and systematic. University supervisors were required to observe student teachers three to four times during student teaching and to meet individually with them to discuss the lesson and evaluate students' progress according to the targets outlined on the field evaluation form. Therefore, the potential existed to discuss specifics of teaching language arts, but as we document below, this potential was not realized.

An analysis of the content of debriefings between the student teachers and cooperating teachers or university supervisors produced seven focal areas:

1. Management--issues such as discipline, student participation, homework, pacing, engagement, managing independent or small group work

2. Planning--planning for upcoming lessons with a focus on activities, procedures, or topical coverage

3. Procedures--taking attendance, lesson planning, opening and closing of lessons

4. Language arts content--knowledge of language arts, instructional strategies for teaching language arts

5. Logistics--review of evaluation form, planning for next observation, goals for next observation

6. Praise related to management, classroom procedures, or general behaviors

7. Praise related to instruction or content of the lesson

Table 3 displays the proportion of exchanges in each of these categories for the five cases in which cooperating teachers and student teachers actually talked about language arts lessons and for the one in which the cooperating teacher simply provided the intern with written notes. The majority of postlesson debriefings we observed with the cooperating teachers, except for Charles's, focused on management issues. This was true even for student teachers who were told their classroom management was strong. For example, cooperating teachers suggested spot-checking on students to hold them accountable for work, giving clear directions, strategies for collecting and distributing papers, calling on students who were not participating, and the like. Sometimes, what could have been framed as pedagogical content issues were, instead, framed as management issues. For instance, Frank's cooperating teacher suggested using a reader response journal as a strategy to get students on task as soon as they came into the classroom, although he never discussed the concept behind using response journals, posing particular types of questions, or how Frank could use the journals in class to further students' understanding of the novel they were reading. He advised Frank to use the reading response journals to convince the students that he was "dead serious" about expectations, but he did not discuss how journals could provide students with meaningful learning experiences and motivate them to become engaged. Similarly, Hannah's cooperating teacher praised her lesson on literature circles by listing the parts that she had done well: giving directions, physical room layout, student participation, collecting materials, and so on. He concluded, "So it's like management, management, management which is hard. And so I think you've got all those pieces really pretty well." There was no discussion of the goal of the lesson, what the students had learned, or how Hannah had provided instruction or scaffolded student learning; the lesson was treated as a process of managing students rather than teaching them.

Another factor that sometimes hindered substantive subject matter conversations was the cooperating teachers' unfamiliarity with some pedagogical approaches student teachers wanted to try. In one case, the cooperating teacher had no experience with writer's workshop, and in the other, the teacher had no experience with literature circles. Although in both instances the student teachers were allowed to implement these instructional approaches, the cooperating teachers could not provide conceptual or practical support, nor were they equipped to help the student teachers work through the pedagogical issues that arose. Predictably, both student teachers failed in their efforts to implement these language arts strategies they had studied in their coursework.

For both Allison and Nancy, the rare instances of feedback categorized as content/instruction were quite superficial. During one lesson debriefing, Allison's cooperating teacher made a general comment that she would

like new teachers to know more about metacognitive approaches, but she never explained or engaged Allison in a discussion of how to integrate these tools into instruction. Similarly, the written notes Nancy received from her cooperating teacher suggested that she introduce unfamiliar vocabulary to students and check for understanding. However, the teacher did not offer suggestions or invite Nancy to talk with her about how to determine what might be unfamiliar, how to deal with those vocabulary words and phrases, or what strategies she could use to check for understanding.

The debriefing between Charles and his cooperating teacher provides an informative contrast with the others we observed both in content and in approach. Recall that his cooperating teacher's goal was to provide him with opportunities for guided experimentation, and she expected to alter her approach to being a cooperating teacher to accommodate her specific student teachers. She also encouraged Charles to ask questions at any time, including after he had observed her teach. The approach she took to lesson debriefing was also quite different than the others. She chose to watch Charles teach a good deal of the time because she said she enjoyed it and learned from it; she even invited colleagues to observe as well. During the debriefing we observed, she began with a question that required Charles to reflect on specifics of his subject matter instruction: "So, just tell me basically how you think the first part of the lesson went with the context clues?" From that point, she engaged Charles in a collaborative discussion of the details of the lesson, revealing both her knowledge and her interest in learning from the experience of observing and working with him. She said,

> The other thing I learned from this lesson--I guess I
> kind of knew it but I really didn't--is just how literal
> those kids are, and so every time you can, every opportunity
> that you can have to do the multiple-meaning
> words and context clues is absolutely essential.

And later in the debriefing,

> So tell me if you've observed this too--I think that
> many of them are fairly good now at getting the main
> idea but the supporting details are still throwing them.

At this point, Charles offered to show her some of the work the students had done before, and during the lesson as they continued to discuss what the children had learned and where they needed additional instruction. For this team, debriefing was clearly a collaborative effort aimed at examining the content and process of teaching language arts while still attending to issues of management and procedures.

Debriefings with supervisors also lacked focus on subject matter and pedagogical strategies (see Table 4). The vast majority of comments were directed toward classroom management or praise for management, procedures, and general behaviors. These two areas were consistent with supervisors' prior experiences and beliefs about supervision: (a) Management was a primary challenge for new teachers, (b) supervisors should serve as supporters (we can "offer TLC and lots of support"), and (c) supervisors should be mediators who keep the peace (we should be careful not to "stir up controversy"). Comments and praise related to language arts instruction and content were more prevalent between supervisors and student teachers than between cooperating teachers and student teachers. In another effort to be supportive and responsive to interns' unique needs and situations, supervisors often began the debriefing by asking the student teachers to reflect on what had gone well in the lesson and what might need additional work. As might be expected, the concerns were

often focused on the typical management issues that might prevent a smooth-running lesson. These were valid issues for our participants, and supervisors were more than happy to deal with them, yet the conversations rarely returned to subject matter issues.

Another possible explanation for the limited attention to subject matter could be related to the evaluation tool the supervisors were required to use during observations (see Table 2). Student teachers were required to identify specific goals and subtargets on the evaluation form as the focus for each supervisory visit. The objective was to cover as many of these as possible over the required number of observations. "Subject matter knowledge" was listed separately from "instructional strategies," and together these targets represented only 2 of 15 on the list. Furthermore, all the targets were written in generic terms so they could be used to observe in any subject area. The result of using this tool and having only three or four required observations meant that pedagogical content knowledge was not a primary focus of each observation. Furthermore, the observational data indicated that supervisors did not try to integrate subject matter instruction into other topics on the form (e.g., classroom management, adapting for differences) during the debriefing discussions.

Because supervisors had advanced degrees, years of experience as elementary or secondary English teachers, and most had sat in on methods classes, we expected the discussions to be quite substantial. Still, the overwhelming majority of subject matter discussions were quite superficial and, at times, miseducative. Even when the supervisor and student teacher agreed to focus on one of the evaluation targets that dealt specifically with subject matter, the exchange was thin, as seen in a comment from Bill's supervisor after a lesson in which he used a required, tightly structured, formulaic writing program:

> I found good evidence for 1A [content knowledge goal from Table 2]. You were dealing with the central concepts and material, how to develop the paragraph and all that kind of thing. And you communicated visually and verbally.

The lack of in-depth instructional feedback or exchange was even more surprising when, during our private interview, we learned that the supervisor had serious concerns about the formulaic approach to writing Bill had used but decided not to introduce tension into the situation. In reviewing the lesson with us, she noted that the lesson seemed repetitive and confusing for students, that they did not seem to need to learn some of the terms Bill taught and did not seem engaged. Yet during her debriefing with Bill, she simply mentioned the approach to him but did not share her insights or concerns:

> This is a different approach to student writing than I've seen before. You indicated before that it seems to be pretty effective ... but I'm wondering if students of this ability level will be challenged by something different.

Bill justified using the approach with the entire class as well as with his honors class by telling the supervisor that students can bring their own skill level to the formulaic models used to teach writing. The supervisor simply responded, "That's fine. I can understand that." However, during our private interview, Bill told us that he was not pleased with the lesson and was surprised that his supervisor thought it went well. He had been working with both his cooperating teacher and university supervisor to make his teaching less teacher-centered and was struggling with how to do that given the tightly formulaic curriculum material. He was disappointed that neither his

cooperating teacher nor his university supervisor had helped him work through the problem, and he wished he could have discussed it with a peer who was implementing a more student-centered workshop model. Bill was eager for, and capable of, considering multiple aspects of curriculum, pedagogical content strategies, and student engagement. The supervisor clearly had insights about these issues as well. Yet what might have been a fruitful, educative discussion never happened, likely because of the supervisor's desire to maintain a front of supporting the cooperating teacher's practice.

In contrast to this example where potentially sensitive and complex issues were avoided, we documented several instances in which miseducative feedback was provided by the supervisor. One example occurred when Marie, an experienced reading teacher, observed Stephanie using reading material that was too difficult for her students. Realizing the problem and having no choice but to use the assigned materials, Stephanie adjusted her instruction by giving students a choice of listening to her read aloud or reading with a partner, two good choices under the circumstances. Marie praised Stephanie for her use of alternative strategies but never mentioned the fact that the material was too difficult for the students or that the students were not actually able to practice reading during this lesson. A second example comes from a high school lesson debriefing in which the supervisor advised the student teacher to give "pop quizzes" to motivate students after most of them came to class without having read the book chapters assigned as homework. She never suggested using prereading strategies to motivate students, setting purposes for reading, or making connections to what students had already read or experienced. Instead, she viewed the problem as a management issue. Although it is difficult to determine if these instances of miseducative feedback were a result of supervisors' own misunderstandings of tools for teaching reading, their unfamiliarity with strategies taught in the methods classes, or their efforts to smooth the waters, the end result was the same--student teachers were denied an opportunity for productive feedback and discussion about teaching language arts.

Our individual interviews with all the student teachers and some of the supervisors suggested there was an untapped reservoir of potential to explore subject matter knowledge as well as conceptual and pedagogical tools for language arts. At some point during our individual interviews, every student teacher raised questions or concerns about what they were seeing or were asked to do in the classroom, but they rarely raised these issues with their supervisors. Often, these concerns could be traced back to what they had learned in their methods coursework (e.g. "It's the writing process in a way, but it's not including revision, and it's getting to editing too soon"; also, "Certain students don't get it at all, and it's not at their reading level") or were contrasted to their vision of good teaching. Yet only one supervisor made a connection to language arts coursework concepts or strategies during debriefing. Overall, the evidence suggests that student teachers had both the ability and inclination to think analytically about the specifics of teaching language arts. They displayed both the disposition and the subject matter knowledge to engage in productive, substantive critique and, consequently, to deepen their understanding of teaching and learning. Yet it rarely happened with either the cooperating teacher or the university supervisor.

Discussion

In all the cases studied here, we identified lost opportunities for learning to teach. Although each person acted in good faith, according to perceptions of his or her roles, there were significant tensions among the multiple settings in which everyone participated. Chief among these were multiple views of the goal of field experiences, mentoring, and effective language arts instruction. Although student teachers entered the field with ideas and approaches they were eager to try out, few of the cooperating teachers provided opportunities to implement them. When they did provide such opportunities, most teachers were unavailable or unable to provide feedback. Similarly, supervisors sometimes had valuable perspectives that they felt unwilling to share due to the feedback they had received from the university, the affiliation they felt with the cooperating teachers, and their commitment to preserving harmony. And cooperating teachers juggled classroom and school responsibilities with mentoring

yet were given little support or training in how to serve these dual roles. As a result of these cross-setting tensions, opportunities to learn were missed and minimized. Moreover, student teachers became complicit actors in what was, for them, a deeply important and high-stakes setting.

This study adds value to the ecological shift in research on student teaching (Clift & Brady, 2005; McIntyre et al., 1996). It highlights both complexities and challenges inherent in student teaching and the importance of taking a more systemic view of the phenomenon. In particular, activity theory helps us understand the importance of looking at this system with its multiple settings, as a whole, and it focuses our attention on structures that create particular ways of learning and participating in specific settings. In our analysis, we see numerous structures that impact the learning of student teachers: discrepant goals for student teaching, strained interactions within the triad, tenuous ties between coursework and fieldwork, unclear criteria for field placements, and lack of support for cooperating teachers and university supervisors. This conceptualization of the interactive, structural, and social nature of student teaching adds another layer of complexity to an already multifaceted setting, and it adds another dimension to the existing research on student teaching. Although a few models of student teaching, such as those found in Project START (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) and Professional Development Schools (Darling Hammond, 1994), have tried to create more collaborative communities and coherent connections among the triad members and settings, these relationships have been notoriously difficult to sustain and have not been adopted on a broad scale. As teacher educators continue to grapple with this major challenge, it will not be enough to simply clarify the roles of the triad members or even to align them. It will be necessary to understand the inherent tensions among the multiple roles each member plays and the need for each person to balance them while participating simultaneously in the triad. Failure to have a shared and explicit understanding of these tensions results in a student teaching experience where these strong pulls are not examined or used as a springboard for deeper and more authentic discussions of learning to teach.

With few exceptions, the vision of student teaching held by both types of mentors--cooperating teachers and supervisors--was not one of nurturing experimentation and inquiry-oriented practice, even when student teachers were willing to venture into these realms. Neither was the focus on developing a community of reflective practitioners and learners (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Lieberman, 1992), shared growth among all the members of the triad (Bullough & Draper, 2004), or helping triadic members understand themselves as teachers or teacher educators (Johnston, 1994a; Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Instead, the shared vision implicitly negotiated within the triad was one of managing the classroom, staying on the given instructional/curriculum track, receiving a good evaluation, and getting along--all of which conspired against learning to teach as a practice of inquiry and experimentation. Whereas such an orientation addresses some of the issues new teachers face, it clearly shortchanges the potential to learn from the student teaching experience, both through firsthand experience and the counsel of knowledgeable others. When student teachers are not able to experiment and not guided by their mentors to become thoughtfully adaptive teachers (Duffy, 2005), they lose an opportunity to deepen their understanding of pedagogical approaches they have studied in coursework and to learn by interrogating new approaches they experience in the field. Similarly, by focusing more centrally on classroom management than on learning, the system constrains opportunities for student teachers to explore deeper issues of teaching and learning. And when student teachers inhabit the constrained role of a guest in someone else's classroom, there is little room to develop their own professional identities.

The quantity and quality of mentoring were also shaped by the multiple settings in which our participants resided. Although other studies have documented the limited influence of cooperating teachers and university supervisors on student teacher learning, we were surprised to find how few lessons were observed and, consequently, how few debriefings took place between cooperating teachers and interns. More surprising still was the lack of subject matter feedback provided by both the cooperating teachers and university supervisors, even when student teachers raised questions. Furthermore, links to subject matter coursework were weak, at best, in conversations between the university supervisors and student teachers. Influenced by personal histories, relationships, views of

learning to teach, and expectations at the school and university levels, both mentors rarely provided opportunities for interns to become deeply engaged in the complex issues of teaching reading, literature, and writing. The exception to this trend was Charles's student teaching setting in which experimentation, reflection, and thoughtfully adaptive practice were the bases for planning and discussing lessons with his cooperating teacher. This vision of learning to teach and mentoring was also valued among other teachers and administrators in his school, making the entire school setting rich with opportunities for subject-specific teacher learning--a setting in which Charles grew and thrived. But even in such a nurturing environment where the cooperating teacher guided and probed the conceptual and practical tools of teaching reading and writing, similar subject matter feedback was minimal from the university mentor.

A study such as this, with its limited size and scope, leaves many questions unanswered and fertile ground for further research. Most obvious is the question of whether the findings here are unique to this teacher education program and the particulars of its structure, staffing, student population, and placement in a major urban Research-1 university. What was the effect, for example, of having retired teachers rather than course instructors serve as university supervisors? How did the partner school model facilitate or hinder the development of university-school connections and opportunities for student teachers to learn? The limited duration of the study also raises questions about the long-term effects of these student teaching experiences. For example, the teacher education program appeared to instill in the student teachers a disposition and desire for inquiry into their practice that carried into the field, despite their mentors' reluctance to engage it. However, without longitudinal data, we do not know if this orientation or other dispositions (i.e., identity as professionals) were diminished by these missed opportunities to learn. In contrast to a longitudinal view, it would be helpful to dig more deeply into individual cases to learn more about the attributes of successful student teaching interactions. Was the strong mentoring that Charles received from his cooperating teacher, for example, able to counteract the limited mentoring he received from his university supervisor? How did these experiences influence his vision, identity, and efficacy as a future classroom teacher and mentor?

In his famous essay on theory and practice, Dewey (1904/1965) observed that historically, student teaching has failed to serve the best interests of novice teachers. He claimed that "the best interests of the children are so safeguarded and supervised that the situation approaches learning to swim without going too near the water" (p. 146). He went on to argue that "to place the emphasis upon the securing of proficiency in teaching and discipline puts the attention of the student teacher in the wrong place, and tends to fix it in the wrong direction" (p. 147). More than 100 years later, we might argue that not much has changed. Given the current pressure on classroom teachers to meet accountability and curricular demands, we might even argue that the situation has, if anything, worsened. Caught among competing masters, each member of the triad can be pulled off-course, losing an opportunity to benefit personally from the student teaching experience and leaving the student teacher at risk.

Our results suggest that a major, and frequently overlooked, challenge to addressing student teacher learning is the tendency to problem-solve or intervene only at the student teaching site, with little consideration of the other, sometimes competing, settings that impinge on all the actors. Keeping the entire activity system in mind, we point to three sets of issues and corresponding questions that might be considered to advance student teachers' opportunities to learn. The first set of issues takes aim at the need for a shared and explicit discussion of the role of guided experimentation in student teaching. How, for example, do various members of the triad view guided experimentation? How might such a view be perceived by others with whom these triad members interact? How might teacher education programs and schools create contexts in which student teachers could observe, practice, and engage in rich dialogue about thoughtfully adaptive teaching while at the same time attending to high-stakes testing, curriculum mandates, course requirements, and the like? What trade-offs are schools, mentors, and universities willing to make to promote student teacher learning? In our view, the structure, length, and evaluative nature of the student teaching experience shortchange the process of learning to teach by valuing student teachers' accomplishments and independence over their learning. Instead of focusing on a final set of

student teaching performances, teacher education programs might scaffold a developmental path for learning to teach that values inquiry, practice, and knowledge in different ways at different stages of the program.

A second related issue can be framed around the composition, interactions, and professional development of the triad as well as school placements. Here we see reasons to rethink the traditional triad to foster learning, build more substantive connections and subject matter links between universities and schools, and create a larger community of practice. In this study, other potential players such as student-teacher peers, coursework instructors, and other teachers at the school site did not systematically participate in mentoring but certainly had much to contribute. Teacher education programs that foster strong collaborative cohort programs, such as the one in this study, might consider a role for peers in the student teaching experience. Although student teachers are often placed in schools with peers, there are few formal structures to engage them in comentoring experiences. The same is true for other teachers at the school site who may serve as good mentors, offering alternative perspectives and less pressure for the student teachers to fit in. As for engaging university faculty who teach courses in student teacher supervision, this continues to be a thorny issue, especially in Research-1 settings. One option might be for university faculty to take a consultative, mentoring role, rather than supervisory one, communicating with student teachers in person or online about problems of practice. Similarly, cooperating teachers and university supervisors might be able to play significantly different roles than typically envisioned, relying on their experience and contextual understandings without relying on them to be the bridge to coursework. New structures for building such teacher learning communities might broaden student teachers' perspectives and opportunities to learn and initiate them into the messy world of teaching where multiple demands and ways of thinking are part of the landscape (Duffy, 2004; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000).

Finally, we see a pressing need to address the overwhelming lack of subject matter feedback, both conceptual and pedagogical, that was provided to student teachers. This is especially problematic given the achievement gap in reading and writing and the contemporary push for accountability. To turn this around will require a shared and dynamic vision of effective instruction that can meet the needs of a wide range of students, as well as mentors who are knowledgeable and willing to engage it. Such a shift is likely to require reconceptualization of evaluation tools that compartmentalize teaching and a recognition that classroom management is "eternally married" to subject matter (Grossman, 1992).

As instructors within this teacher education program, aware of the long history of research on student teaching, we are humbled by the persistent challenges of transforming the multiple structures and relationships that shape the student teaching experience. The structures that constrain learning opportunities have histories that are deeply embedded in the cultures of the school and university. Despite the fact that this program had undergone considerable reform and renewal, the undertow of the past caught student teachers in its wake. As we both study and engage in the preparation of teachers, we must be constantly aware of the structures that endure, shaping the learning and experiences of beginning teachers.

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Table 1
Participant Placements and Cooperating Teacher, Supervisor, and School Background

Name	Placement/ grade-location	Cooperating Teacher: Years Teaching/Number of Student Teachers	University Supervisor: Years as Supervisor
Stephanie	2-urban	19/2	23
Charles	4-urban	28/6	23
Dorothy	2/3-suburban	5/1	3
Hannah	6-suburban	18/5	22
Donna	9/10-urban	28/20	2
Bill	9/10-suburban	26/11	2
Allison	6/7-urban	3/5	5

Frank	7/8-suburban	8/1	5
Nancy	8-suburban	5/1	5

School

Name	Percentage Meeting Standards	Percentage Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	Percentage Students of Color
Stephanie	62%	61%	69%
Charles	62%	61%	69%
Dorothy	72%	10%	22%
Hannah	80%	6%	15%
Donna	53%	21%	50%
Bill	64%	10%	18%
Allison	58%	23%	46%
Frank	32%	27%	35%
Nancy	51%	16%	22%

Table 2
Student Teaching Evaluation Profile

	Not Attempted	Below Expectation	Nearing Expectation
Goal 1 Effective Teaching, Assessment & Evaluation	0	1	2
Subject matter knowledge			
Instructional strategies			
Planning			
Subject matter assessment			
Goal 2 Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners	0	1	2
Learning & development			
Adapting for differences			
Respect for learners			
Adapting for diversity			
Goal 3 Creating a Positive Learning Environment	0	1	2
Communication strategies			
Classroom management			
Goal 4 Professional Commitment	0	1	2
Teamwork with colleagues			
Family & community relationships			
Ethical practice & professional conduct			
Reflective practice			
Ongoing learning			

University Supervisor--Cooperating Teacher--

	Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectation
Goal 1 Effective Teaching, Assessment & Evaluation	3	4
Subject matter knowledge		
Instructional strategies		
Planning		
Subject matter assessment		
Goal 2 Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners	3	4
Learning & development		
Adapting for differences		
Respect for learners		
Adapting for diversity		
Goal 3 Creating a Positive Learning Environment	3	4
Communication strategies		
Classroom management		
Goal 4 Professional Commitment	3	4
Teamwork with colleagues		
Family & community relationships		
Ethical practice & professional conduct		
Reflective practice		
Ongoing learning		

University Supervisor--Cooperating Teacher--

Table 3
Language Arts Lesson Debriefings Between Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers: Percentage of Feedback on Aspects of Practice

	Management	Planning	Procedures	Content
Charles	12%		12%	41%
Dorothy	33%	67%		
Hannah	54%		15%	
Stephanie	NA			
Allison	71%		14%	14%
Bill	NA			
Donna	NA			
Frank	88%			
Nancy (written notes)	60%		7%	33%

	Logistics	Praise M/P/G (a)	Praise I/C (b)
Charles		29%	6%
Dorothy			
Hannah		31%	
Stephanie			
Allison			
Bill			
Donna			
Frank		12%	
Nancy (written notes)			

(a.) Management, planning, or general behaviors.

(b.) Instruction, content.

Table 4
Language Arts Lesson Debriefings Between University Supervisors and Student Teachers: Percentage of Feedback on Aspects of Practice

	Management	Planning	Procedures	Content
Charles	14%		5%	
Dorothy	22%			
Hannah	32%			16%
Stephanie	33%		7%	11%
Allison	24%		5%	9%
Bill	40%	10%		20%
Donna	50%		4%	21%
Frank	40%	25%		
Nancy	60%			

	Logistics	Praise M/P/G (a)	Praise I/C (b)
Charles	5%	52%	24%
Dorothy	22%	56%	
Hannah	5%	47%	
Stephanie	4%	41%	4%
Allison	14%	43%	5%
Bill	20%	20%	
Donna	11%	4%	11%
Frank	5%	25%	5%
Nancy	10%	20%	10%

(a.) Management, procedures, or general behaviors.

(b.) Instruction, content.

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