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Cooperating Teachers' Experiences Mentoring Preservice Teachers

David H. Lewis
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COOPERATING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

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COOPERATING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

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by

David Harter Lewis

A.A., Early Childhood Development, Santa Fé Community College, 1992

B.U.S., University of New Mexico, 1998

M.A. in Education: At-risk Youth, College of Santa Fé, 2002

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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COOPERATING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to people who were told they “could not.” Keep looking. You will find someone who will say “of course – here is how.” Unless you stop, it isn’t over until it’s over.

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Abstract

Recent literature was reviewed to locate articles with perspectives and attitudes of cooperating teachers who work with preservice teachers at school sites in coordination with institutions that have teacher preparation programs in general and/or special education. The results showed an emphasis in reporting the external aspects of being a cooperating teacher such as the daily activities, and little was reported about the internal aspects of being a cooperating teacher such as personal experience and rationale for working a preservice teacher into a classroom. This led to the research question “What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers?”

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that was addressed by conducting a qualitative study with eight cooperating teachers who were recruited from a special education dual license teacher preparation program.

The data from the interviews of their experiences mentoring preservice teachers were analyzed. Three major themes of Knowledge, Learning, and Sharing along with 11 subthemes were identified that described the dynamic and fluid nature of mentoring attributes of cooperating teachers. The stories and thoughts of the participants provided a primary account of a group of professional teachers who mentor preservice teachers. Implications of hearing directly from cooperating teachers through interviews, and the limitations of the study were discussed as were considerations for future study.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In Homer's history, Odysseus left for the Trojan War and he left his son Telemachus behind with a trusted, knowledgeable friend Mentor. This dependable associate – the “mentor” – was a father-figure, a teacher, a role model, an advisor and guide. He was meant to take the place of Odysseus in guiding youth through the often confusing and contradictory events on the way to adulthood. The flexibility of the mentor role from classical times through the guild system of apprenticeship up to modern teacher preparation programs is reflected in the wide variety of terms and concepts found in the description of the mentor in professional training such as teacher education. The role of the mentor teacher as it exists today in teacher education in the United States is known by different names such as cooperating teacher, mentor, mentor teacher, school-teacher mentor, class teacher, coach, support teacher, and teacher tutor (Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2008).

Apprenticeship and Early Mentoring

The European system of apprenticeship where young aspiring craftsmen and laborers were put under the direct guidance of master craftsmen was prominent in the English colonies that dominated the eastern seaboard of North America starting with apprenticeships of the early 17th century and continues today primarily under the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 (29 U.S. Code § 50) (United States Department of Labor, Education and Training Administration, 2015). This system where a knowledgeable practitioner was available to those new to their trade is a natural continuance reflecting the ancient system where young men were given over to an experienced practitioner

(Colley, 2000) and reflects the values of the ancient myth of Mentor where caring, instruction, and protectorship were the essential frame for learning new skills (Hennissen et al. 2008).

In the summer of 1839, three women in Lexington, Massachusetts attended the first state funded school specifically established for public teacher education (Harper, 1970). They were part of the first experimental program in the nation to train teachers at public expense in the norms of education and they became graduates of a quickly growing field of “normal schools” nationwide. The first State Board of Education was headed by Horace Mann (Hinsdale, 1900) who said,

I believe Normal schools to be a new instrumentality in the advancement of the race. I believe that, without them, free schools themselves would be shorn of their strength and their healing power and would at length become mere charity schools and thus die out in fact and in form. (p. 160)

The “free schools” Mann referred to were free from state influence and were private institutions with private goals of education compared to the new normal schools meant to supplement society’s potential by reaching all citizens, not just the wealthy. The normal school curricula for teacher preparation was intentionally made to reflect the norms – the standards—of public education (Harper, 1970).

As the industrialization of American society increased through the end of the 19th century, educational theorist John Dewey came to prominence for his desire to see holistic education for children (Harper, 1970; Hinsdale, 1900). His philosophy of education reflected the natural learning model that apprenticeship brought by learning through authentic practice. He emphasized the practical application of skills being taught

in coordination with social aspects of learning in order to create people who were able to live in harmony with nature as he stated in his Pedagogic Creed (1897):

I believe, therefore, that the true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor the history, geography, but the child's own social activities. I believe that education cannot be unified in the study of science, or so-called nature study, because apart from human activity, nature itself is not a unity; nature in itself is a number of diverse objects in space and time, and to attempt to make it the center of work by itself is to introduce a principle of radiation rather than one of concentration. (p.10)

He therefore saw teachers in the role of engaging students and “not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life” (Dewey, 1897, p.18).

Following Dewey's principles, the teacher then reflects the concept of mentorship where knowledgeable adults are there to protect, guide and expose students to experiences where they can function outside of the classroom.

The model of a preparation program as an essential part of teachers' education that included pedagogy as well as content continues today and over the past century. Various calls for reform of US education have made incremental changes to what education and its teachers are expected to do and how it can be achieved. Despite Dewey's prominence in the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City, the progressive education that he favored where students learned content as well as social consciousness was not easily adopted by many school systems that found changes difficult to implement (Ravitch, 1995). The population concentration of the country was slowly becoming less rural and more urban (US Census Bureau, 2010).

After World War II as the country started to actively address issues of discrimination along race, disability and socio-economic status, the US paid more attention to international standings in science and technology that started a cycle of educational reforms that continues to dominate public policy in education (Ravitch, 2013). After the Russian launch of the first satellite in 1957, the US started devoting more resources to ensure its students were adequately prepared for the new economic globalization. Development of national tools that were more than assessments of college readiness were developed such as The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also known as “the nation’s report card” that was first administered in 1969 (NAEP, n.d), and participation in international assessments such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016).

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report called *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) that emphasized again the idea that America’s schools were failing and in danger of falling hopelessly behind by noting that “International comparisons of student achievement, completed a decade ago, reveal that on 19 academic tests American students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized nations, were last seven times” (Indicators of the Risk, item 1). It also found that “Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students” (Findings Regarding Teaching, item 1) and “The teacher preparation curriculum is weighted heavily with courses in ‘educational methods’ at the expense of courses in subjects to be taught” (Findings Regarding Teaching, item 2).

It should be noted that there are no citations or references associated with these assertions in the report. Ironically in 1990 when the Secretary of Energy James Watkins, tried to gather data to show the educational decline according *A Nation at Risk* by engaging Sandia Laboratories in New Mexico, the final data submitted (but ultimately not published) actually contradicted the assertions made seven years prior (Ansary, 2007).

In 2001 under the leadership of President George W. Bush and with a large majority bipartisan Congress, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act originally passed in 1965 was reauthorized and renamed as No Child Left Behind Act. This reform had major adjustments in the role of the federal government in creating standards not only for students, but for states and teachers in order to show steady statistical improvement in standardized test scores until all US public school students would be functioning at grade level in reading and math by 2014 (United States Department of Education-NCLB, 2001). The new law had many areas of focus such as accountability to the federal government in key areas of public education, documentation of continued improved students' test scores, and applying common standards of academic success to all children in an effort to increase quality of public education. A provision of the law required for the first time at a national level that teachers needed to be "highly qualified" in any area in which they were providing content instruction and this was defined in Part A Section 9101 of NCLB:

(23) HIGHLY QUALIFIED- The term highly qualified' —

(A) when used with respect to any public elementary school or secondary school teacher teaching in a State, means that —

(i) the teacher has obtained full State certification as a teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification) or passed the State teacher licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in such State, except that when used with respect to any teacher teaching in a public charter school, the term means that the teacher meets the requirements set forth in the State's public charter school law; and

(ii) the teacher has not had certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.

These requirements were to be in place by the 2005-06 school year and the states were to interpret the requirements of full certification or licensure individually. This uncertainty of what constituted proof that teachers knew their subjects was seen either as flexibility or as being too vague to be considered rigorous (Ansary, 2007).

The emphasis on teacher quality has been a concern since the law was passed as evidenced by the requirement for teachers to be highly qualified in the areas in which they teach (United States Department of Education-NCLB, 2001). In 2005, Richard Ingersoll noted the way data on teacher quality was interpreted will affect how solutions are chosen which may address the problem without getting the desired results. He called this a "teacher-deficit perspective" because it looks at the issue of unqualified teachers as being a problem with the teachers and their training instead of a systematic problem of poor allocation of resources. He noted that data suggest top-down decisions affect the outcomes of students because the teachers themselves have no agency or authority to decide which course will be taught by whom; they go where they are placed. He reported that the misassignment of teachers without training in the areas they are teaching is

traceable to low status within the system (new teachers, part-time teachers) and the overall low status of the teaching profession.

The Importance of Mentoring

Mentoring preservice teachers and first year teachers is a prevalent way to address the support needed to prepare teachers who are highly qualified that can vary tremendously (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005). Research on cooperating teachers typically focuses on what mentors should believe or do when working with preservice teachers, and how mentoring affects cooperating teachers' professional development (Hawkey, 1997; Huling & Resta, 2001).

Need for the study. There is no standardized term in use for teachers who provide guidance to preservice teachers and they are known by different names such as mentor, mentor teacher, school-teacher mentor, class teacher, coach, support teacher, teacher tutor and cooperating teacher (Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2008). This is due partly to the required and perceived duties of the cooperating teacher as well as any established name in use at a given institution for many years. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term "cooperating teacher" to designate the person filling this role unless there is a specified reason to do otherwise, and the term "mentoring" is used as a synonym for the supervisory tasks undertaken by them. This is meant for convenience sake only and to maintain a relative ease of reading.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the self-reported rationale and perspectives of teachers who choose to mentor preservice teachers in order to enhance the teacher preparation programs that use an apprenticeship model. Much of the research this area has examined how to best support preservice teachers (Wilson,

Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), how to collect meaningful data from preservice teachers about their experiences at their school sites in relation to cooperating teachers (Koç, 2011, Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012), what cooperating teachers give to preservice teachers (Téllez, 2008), and characteristics of cooperating teachers as defined by examination of their performance or interactions with preservice teachers and sponsoring institutions (Crasborn, Hennissen, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2011).

My review of the research which is discussed in Chapter 2 indicated a lack of articles examining the experience of the cooperating teachers themselves from a personal perspective and not only from what the preservice teachers gained under their guidance. There is ample research around supporting preservice teachers and what they report as being valuable in their experiences student teaching with cooperating teachers (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). By contrast, locating research that directly reports on the perspective of being a cooperating teacher is much less available. This gap in the research led to my research question: What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers? To address this question, I interviewed eight cooperating teachers to learn about their experiences mentoring preservice teachers. Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant literature regarding cooperating teachers. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for research to address my research question. Chapter 4 reports the results of my research and includes a thematic analysis of the interviews of participants. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the implications of my research and suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this literature review in this chapter was to locate articles with perspectives and attitudes of cooperating teachers who work with preservice teachers at school sites in coordination with institutions that have teacher preparation programs in general and/or special education. The research question was: What do cooperating teachers working with preservice teachers report about their experiences?

The review addresses research and theory related to cooperating teachers' involvement with preservice teachers as well as their interactions with teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education. The selection process is explained and I briefly identify the two theoretical frameworks I used in this study since it is through this perspective that I reviewed the literature. These frameworks are discussed further in Chapter 3 in regards to the methods used in my study. Analysis begins with identifying five primary themes followed by a summary, and the final section of Chapter 2 describes how my proposed study addressed some areas that have not been extensively explored.

Selection Process

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) was used to conduct a search of the literature in the areas of teacher preparation and cooperating teachers that were published 1995-2015. The following key descriptors were used for the search: "teacher preparation", "mentor teacher," "cooperating teacher," "mentor teacher," "coach," "coach-teacher," "teacher educator", "teacher tutor," "role," "perspective," "motivation" and "rationale." The criteria used for this review included studies pertaining specifically

to cooperating teacher or mentor participation, their roles, and teacher preparation. A hand search was also completed by looking for articles listed in the reference sections of the articles found in the OCLC search that pertained to the same criteria. Eleven studies were selected that were published in English, were peer reviewed, were less than 20 years old, and focused on cooperating teacher or mentor participation, their roles, and teacher preparation.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives that I used when reviewing the literature reflect two related aspects of human development. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) emphasizes understanding of the world through graduated spheres of influence on individuals (see Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development). Moving from the initial microsystems where people are influenced in the most direct way by those who are physically and emotionally close, the external influences get increasingly more distant as institutions and people become less directly involved in an individual's lives. The complementary system of Symbolic Interactionism developed by Herbert Blumer and based on the work of his mentor George Herbert Mead is a way of studying human conduct and life in general with the understanding that reality is actively and thoughtfully constructed as the result of social interactions (Blumer, 1986).

Themes

A feature that was common to all the studies during the selection process was an emphasis on the external perspective and actions of the participants. This perspective is a natural enough one to have especially in articles where the prime focus is on reporting

about preservice teachers and their experiences. The cooperating teachers were shown in the light of supporting the focus of the given study in which they participated, and their own thoughts or motivations were not stressed. This has the effect of leaving the interior views of the cooperating teachers in relation to their work as somewhat opaque and filtered through the experiences of others rather than direct personal statements about mentoring others. After reviewing the articles, five themes emerged regarding cooperating teachers and their work: social aspects, skills transmission, involvement, competency, and identity.

Social aspects. Being a cooperating teacher is recognized by many as having a strong social component that includes qualities such as nurturing, forming relationships and being emotionally available during the stressful time of learning how to teach. Cuenca (2011) conducted a case study of two pre-service teachers where he collected data from observation and interviews with them, which he then analyzed with an eye to finding what would be of value to cooperating teachers. Both pre-service teachers were part of “tethered learning” with their cooperating teacher where the pre-service teachers would slowly take over the duties and lessons of the cooperating teachers who were close by for support or correction. The one pre-service teacher felt supported and like a “real teacher” from her interactions with the cooperating teacher who was nurturing and interactive. The other mentor was not as involved and often out of the room, leaving her pre-service teacher feeling abandoned and questioning herself. Cuenca determined that how pre-service teachers felt about their legitimacy in being a teacher was tied directly to the attitudes of their cooperating teacher. A limitation to this study is the small sample

and conclusions made about the motivations of the cooperating teachers reported solely by the pre-service teachers.

Preservice teachers desire affirmation and connection as well as cooperating teachers. Sudzina, Gielbelhaus, and Coolican (1997) were curious about the role of cooperating teachers in the success or failure of preservice teachers, so they asked 74 preservice teachers and 13 cooperating teachers three questions: when you think of a mentor, what qualities come to mind?; what are the responsibilities of a mentee?; and, what factors do you think contribute to a successful student teacher experience? The preservice teachers stated that cooperating teachers should be supportive and use honest conversation. They said their responsibilities were to accept critique, work hard and be flexible with expectation. Positive relationship was cited as a key element of a successful time spent with the mentor. The cooperating teachers said that qualities of a good mentor are being a strong leader, being open minded, having a sense of humor, being organized, and being a good listener. They thought responsibilities of preservice teachers are being prepared, having a willingness to work, accepting criticism, being cooperative, and developing good rapport with children. Factors for successful preservice experience were following the responsibilities. Cooperating teachers also subscribed one of two basic outlooks about preservice teachers: preservice teachers need to work harder and follow the lead of the cooperating teacher, or mentoring preservice teachers is a shared responsibility. Conclusions included a hierarchy of interactions between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers with more directed model moving into a subtler way of having the mentor and preservice teachers assume a more shared sense of relationship. This study was difficult to interpret because the authors tended to make unclear

connections and statements with little example or evidence to illustrate their point.

Skills transmission. Many cooperating teachers see skills transmission as an essential part of their role as a mentor. Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger (2005) examined the teaching perspectives of cooperating teachers as part of a project that gathered data in two stages where ultimately 301 participants completed the self-administered Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) which is based in the idea that teachers have a dominant perspective that results from the relationship of their personal motivation, intentions and beliefs in their environment. The five basic perspectives were Transmission (focusing on skills and order); Developmental (focusing on understanding students' prior knowledge); Apprenticeship (focusing on authentic learning); Social Reform (focusing on students' awareness of their place and possibility in society) and Nurturing (focusing on emotional connection). The outcomes indicated, among other things, that a high percentage of cooperating teachers have a nurturing perspective as the base of their relationship with students. Secondary teachers tended to have a goal of transmission perspective more than at other school levels.

Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen and Bergen (2008) conducted a review of literature using 26 sources to investigate the behavior between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers during mentoring dialogues in order to build a unified conceptual framework capable of describing these dialogues. These dialogues are referred to differently around the world by terms such as coaching talks, post-lesson talks and supervisory conferences and they serve the function of a debriefing where the cooperating teacher and pre-service teacher discuss what has happened, plan lessons and exchange ideas. To avoid vagueness or confusion and imprecision, the authors chose to

use the term “dialogue” since its meaning clearly indicates the two-way nature that mentoring has. Of note here was their extensive documentation of the terminology for practitioners used within the educational community around the concept of mentoring: mentors, cooperating teachers, cooperating teachers, school-based mentor as some. They explained this by showing how the social positions have changed along with responsibilities of people currently called “cooperating teachers” and how that might be different depending on the defined role and traditions of a given institution.

Involvement. Several articles mentioned that cooperating teachers exhibited a range of participation from minimal guidance to frequent feedback. Portelance and Gervais (2009) interviewed, transcribed conversations and gave a questionnaire to 14 dyads of pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers to gather data for analysis of the dynamics of shared knowledge. The authors stated that the idea of reciprocity between the pre-service teacher and the mentor is at the heart conversations during formation of working relationships of the pre-service training time. They found cooperating teachers used six roles: adviser, reassuring judge, transmitter of information, the teacher, thought provoker, and reflective practitioner. The active roles for the pre-service teachers were: transmitter of information, transmitter of innovative ideas, advocate of personal choices, and reflective practitioner. The authors believed the exchanges pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers had promoted innovation for the pre-service teaches and set a tone of growing trust so that when rough times appeared, a working basis of positive exchange was already in place. The cooperating teachers also used the conversations to pursue professional growth and expand competencies in interventional strategies to use with the pre-service teachers.

Veal and Rikard (1998) interviewed 23 experienced teachers to determine their perspectives on working in a triad with the preservice teacher and the university teacher preparation program supervisor. They found that the cooperating teachers maintained a perspective that allowed for more power and influence than either the preservice teacher or the university supervisor. The unintentional power brokering between the cooperating teacher and university supervisor shifted depending on the issue discussed and where it took place. Cooperating teachers held some animosity towards the “ivory tower” the university supervisors represented and suggested that they spend more time in the schools so their programs can reflect better the reality of school.

Competency. Cooperating teachers functioned with varying feelings of competency. Ganser (2002) conducted a survey of 94 teachers who worked with preservice teachers and who had also worked with first year teachers to determine similarities and differences in the perspective of these dual-experienced teachers. He made a distinction in names that will be continued here for clarity unless part of the nomenclature within the referenced literature: cooperating teachers worked with preservice teachers and mentor teachers worked with first year teachers. Participants filled out a 10-question survey first from their perspective of being a cooperating teacher with preservice teachers, and then again from their perspective of being a mentor teacher with first-year teachers. He found that there was strongest agreement in “Understanding the Role” and “Preparation for the Role”, whereas the weakest agreement was “Adequate Incentives to Participate” and “Most Teachers Would Benefit in This Role.” He concluded that the teachers understood their both of their roles and that they felt prepared to do them. He also noted that since many had not received training in how to be in their

role, this would have likely affected their comfort level because they had unintentional low expectation of their teachers they were advising. More training would bring up expectations and increase the quality of the pre-service and first year teachers.

Experience as teachers is directly related to the type of teacher preparation cooperating teachers had in the beginning of their teaching careers since it sets the tone for how teachers will view and interact with the students. Klieger and Oster-Levinz (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews in Israel with 12 pre-service teachers, 6 cooperating teachers and 6 university professors to determine if there are differences in cooperating teachers' understanding of their role with pre-service teachers based on how they received their own pre-service training. There are several systems of teacher preparation in Israel and the research focuses on two of these systems. One is to follow an apprenticeship model where the pre-service teachers work closely with a cooperating teacher following their example and direction. The second is the Professional Development School (PDS) where the schools and universities work together to provide the services and curricula pre-service teachers need in order to work with a cooperating teacher. The results showed that the cooperating teachers who had their own pre-service pedagogical training at a PDS had a much clearer understanding and confidence about their role perceptions as a mentor. The authors concluded that the study could be valuable in forming criteria during recruitment and training of cooperating teachers.

Identity. Understanding the role of being a cooperating teacher can be a challenge since there is no official definition of "cooperating teacher" and opportunities for working with preservice teachers are naturally as diverse as the people involved. Hawkey (1997) conducted a review of literature regarding the nature of the relationship

between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers in four specific ways: expertise of personnel; developmental stages for both cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers; interpersonal relationship development; and being a mentor is more than supervision because the mentor brings perspective, experience, and values. Hawkey also noted the dynamic nature of forming a relationship with new practitioners and experienced ones where both bring personal perspectives and values that were appreciated by both. While both acknowledged the value of positive interactions in the classroom, the function and course of action to take with discord from either side was not as easily agreed upon. Relationships determined the quality of the experience and therefore better understanding of how to encourage and form positive working relationships was important. The stresses of mentoring and of learning to teach could cause avoidance of discord rather than solving issues that arise. Further study into the roles, relationships and responsibilities of mentoring may bring methods to help foster production pre-service teaching opportunities.

Cooperating teachers display a range of styles when working with their preservice teachers and university contacts. Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) conducted a review of articles to gather empirical data to replace commonly held beliefs. Their thematic analysis created 11 categories of participation in teachers' education that represented high levels of focus and engagement. The names for the categories show the persona that cooperating teachers may take in their participation with pre-service teachers and their sponsoring institutions such as Provider of Feedback, Supporter of Reflection, Gleaner of Knowledge, and Advocates of the Practical. All categories names had a positive connotation. In addition, three types of participation were identified: closed (authority

makes decisions), invited (negotiation with authority and others), and claimed (others act independent of authority). While ideally cooperating teachers in any of the categories of participation would predominantly use an invited form of interaction, some categories were a better fit towards either closed or claimed. The authors were keen to point out that all participants considered themselves “teachers of children first” though they gave no indication of how they arrived at this.

Ganser and Wham (1998) conducted a survey of 454 mid-western K-12 teachers who participated with a local teacher education program to determine their perception of the greatest contribution that a cooperating teacher can make to a pre-service teacher, and what they considered is the greatest satisfaction for cooperating teachers. Results of the question about contributions given by the cooperating teachers were themes of having a genuine classroom experience; being a “bridge” between theory of the university and the reality of practice; safe environment for exploration and making mistakes; and being a role model of a competent professional. Personal satisfaction was noted by being part of the development of new teachers; their relationships with pre-service teachers; learning new things from the pre-service teachers and remaining “fresh” in methods and theory; and a continued relationship with the new teachers after their experience.

Need for More Research

After reviewing the literature, I noticed an emphasis in reporting on the external aspects of being a cooperating teacher such as the daily experience of mentoring and guiding, the interactions with preservice teachers and institutional programs, and the desires and obligations a cooperating teacher may have in order to function well on the job. Very little was reported about the internal aspects of being a cooperating teacher

such as personal desires about being a cooperating teacher, rationale for taking on a preservice teacher or struggles regarding balancing typical teaching duties with an added layer of teaching an adult mixed into the typical classroom roster. The perspective of cooperating teachers' reasoning and justification for participating in teacher preparation programs is lacking. Further study in these aspects of being a cooperating teacher could reveal some of the motivation and interior perspectives of cooperating teachers that could influence recruitment, training and expectations of sponsoring teacher preparation programs with an end result of improved outcomes for all involved. I responded to this void by interviewing cooperating teachers to address the following research question: What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers?

Chapter 3

Methods

The interpretive nature of this dissertation on teaching and mentoring experiences is grounded in the field of qualitative research as defined by Creswell (1998):

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p.15)

Qualitative research offers the opportunity to explore the directions that the participants take when recounting their experiences as well as a way to gain deeper understanding of the natural interaction of reflection that is part of teaching and mentoring (Dewey, 1933; Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles & López-Torres, 2003; Portlance & Gervais, 2009). Qualitative research is focused on exploring the questions of “what” or “how” rather than “why” (Creswell, 1998). Before determining the purpose of interactions, basic information needs to be established in order to understand context of the interactions. By establishing intent behind action and attitudes through detailed description, analysis can reveal associations that help drive motivations (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The lack of research I found investigating attitudes and rationales of experienced teachers who decide to become cooperating teachers to student teachers led me to my research question: What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers? My intention was to conduct a qualitative study with interviews of cooperating teachers to hear directly about their experiences mentoring preservice teachers. Using this data and conducting a constant comparative analysis to

identify themes (Creswell, 1998) would result in an authentic account of what a group of cooperating teachers said what it was like for them in their role of mentoring preservice teachers.

Theoretical Framework

It was a natural fit for study of mentorship by cooperating teachers to use the ecological model of human development formulated by developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) whose description of the nested nature of social interactions provided the overarching theoretical framework for this phenomenological study. To illustrate his concept of human development through social interaction, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development used a framework of five concentric systems with which individuals interact (see Figure 1. The ecology of human development model of Bronfenbrenner). As one moves from the individual in the center, the systems represent interactions of lessening immediacy and personal agency towards more interaction with others and larger social patterns. The individual is surrounded first by the Microsystem and then the Mesosystem consisting of family, friends, religious affiliations and neighborhood. Surrounding these are the Exosystem (economics, politics, government, religious framework) and the Macrosystem of overarching values and beliefs. Affecting all is the last system that represents the dimension of time -- the Chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's organic approach that has individuals at the center of their personal spheres slowly progresses in shared experiences as one moves out to more abstract interactions with entities that are more dependent on each other for expression until the final system is reached -- Time that rules over all.

A second model I used is called symbolic interactionism developed by Herbert Blumer (1986). Symbolic interactionism is a pragmatic approach of ecological human development that was developed as a way of studying human conduct and life in general with the understanding that reality is constructed as the result of social interactions (Blumer, 1986; Hund & Knaus, 2011). Blumer named three premises of symbolic interactionist theory in play as people create meaning through social contact in their worlds. First, people act on things if they are meaningful to them. Second, this meaning comes from social interactions. Lastly, individuals process meaning as they encounter people and concepts over time (Blumer, 1986). Personal meaning therefore is a product gained through social interactions with others that are laden with symbolic interpretation, and is adjusted as new interactions occur.

Symbolic interactionists view the healthy individual as a developing and learning person capable of forming a self-image interpreting situations, taking the role of others and negotiating interpersonal transactions—all because of and through symbolic learning. (Abrell & Hanna, 1978, p.440)

By the nature of their jobs as teachers who spend their days interacting with students and adults, cooperating teachers are constantly encountering new information through their relationships. Using these models during analysis emphasized the aspects of diversity and human perspective that are essential parts of understanding how people construct their realities and how the realities of others are interpreted. By using both models, an understanding of internal drives and rationales was complemented by a view of how individuals interact when teaching and how their professional identities are formed.

Participant Recruitment

Recruitment is commonly used in qualitative research and involves selecting research participants according to the needs of the study who can give a richness and detail of information that is suitable for research analysis (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For these reasons, recruitment was used for determining participants for this study. The selection criteria for inclusion were professionals who were cooperating teachers in schools and who participated for four semesters or more with a special education dual license program (SEDLP) housed at a university in a Southwestern state where students are prepared for certification known as "dual license." This license allows them to teach in inclusive settings (special education students together with their non-disabled peers) or in either general education or special education classrooms.

Contact with the coordinator of the SEDLP produced an extensive list of present and past cooperating teachers. After sorting through it to find those teachers who met criteria, an email was sent describing the research project and they were asked to respond within 10 days if interested in participation. Nine teachers expressed interest, with one ultimately unable to participate.

The eight participants who responded with enough interest and availability to participate were scheduled to meet at an agreed upon place and time for individual interviews. These eight participants were purposefully selected because of their experience in education as a teacher of special education, general education or both, and because they worked as a cooperating teacher with preservice teachers in the SEDLP. Despite being a relatively small group of eight, the five women and three men

represented diversity in life experience, and in educational approaches in four elementary schools and four secondary schools (four public schools, one private school and three chartered-public schools). Seven participants have master's degrees, and one has a PhD. Two became teachers after changing from a non-education career. Five had general education licenses, four had special education licenses (one teacher had both licenses). Two teachers had 20 or more years of experience teaching, four had 10-14 years and two had five to nine years of teaching experience.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, each participant chose a pseudonym, and only the most basic of their demographic information has been related here so as to discourage identifying connections to their identities in the relatively small educational community where they live and work. Being able to speak freely about their experiences was paramount to getting as frank and varied accounts as possible to represent their professional lives accurately. Prior to the interview, I asked the participants to sign a consent form with information about security of records, risks, intent of the study and a lack of compensation for participating. The additional following safeguards were used to protect the participants' confidentiality.

- Participants were advised in writing of the voluntary nature of their participation. and that they could have withdrawn from the study at any time.
- The research objectives were clearly delineated in writing and articulated to the participants.

- The participants were informed in writing of all data collection methods and activities.
- Data (electronic, audio and written) from any participant who later chose to opt out would be erased or shredded at a secure location at UNM.
- Written notes and data were to be kept on passcode encoded computers accessible only to me.
- Recorded (audio and written) data will be kept for three years in a secure cabinet accessible only by me and will be destroyed in three years.

The Interview Process

After securing IRB approval, I began the discovery process by arranging for interviewing the teachers in a place of their choosing to ensure that they would feel comfortable when relating their stories. Some chose their home and others came to my university office, and a two met me in a coffee shop. Standard protocols were followed to get signed consent and to begin using pseudonyms for confidentiality before the participants were given a lavalier microphone and digital recorder that was the primary means of recording their interviews. A pad and pen was available for any notes that might be needed for clarification. Each participant was told that the future focus group's date and time would be announced via email.

I conducted the study using semi-structured interviewing techniques for approximately 60 minutes for each participant. During the initial interview, rapport was established to help set the participant at ease and thus elicit accurate information (Spradley, 1979). Throughout the interviews, four open-ended questions were asked of

the participants (Seidman, 2013). The questions related to their experiences as a cooperating teacher and how they contributed to preparing preservice teachers for a career in education:

- What events or experiences led you to be a cooperating teacher?
- Describe a typical day you have as a cooperating teacher---how would you describe what you do?
- What does it mean to you to be a cooperating teacher?
- What are qualities of a cooperating teacher?

Additionally, probing questions such as “Can you describe that?” or “Can you say more about it?” were used when more clarification of information was needed from the participants or to follow up for more detail.

Transcription Protocol

Once the data were gathered, transcription took place between September and December of 2016. The recorded interviews were transcribed into electronic word processing files following the Transcription Key for Entrevistas Bilingües Research Project (Scherba de Valenzuela, n.d.) (see Appendix A for transcription protocols). The basic elements of this system included:

- typing exactly what was said as it is heard, keeping regionalisms and noting unintelligible words;
- use of punctuation had a specific meaning that indicated phrasing, hesitations and voice inflections and was different from conventional writing rules concerning punctuation;

- all conversation was transcribed even when there was overlapping talking and incomplete breaks;
- actions were transcribed using a system of parentheses and brackets surrounding short descriptive actions.

Thematic Analysis

Once transcribed, a constant comparative analysis was conducted to determine any emerging themes or patterns in participants' interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Units of thought and semantic relationships were open coded and preliminarily sorted into emerging categories and subcategories. Each participant was assigned a color of paper for transcription. Themes and subthemes each had a unique mark to facilitate varied groupings. Interviews were repeatedly read to identify units of information or thought within the transcripts which were then cut and pasted onto index cards. A working memo was created after the open coding process in order to sort them into emerging relationships among the codes. Eventually selective coding was used to create any strong lines among the themes that may have appeared (Creswell, 1998) and labeled to describe the nature of the themes and subthemes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

These transcriptions were read several times each and I made notes of commonalities or differences so that I could start grouping them accordingly. I also noted interesting quotes that seemed to capture the character of the participants and their experiences that would help bring their voices forward in writing and analysis. Once I had these quotes and notes marked, I printed the transcripts and cut them into sections that I used as I started to separate them into like groups. When these were sufficiently sorted, I cut the most prominent quotes into units of thought. By assigning each

participant a unique color index card, it was simple to affix one quote per colored index card making an easy and quick way to locate information. I then had a file box of index cards that looks like a rainbow of thoughts and experience.

As I reread each card, I started organizing them into piles with like topics and some themes started to appear. I kept a list of these emerging themes and after doing this repeatedly, I eventually identified several major themes that were found in all the participants' interviews in one degree or another. Each theme was assigned a unique color. These markers became useful later when continuing to refine the sub-themes. Each participant's quote was given an appropriately colored marker on the face of their unique quote card for each theme or themes, plus any subthemes, and sorting continued within each theme to establish sub-categories. Once these subthemes were determined, they were given its own unique marker within its theme to make sorting and re-classifying visually simple and quick.

Kept in a file box, the cards were easily accessed as the sorting took another turn when I noticed some characteristics may have been prominent in many if not most of interviews, but not necessarily all of them. I began my draft of the themes and what I was seeing but the further I went in trying to make connections, the more it seemed that I was trying to fit what I found into an artificial construct. I was torturing my data by forcing it into categories that simply were not applicable. Finally, I had to admit I was looking at my arrangement somewhat backwards. The strict categories I created actually had a more dynamic character that reflected the flexibility in teaching that the teachers reported. Remembering that analysis is more than a listing of features (Spradley, 1979), I regrouped then followed the same sorting and coding protocols that I used to determine

my original themes, I started a second thematic search. I kept track of different emerging categories on lists that ultimately formed a more fluid tripartite grouping of Attributes of Cooperating Teachers with characteristics commonly found in professionalism: Knowledge, Learning, and Sharing. Each theme also had subthemes. It was at this point that I could start assigning quotes and discussing the emerging thematic design of cooperating teachers.

A critical friend (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was contacted in advance who agreed to read the transcripts and review how the initial categories were sorted and categorized into emerging themes. Despite having over twenty years of teaching experience and formal training in working with diverse populations, the nature of bias is such that I knew I needed to constantly be alert for my own blind spots in order to report the participants' experiences accurately without unintentionally using a biased view. The suggestions from this critical friend were negotiated to determine the final themes and subthemes that were ultimately used in the working memo.

Member Check

A measure of validity of the participants' accounts as cooperating teachers was established through member checking procedures that elicited their comments and feedback (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After all participants were individually interviewed and in order to ensure accuracy, a focus group was scheduled for purposes of member checking. Unfortunately, two participants had moved out of the area and only two were available for a face-to-face meeting so feedback data was solicited from the participants through email. Participants received an electronic copy of the theme analysis with a transcription of their own interview, and were invited to add any ideas they may have had

since their interview, or to note areas they wanted clarified. After meeting two participants who accepted the invitation for meeting, the dialog was accepted as accurate.

Chapter 4

Results

The opinions, anecdotes, beliefs, and experiences of skilled teachers who serve as cooperating teachers needed to be heard and examined in order to accurately understand what their daily professional lives are like throughout a school term when working with student teachers. My research question was “What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers?” and the reflective accounts from interviews of a group of master teachers was the basis of my research.

As noted in Chapter Three, this study was conducted with public school teachers who are current or past cooperating teachers for the student teachers of a local special education dual licensure teacher preparation program (SEDLP) who are in their final year of preparation for becoming a professional educator. The certification known here as “dual license” allows teachers to teach in inclusive settings (special education students and their non-disabled peers together) or in segregated setting for either general education or special education classes. This chapter will report the results from these interviews.

Meet the Teachers

Teachers with the requisite expertise to take student teachers into their classrooms have spent years gaining skills such as these reported by Berliner (2004) as characteristics of teachers with expertise: automaticity and routinization in daily tasks; flexibility in their teaching; meaningful patterns recognition in the domain in which they are experienced; rich and personal sources of information to solve problems they encounter. When considering who would be confident enough to recount their experiences for a study, having participants self-selected with plenty of teaching

experience would be a realistic assumption. "A reasonable answer to the question of how long it takes to acquire high levels of skill as a teacher might be 5 to 7 years, if one works hard at it. Competence as a teacher might come about 2 years earlier, but achieving that level of ability also requires some work" (Berliner, 2004, p. 201). For this study, eight teachers with a variety of background and experiences voluntarily contributed time and energy to advance knowledge about what it meant for them to be a cooperating teacher in a time of changing technology, societal expectations and increasing responsibilities. A brief overview of each participant follows.

Having taught for over 10 years in public schools and chartered-public schools, Peter is a general education teacher who has a realistic view of teaching that he imparts to his student teachers. "I demand that they take a little break at lunch time...I think it's important and healthy when we hit that point, we can say 'This is their recess, this is your down time.'" He has focused on teaching in primary grades for most of his career.

Alice is an elementary special educator with over 15 years of experience teaching in both public schools and chartered-public schools. She expressed a desire to help new teachers get off on the right foot by watching her teach and to acquire some of the traits she believes good cooperating teachers have, "I think they need to be a really good listener...I think they really need to model a love of children and a love of learning. I think they need to be exemplary in their field."

Another teacher with over 20 years teaching, Riverrat has been teaching in a middle school although she has an early childhood background that she has used in public and in private schools. "I feel it is really critical to put early childhood concepts and methodology into middle school...a lot of secondary teachers are stuck in, as I say, the

secondary Stand and Deliver mode and I don't think that is best for children in middle school." Some of those concepts and methodology would mean giving teaching a real-life focus. "I model language...because that's one of the focuses I thought I was strong with, with the second graders and kindergartners when I taught them. Teaching language, teaching reading, using vocabulary in context and giving them real-life experience."

Leo is a public school teacher who has taught general education to middle schoolers for over 10 years. He related that he is known for being brash, affable and dramatic, and he is popular with student teachers having mentored 12 of them.

This is a job that requires a certain level of entertainment. I mean I'm not saying you should wanna entertain all the day. But again it's about creating a relationship and if you don't realize these kids that are inside that classroom have a need for some level of enjoyment...and the only thing they get to enjoy is YOU, well then, you've got to give them something to make that happen. That's your job. ((bangs his hand on table))

Changing her career midlife gave Sue a personal perspective for how important professionalism is for student teachers when working with her in middle school.

Regardless of how good of a student they are...I think that they should come with a professional attitude that, you know, this is not just another hoop to jump through but this is...somebody's job! – and they need to be professional when they come into this workplace.

She has taught special education students for over five years in public schools and is dual licensed.

Conrad really enjoys her work as a special educator in a public elementary school. She has mentored student teachers and first-year teachers who benefit from her knowledge and skills she has acquired in teaching for over 20 years.

I love letting my experience make something better for somebody to give them, you know, solutions that they may just not know or to give them that experience...I know it's so minimal which is why eventually, I went on to be a mentor teacher because I saw a lot of people struggle as first-year teachers.

She recognizes the stress of being a cooperating teacher but is still satisfied to be a part of preparing new teachers. "But you know that I can't say that I would change my career so ((thoughtful pause)) I think it's an important component. I've been very pleased to do it."

After a career change in midlife from a commercial science field to being a teacher, Floyd brought his practical knowledge of being a professional to his mentees.

I try and make it as realistic as possible for them because I've noticed in other rooms [those] who were just not prepared for the reality for what they face, and it's causing a crisis as they reconsider a career choice as a second-semester senior...that's a crisis.

Well-educated with two master's degrees and a Ph.D., he has worked for over 10 years in secondary public schools.

Another early childhood educator is Raquel who has worked for over 5 years in a chartered-public school setting. Her desire to share her beginnings as a student teacher from her own warm and encouraging cooperating teacher is something she is proud and happy to share with others. Her welcoming words to new teachers indicate how nurturing she is right from the beginning with her student teachers:

Then I just say that I am here to help you. And that my main role is to help you through this journey to become the teacher that you want to be. And take the things that I show you here and I hope that you use them; that I am always a resource for you. I wanna see you succeed. I want you to know—we need more wonderful teachers for children.

Thematic Framework

When reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, I kept track of different emerging categories on lists that ultimately formed a more fluid tripartite grouping of cooperating teachers' attributes with characteristics commonly found in professionalism (Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage, 2005; Shulman, 1998): Knowledge, Learning and Sharing. (see Figure 2. Cooperating teachers' attributes). Each theme also had subthemes that occasionally overlap, sharing characteristics that were emphasized in some participants while others had less of them. For example, when looking at dialog from Alice where she is focusing on reflection which is a subtheme of Learning, she also may speak of her love of teaching and how she wants to show others the value of learning, all in the same minute:

But I have noticed that upon bringing in these student teachers, I really can really do a much better job of leaving it [problems] at the door because I know somebody is watching and I really want to be exemplary for them. I wanna be my very best self for them day after day.

The domains of Knowledge, Learning, and Sharing have no hierarchy, the divisions between the three of them are permeable as are the subthemes. Teachers are people too and they are the results of their backgrounds and environments, so rigid groupings are

unrealistic and unnecessary in order to get a feel for how they are interacting with their students and student teachers.

Knowledge

The theme of Knowledge has four subthemes: skills; being a resource; wisdom; and duty. It describes some of the practical parts of teaching that support the idea that being a professional means having a body of knowledge to draw on (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Skills. These participants talked about skills and qualities such as being organized, consistency and being observant that work together with knowing the content that is being taught to produce strong cooperating teachers. Riverrat quickly listed off what professional qualities she believed a cooperating teacher would have: “I would say flexible, personable, knowledgeable, organized. I should say tech savvy but I’m not ((laughs)) ...and honest.” When asked to describe further what flexible meant as one of her desired qualities for cooperating teachers, Riverrat said:

Well, you have to be willing to give up some of your power. You have to be willing to give up some prized lesson or something that you’ve always done in order to let them grow and experience what they want to do. Teaching in general you have to be flexible...so you have to be willing to share your space; have somebody in your place all the time. Sharing material, showing them where to access materials...bending and giving and taking.

Floyd was also direct:

You need to be flexible. You definitely need to be flexible. You have to have the desire to do it, to impart information, accept feedback but... there are some that I

have seen some at the far end who want to explain every single thing that was going on in the class to the nth degree.

Peter noted it is as important to listen to his student teachers as he does to his classroom pupils:

They have to be willing to listen to them. That is a huge piece of it. Good listening skills, observational skills and just a willingness to give ideas with a little more time. You give so much time to your own students, you have to be willing to support them as a student as well.

Listening was also important to Alice who went through a mental list and thoughtfully repeated herself, emphasizing some of her key values for cooperating teachers:

I think they need to be a really good listener...I think they really need to model a love of children and a love of learning. I think they need to be exemplary in their field...by being a good listener, [showing] love of learning, love of children ...and a really, really clear understanding of scope and sequence...childhood development and with your content area.

Conrad maintained that having an easy-going attitude combined with some confidence meant cooperating teachers could be truthful even when it hurts:

I think that you have to be comfortable and arrogant at the same time. I think you have to be willing to be truthful and intervene because if you don't intervene when they need it, then the problems just perseverate. They will go into classrooms and they won't be ready, and their students will be lesser because of that...I think that being respectful is important. I like saying I am responsible but I am not always timely...I guess you just have to have clear expectations and be

willing to address them even if you are uncomfortable with it. I also think you need to understand that we are there for them. They are not here for us.

The skills needed by quality cooperating teachers include organization and being prepared especially since they serve as models for the student teachers. Leo values being consistent and notes that the student teachers as well as the students of his classroom respond to predictability:

I'm a big proponent of routine; a proponent of consistency, familiarity...for me especially at this age level that the number one need that they have is acceptance. And when you create an environment that's familiar, that's routine-based, that's very ordered, that's predictable, that's comforting to them, they know what's going to happen every day.

Similarly, Riverrat gives her own routine as an example of a quality necessary to be an effective cooperating teacher:

Organized means to me that I have my ducks in a row all the time even when I have to be flexible ((laughs)). That materials are ready, things are planned. I know what I am doing and I know where I've been...I would never just walk into it, winging it... Modeling for them. This is what you have to do to start your morning. This is what has to happen before you leave today because we have a first block class tomorrow.

Conrad recognized the value of experience and building relationships that comes from being predictable:

I've taught a long time and I'm pretty good at situations and knowing outcomes-- and I read my students really well. There are times where I just have a stronger

rapport with my students, and that for me personally is what allows me to be more successful. They may not always have that rapport yet and so really try to make sure you develop routines for kids... So I just talk at them all day long...really to explain why one of the kid-things you are going to want to make sure to do is to set up a routine.

Being a resource. Conrad spoke of her own beginnings and how she wants to be a resource for new teachers because her training was so different from her practice:

I was very fortunate to have good role models and to work at some quality schools. My own student teaching experience was very, very, very different. It was really non-supervised and non-structured, and I just wanted to utilize some of my experiences to help someone out.

The act of sharing wisdom can expose student teachers to what teaching is really like compared to the ideal they encounter in their university classes. Conrad related helping a student teacher see the realities of the many tasks of teaching and the time frame it takes to get them done.

I remember a student teacher and I gave her three days to look through all the IEPs and the programs at a glance and she was like, "Oh my god -- I did all this work!" and I said, "Yes but you did it while I was teaching." ... then I'd say, "Remember next year you're gonna do that while you are teaching all day." It would take them literally days to get those things done not realizing that— and they are so proud of themselves. And they should be because it is a lot of work, but I don't think they realize you do that while you're teaching, and that's unfortunate.

Since resources are part of the body of knowledge that teachers possess, Sue mentioned that people are resources now and in the future for student teachers who should access them while still in their programs:

I've learned a lot of things from a lot of great teachers. So for me what being a cooperating teacher is is giving them the opportunity to see the wealth of information I've gotten from great teachers that I work with. Teachers that have mentored me ...my cooperating teacher. I mean, you don't do this in a vacuum, you know. When you have a student teacher, they are not really dealing with just one teacher. They have the opportunity to...learn a lot of different ways of doing things; a lot of different perspectives from just that one teacher. ...Maybe it's just my age but you know, when I was a student teacher I clearly understood I was networking...That's how I got my first job. Somebody said, "She really worked her butt off," you know?...that's how I got my first job. I do not understand how they don't get that they are actually networking.

Peter said sharing and modeling his teaching practices for student teachers is a way of giving back resources while acknowledging their sources:

I give tribute usually to where I learned those or picked those things up from I think every experience I've had along the road, as an educator has influenced me one way or another. I try to give all the good ones back if I can because there's some really awesome resources out there.

Riverrat said being personable teacher makes it easier for student teachers to talk to her because she is present and available. She said a good cooperating teacher is

somebody who is easy to talk to so that you can ask anything hopefully; you can be yourself with. I'm not gonna say, "Here is my classroom" and then run away and ditch 'em like some stories I've heard. I think I am pretty easy to get along with and talk to and willing to try anything new. I think I am game for anything.

Wisdom. Raquel said her experience and insight was meant to complement the learning that the student teachers get from being with the classroom children while they learn to teach:

What I am doing is trying to do with the student teacher is give them opportunities to grow and learn...The student teachers are to learn from me and the children, and to take it to make it their own, so that is different for me.

Floyd also uses his wisdom gained from life and experience to help ground the student teachers in reality:

I say I'm laying groundwork...giving them a living game plan in terms of what we...might see and some strategies that more likely than not are going to work...For example too, if they have them teaching a class or presenting a lesson, then providing them something upbeat to go on 'cause a lot of them come in...a little overwhelmed I've noticed, 'cause it isn't completely like they were told.

Peter helps his student teachers with their university work and this reminds him how the ideal may not fully reflect the real when it comes to teaching. Somewhat ironically, he counters that by suggesting his student teachers read a comic book to get a sense of what is real about being a teacher:

There's been...times where I've shared literature that I thought they must read...
"To Teach in Comics" is great. You can read it in thirty minutes if you are gonna

sit down and really commit to it. It really outlines the profession really well. One of those things that I think I can give a little bit more to get them through. I will support them through in their university studies but also like also paint a bigger picture of what education looks like.

Duty. When asked why they were cooperating teachers, the responses were sometimes short like Riverrat who said, "I was asked." But more often people revealed a strong sense of duty or professional obligation to the teaching field like Alice when she described her drive to create change by working with preservice teachers:

I will continue to say yes to being a cooperating teacher 'cause that's exactly what I'm after because I really want to show them something that might be different for them, you know. I want them to see that you don't have to bark at children in order to get them to do what you want them to do. I want them to see that listening above all is one of your best strengths as a teacher. That you need to talk less and listen more ((laughs)).

As a way of showing his level of commitment to teaching, Leo remarked that being a cooperating teacher allowed him to make changes in a system to benefit many more student teachers than just the ones he works with:

I think before I get to the place I want to be, I can at least be a teacher of a teacher where I do it in a singular way rather than do it in a broad way like being a professor or a speaker or a writer kind of stuff. And I know that they take the stuff back, and so it's my little insidious plan of planting these ideas of educational revolution in the student teachers' minds.

Conrad also considered being a cooperating teacher an honor as well as simply part of being human:

Because it's just good humanity. To be a human, you should impart your wisdom...if they could gain any skills at all then I think that's our responsibility to share that with them. We have the experience and the know-how, and just for me personally you know, I think it's our responsibility. I've had great mentors. I've had great people who have taught me, and it's just my way of continuing that.

She also emphasized the importance of having cooperating teachers available as part of the education experience for preservice teachers despite the nature of trying to measure the value of such things:

I think it's an important component. I've been very pleased to do it. I know that all that has been said [about teaching] is very subjective. I know that people need more objective things and most of what we do is NOT—much like our own evaluations and our assessment; that there are components that are not measurable.

Peter also thought that being a cooperating teacher was needed in the teacher preparation system like other professions have:

It's just essential and vital. I hope they never take away the mentor role... there are so many other professions where you have to go through some sort of mentorship program that I don't know why you would ever take that away from education.

Floyd expressed almost the same thing by noting that student teachers get a view of how teaching actually is in the classroom by working with experienced teachers in the classroom:

In this day and age, I really think they need to have a mentor teacher. It's at the point where it's more than just an advantage. Because having a good mentor is going to explain to them all the different stakeholders that they are accountable to and how that works in real life.

Learning

The theme of learning has three subthemes: reflection; modeling as an exemplar; love of education. When interviewing teachers about their jobs, it came as no surprise to me that the theme of Learning was prominent. Since teachers who are reflective of their teaching are aware that learning is the goal (Sergiovanni, 1986), teachers need students in order to be realize the potential of being a teacher. Showing student teachers how to go about the act of teaching (modeling) is a form of the ancient practice of apprenticeship (Colley, 2000) and sharing experiences helps create relationships between people.

Reflection. The act of reflection is essential for teachers to be effective in their practice by becoming aware of what they do and what they want to change (Dewey, 1933; Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & López-Torres, 2003; Mena Marcos, Sánchez & Tillema, (2008); Tillman, 2003). Cooperating teachers are engaged by the sponsoring teacher preparation programs to mentor preservice teachers because of their experience and expertise (Clarke, 2013; Hawkey, 1997; Hennissen et al., 2008).

Something that all the participants said was that they spend time with the student teachers reviewing and analyzing the student teachers' actions as well as their own

beliefs and actions. The cooperating teachers are aware of the importance of hearing student teachers' expressed desires and comparing them to what they know a competent new teacher will need. "Finally, there are times when students' expressed needs seriously challenge one or more of our inferred needs. Then we might ask that profound question: why am I teaching X?; why do I infer that my students need to learn?"(Noddings, 2006, p.341). This constant self-reflection helps to keep their interactions relevant.

Leo spoke of his cooperating teacher's request for reflection when Leo was a student teacher, "I think the most important thing he ever did with me was he asked me what do I want kids to know in ten years. And I couldn't answer that question with some kind of rote memorization dribble."

Conrad loves her work and relates what the student teachers says to what it is like to first go in front of a bunch of people as a teacher or even talking to their university supervisor:

They share that it's scary. Like they often have the theory and they've had the classes but they may say, "I used to work at a preschool" but they have never been responsible for all the factors you are in a classroom. They get nervous. They turn red. They can get really shy or they can get maybe escalated pretty easily.

Similarly, Peter described a typical student teacher reaction to being in a real classroom: "I mean you are such a novice in the beginning. As a student teacher coming into this new environment and, the first three weeks, every day is 'This is what learning looks like?'" Floyd spoke of student teachers reflecting on their teaching style after watching him model teaching so that they could identify what their strengths are in teaching:

I want them to start thinking about what are they gonna do about their own teaching style, their own teaching approach because my approach isn't right for everyone. They have to come up with what they think their own personal approach is, how that works. And how that specifically works in the classrooms they are in now as well as over the long term.

Floyd also said he is aware of the importance to the student teachers' own learning to encourage reflection without too much intervention by him:

On one hand, I have a classroom of students 7th graders or 8th graders who are barely in first or second grade math. And then I have on the other hand, a student who is months away from their bachelor or master's degree... Sometimes too it is knowing... when to back off. When to say, "Tell me what you saw there" as opposed to just giving it to them. Letting them have a chance fully think and digest what they found because surprisingly enough, most of them will come to it. Or they will be able to describe it and then just slightly miss out on—and that's where I come in to provide that support.

Reviewing and examining what has happened in the classroom during a day or how someone feels after a lesson were reported as common occurrences. Comfort is important to Raquel:

So if I see that someone is not quite comfortable yet and we are in the end of the first month I might really try to sit down and figure out with that person what is challenging for them, or just to try to help them ease into that situation.

Being an exemplar. Being an example for preservice teachers is a subtheme that is intertwined with many others in varying degrees when showing basic classroom skills

like how to teach a lesson or how to grade assignments. The cooperating teachers also examined their own practices and relationships while teaching. Modeling professional teacher behavior and attitudes was a natural part of teaching for Alice. She expressed a high level of reflection as part of her teaching with student teachers by first describing her concept of reflection because it is something that she believes should stay with them as they grow more experienced:

Just asking them of being really mindful of their choices and their behavior in the classroom...I think that's a wonderful part of being a teacher is that we have that opportunity every day to think about how we did that day and then tweak it to make it better the next day. And I think that's what good teachers do especially if you are in it 18 or 19 years like I am at this point is you still ask yourself "did I do that right? Could I do that better tomorrow?"...I really want to always model that type of reflection to the student teacher so that they see even when you are in the field for significant amount of time, you can still have the beginner's mind and put yourself in that place of pushing yourself because no one else is going to do that for you.

Alice also spoke of what it means for her to have the responsibility of being a cooperating teacher, and her respect for her student teachers who share their observations of her own actions in the classroom:

It means that I really have to really be my very best self because somebody is watching and I don't mean that in a big brother kind of way. I mean that I wanna model what I think you are supposed to be as a teacher. I take teaching really, really seriously ... I take it so seriously ... But I have noticed that upon bringing

in these student teachers I really can really do a much better job of leaving [troubles] at the door because I know somebody is watching and I really want to be exemplary for them. I wanna be my very best self for them day after day...But it means more to me when one of the student teachers calls me on something because I know they are really in it day after day. And I grow to really respect them as the semester goes on and really value their opinion and value their questions.

Determining what happened and how things might have been, what they could be or should be in the future is something common for the participants to do with their student teachers. When Peter was asked how cooperating teachers should be reflective, he suggested modeling introspection and collaboration by having a joint approach with his student teacher: "Together; like how something went down, how a lesson was given, looking at lesson plans and reflecting on those. There's always reflection happening. Making time for it is the hardest part." Analysis of daily teaching also happens in more structured ways such when Riverrat is guiding students to see what should happen based on past experiences and she asks them to reflect on their schedules and responsibilities to see how to make it all work:

Sometimes it takes them a while to get it 'cause they'll say, "I have to leave; I have to work; I have a class" and it's like ok – you are teaching First Block tomorrow. The lab's not up and the agenda is not on the board and if you get here at ten of 8 tomorrow...it's gonna be a push for you. Sometimes they just don't register that, so I end up putting the lab together or putting the stuff up on the board — but eventually they step into that.

Love of education. Maintaining an attitude of the pleasure of learning and teaching long after their student teaching experience was important to Sue who thought that the student teachers should have it too:

But I care passionately about what I do you know. I've done it—I have outlived the statistics by six times ((laughs)). I don't see myself quitting and I love it and it's my passion, and why should I have someone in there that is doldrums and doesn't care about it, you know?

Peter had a similar feeling about staying open to learning and trust so that school is enjoyable for everyone, even when the student teachers are teaching “solo” without the cooperating teacher in the room:

I mean you really do have to be willing to learn and to be open to new ideas because you are gonna see them. You can say this is how I do it, but you get to the solo week, you gotta have a little faith in your [student] teacher... open communication for sure and an understanding of scope and sequence and content standards... I mean personally-- what I would like if I were a student teacher looking for a good mentor teacher? Somebody that can make it exciting in some way shape or form... I think schools should be an exciting experience.

Raquel also describes easing student teachers into teaching by initially watching her so they feel increasing comfort with the responsibilities of teaching:

A typical day for me would be the student teacher taking over some of the activities that I would do and I am there helping them through it. They might lead the morning circle, or the morning walk or a segment of our morning workshop with reading a story, or writing a piece. I help them with their lesson plans if they

need me to. It's like being in a training mode so to speak... for them to sit back and watch me model it. Or if something didn't work out, how I would do it and then they could just observe from that point.

A love of teaching and of learning is important to many of the participants like Alice who enthusiastically described teaching both adults and children based in part by her own experiences as a student teacher:

I really enjoy it. I really enjoy being with young people. Whether those young people are six or are twenty-two, I really enjoy it. I really enjoy being a teacher and I really appreciate being at a point in my own professional path that I feel like I have something to offer because those first years I didn't.

Conrad used similar language to talk about how her ability in problem-solving fuels her love of teaching and she shows again her empathy for beginning teachers:

I love teaching. I love my students. I love problem solving. I love that by the way we structure something and by the way that we present things that we can truly, truly embed learning. And I think that just teaching is really challenging. I think that the with amount of interventions you need just to get through a classroom whether its general ed....or special ed. at any level, you have to have an amazing skill set. And I want to ensure all the hard work I have done throughout my career -- that wisdom -- is shared with people. It's scary to go in front of a new class.

Sharing

Sharing has four subthemes: conversation; relationships; support; and legacy.

Sharing is one way the participants saw themselves interacting with preservice teachers

along with cultivating relationships, listening while making conversation for feedback, and planning and collaboration. Doing these types of sharing helps create a strong network among the teachers and student teachers that they report as partly bound in the tradition of a legacy where experienced people help new incoming people. Seeing as teachers spend their entire day at their job explaining one thing or another, it is natural that they would be the ones who start most conversations with student teachers (Crasborn et al., 2011).

Conversation. Communication between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers happened the typical ways through speaking and writing by having conversation, meetings, texting and phone calls. Feedback and planning made up a large part of their conversations that often had an element of reflection to support suggestions. All used talking and listening as a main form of communication and Peter admits that smart phones “began opening up the door to the way I’ve become a texter.” He uses a combination of speaking, texting and email to stay in contact with some student teachers to keep them on schedule when working with him, and with others after they have gone from his school:

With Rxxx, it has been the best form of communication to bringing her back for some field trips after her experience was done. Those kinda things...just a little reminder like when Cxxx was coming up on his solo time and he hadn’t submitted any lesson plans yet...I need to see those! I know it’s coming up right around the corner. And he was very polite... “and yessir, oh I’ll get those to you.” So [I said] send me a message when you know so I can check my email.”

Alice is aware how her manner of verbal communication encourages thoughtful interactions. When I asked her to expand on her personal style of speaking to her pupils in her classroom, she said student teachers often single it out:

That it's just so quiet ((laughs)) ...and they have definitely picked up on that it's really different...this is how I have heard them phrase it, where they see it as a different way of being with children or respecting children.

She also uses this quiet attitude when listening to adults or children. Describing her typical manner of giving feedback to student teachers, she said:

Well, just always more than anything try to listen...ask a good question and let them talk about things and not feel – and not interrupt and just let them have that space to reflect on, you know, their interactions or the lesson that they developed or the way they executed them.

Participants' observations from either perspective – the cooperating teacher observing the student or the student teacher observing the cooperating teacher – were the basis for some conversations. After describing how some of her student teachers were not very good at taking her cues, Sue set up her room to accommodate them having a work space for them next to her in front of the kids so they could more easily see how she works while also receiving faster feedback.

So I actually have my room set up where they sit; they have their own space beside me...they don't have their little tiny space off to the side. They sit on a whole table right beside me. So, I have a whole table and they have a whole table ...a place for all their things and so that they are right there in front of the students.

She emphasized this physical arrangement is the result of them not observing her and not taking note of her expectations for teachers:

We start with...some of the expectations they are going to have to take care of for [their university program] like letters to parents and things like that. So I just basically let them adjust a little bit and kind of watch and see what's going on.

Because I know what they are already supposed to know – actually after some of the bad experiences I did set up a list of expectations, you know...because I guess I wanted them to know that *I knew* what was going on.

She is a seasoned enough teacher to know that watching and observing is part of what is expected from their sponsoring teacher preparation program. “I expect a student is going to come to me with a certain professionalism, you know—and I know the rules!”

Floyd asks his student teachers to really look at their surroundings in order to understand the messages the environment makes to children and to use whatever means they need to help them see what is going on:

What sense do you make of this classroom? If you have to draw a diagram of it, diagram it out. Who's where. What's going on. And what are the issues...see, that's where they are gonna take it in, observe it, consider it, learn it, and go out and be a good teacher.

Floyd also meets daily with his student teachers to inform about practical things as well as emotional situations:

We will sit down about 20 mins before the start of the day and go thru the game plan for the day. Particularly ... to familiarize the student teacher with issues—behavior issues that have emerged, social emotional issues that have emerged so

that they are aware of what is going on and it doesn't come as a complete surprise.

And he noted that the meeting might also happen after school:

I give them feedback at the start of the day and they do too. And usually we take ten minutes at the end of the day about the highlights of what they saw.

Sometimes that bleeds over into the next morning, particularly if they are up to handling a particular class, or to work thru a lab in a particular class. Just some of the things – they give me their feedback in terms of what they saw or their questions. Then we come up collaboratively with a strategy that they think they feel they can implement and that's going to work.

Written communication was reported mostly around feedback and planning either through notes or emails or even written work required from the student teachers' sponsoring preparation program. Raquel meets daily with her student teachers to find out how to support them. This also ensures communication of what happens at her school is given to the student teachers' program on a regular basis:

We meet in the morning so we always talk about their requirements what they have to do for school and what they have to get done. And then how I can best support them in that role. So we have a meeting in the morning. We talk throughout the day...it's open communication always...And we have meetings weekly with their supervisors and we go over their ratings system for them so I have to fill out a form that talks about how does this person implement their lesson plans or how did this person follow the rules of your school. So there is a

rating system I have with that person biweekly just to make sure they are holding up their end of what they are supposed to do for their institution.

Asked how she communicates with her student teachers, Conrad said she prefers directly speaking to them before school each day:

Usually verbally because I prefer face to face. I've certainly had student teachers who text a lot or call, but usually face to face like in the mornings. We meet before school has started so we have time to look over the day.

Also favoring speaking, Leo wasn't fond of writing but admitted it happens when some action may need clarification, "I might do it in writing... I'll put a little note there like, 'please understand that was not what you thought it was', kind of thing. No, no, no, mostly it's conversation." Peter uses conversation as part of what he considers a considerate pace of acquiring teaching skills that is held with a sense of collaboration and clarification:

I got into this cycle of "let's observe and pay attention in the beginning and then as you see the things I am doing and if you want to pick any of those up and you feel like you are ready for them, then let's talk about that and let you do that." I think that gives everyone their own kinda pace to jump in even though they might be ready to from day one. Or they might need a tad more grooming to get there... You have to look beyond the conversation, I think. A conversation has to take place. I mean, to see if are they really trying what I said, or taking that to heart, or are they just doing what they think they know is best.

Relationships. Riverrat is fond of talking about teamwork and discusses the importance of collaboration before she sends her student teachers out to meet other teachers:

What I like to do is have them go through a typical student day... that has a mix of your core classes and go through the whole day with that section. Just so they get a feel for the team for the other teachers' management styles... I kind of insist that they do that near the beginning if they can... The other teachers are very willing to have them come in and work and observe and help. And I think it's good for them to see other professionals in the same settings like Ms. XXX doing the same things I am doing in a very different way.

Teaching cross-content, sometimes with colleagues, is a major part of Riverrat's school structure and one that she feels is realistic for her to show student teachers so that they too can start forming relationships:

I think what I do well is that I integrate. My team is an expeditionary team and we work real hard to make sense and make meaning of our content. We try to weave in English and social studies and science. We wrap a whole curriculum in the units that we do. And that's very intentional so I think I do that well with my team but I think I also model that really well just within my classroom.

And this pays off for her by creating long-term relationships with her student teachers:

I've had great, great student teachers. Some of them I am still in contact with and it's been 10 or more years... They're still in touch with me. I think a lot of it is again just the collegial relationship. You know, I try to treat them as an equal not a somebody who is just coming into the game. Whether they are like me or not

like me. Male or female young or old. I've had older than me. I've had people obviously, a lot younger than me and retirees. Young kids and everything in-between and I just enjoy the relationship of it.

Riverrat gives her student teachers the chance to talk with parents and form relationships that benefits everyone:

So the more opportunities they have to practice and try things in a pretty safe environment, the better. They get a lot of practice talking with parents ... What I found fascinating is that the parents are always very interested in the student [teachers] and then the students get real comfortable chatting with the parents about what they are doing and what the school is doing... One of the things I tell them at the very beginning too is that if you can articulate what you are doing and why you are doing it, you will not have parent problems generally. "This is what I'm doing and this is why." If you can articulate and you know what you are about, you are halfway there. Even with a parent who has a question about something, you just have to communicate, "This is what I am doing and this is why."

In schools, relationships form the basis of concern for others and for friendship whether with adults or children. Parents, colleagues, and children all come in regular contact with teachers and consequently the student teachers whom they mentor.

Remembering what worked well for her when she was preparing to be a teacher, Sue also encourages her student teachers to work outside of her room and make connections with colleagues so that they can work with their classroom students in different venues while gathering information and skills from other teachers:

There's something to be learned from every teacher you come in contact with. There's some really outstanding teachers out there and they all have their own style, and there's pretty much something you can take from every single one of them...That's the fun part of it...that my kids are not always in my classroom so they are all over the place and these [student teachers] can monitor our students in other classrooms and really see a lot. There's a lot of opportunity to see other people's classrooms which was awesome for me when I was a student teacher.

Sue also recognized that relationships with student teachers can form that last for years:

The first three student teachers that I had were *amazing*. Two of them I would say were beyond exceptional. They were ready to go. They didn't need me. However, they were very gracious the entire time...their work ethic was above and beyond...I've kept in touch with all three of them, and they are all exceptional teachers doing amazing things.

Leo noted that "Teachers that are successful have great relationships with kids. Teachers that struggle don't have relationships." He acknowledges that many of his student teachers will not teach in the same content area he does, but that does not matter since his role is to expose them to his ways and philosophy around teaching:

I think being a cooperating teacher and having a student teacher there with me is that it's just another relationship that I am creating, you know. But it's a relationship that's based more on the methodology to what I'm doing rather than the content. There's a lot of student teachers that I know that are not going to go teach content that I expose them to...so what I try to get for them is more methodology in terms of what to do when they structure the assignments.

Leo reminds his students they are in a field that is about people and that relationships should be a chief concern if they want a satisfying career:

I mean here you are in a profession that's attracts people-people; people who like to interact with other people. And yet the interaction you have people-to-people a lot of times is very unfulfilling, and so I will remind them that the way to get fulfillment is to have relationships, you know.

After hearing himself talk so much about relationships, Leo expressed some surprise:

Oh! Maybe I am really a relationship director; you know, not a teacher. You direct relationships and based on those relationships, you get to guide them towards learning experiences. Ahh! That's a very different thought process than to just be a teacher.

During our conversation, Peter reflected on his own confusion that happens sometimes when deciding how to gently guide a student teacher who needed to make changes. He slowly asked aloud, "Maybe my relationships can be too informal?" When asked to explain what he meant, he continued to stumble as he searched for an image of mentoring without relationships:

It would be a sterile environment. I think, you know, it would be painful for both of us—and the kids! ((laugh))

DHL: In what way? Why would it be painful?

Peter: Um ((pause)) I don't—I mean—just like with literacy where you are making connections to the real world or other books or whatever, in human relationships you need to know what someone is going through in their daily life.

Like small little connections can blossom into amazing ((pause)) not so much

opportunities, but an understanding sometimes. And sometimes it could be something spectacular.

He clearly values the relationships he makes with his student teachers because he later explained he learns from them too:

I think that's a neat thing about having student teachers. You have different eyes, and in the classroom, you get another set of eyes critiquing you as a teacher too, so it's not...like it's gonna to be your evaluation or anything that goes to the state. But it could be an eye opener for someone who is really open to it or receptive to what other people think.

Alice said that in one sense, her relationship with her student teachers is an extension of her teaching the classroom students:

I mean teaching is this commitment to serving others so it's just another person I am serving ((laughs)). Just a bigger body in my room rather than the little bodies in my room but I am doing my best to teach them all ((laughs))...I start my day every morning with these enthusiastic young people ((laughs)) and you know do my very best all throughout the day to model exemplary teaching and exemplary professional behavior for them... and spend a lot of time encouraging them... and answering their questions and reflecting on what's happening all throughout the day.

Alice recognizes that they are students outside of her classroom whom she can support when they are sometimes away from her classroom as part of their college coursework:

I give them a lot of things...because they don't get to do beginning of the year stuff in a classroom because they are with you guys [at the university]. I give

them whole folders and this is what you do for those first couple of weeks in the name of building community.

Raquel forms her relationships with student teachers by recognizing the mutual trust that must be there, and she said it is based on her empathy from having been a student teacher too:

It means in this environment we are working towards building trust because this person is in my classroom. For me to be able to trust them and them to trust me that I am going to help them through things that might be difficult. So really, establishing a relationship that is gonna be empathetic – I've been in their shoes before. In many ways, patience, understanding, passion might come in...even though I don't have them for so long, we kinda have to break through those barriers rather quickly because I want to be able to help them the maximum I can in this short amount of time...I'm not talking about calling them my best friend or a relationship like that. A relationship with trust and kindness and respect so that we can get them what they need.

Support. Echoing Alice's point of her student teachers being "just another person I am serving" by teaching them, Riverrat noted watching student teachers gain skills and experience is like her classroom students:

I think I like watching them grow and develop even if they come in strong there is always that growth. It's like watching your students progress and grow and learn.

You are watching them progress and grow and learn and get better.

Raquel said she starts out slowly with them like she does with her classroom students:

It's like when you start a school year, you are not really going to expect the children to know how to sit down and read from the board or read from the book. You have to really take time to know them and build that rapport. It's the same for the student teacher not just for myself but also for the students. So I really like to make sure that everyone on board is comfortable and ready... and communication, you know. "How do you feel? Let's try that this week." ... really it is just based on that open communication and being able to see an ability.

In her imagined conversation with a typical student teacher where she encourages them to feel trust as they learn, Raquel tells them to be mindful of all that they see and do in her room, and that she is there as a support for their well-being and success:

Take the things that I show you here, and I hope that you use them... I am always a resource for you. I wanna see you succeed. I want you to know — we need more wonderful teachers for children. We're not gonna stop having children so that's kinda job security, right? But I wanna really make sure that the student teachers that come through my doors feel confident and safe and cared for even when they leave my classroom.

Raquel kindly but firmly said, "Student teachers need support just like other students and I am so grateful I can help them and have the opportunity."

The pleasure of supporting student teachers by teaching them how to get through their first attempts was a very common thing for the cooperating teachers to note. Raquel said:

I had a mentor teacher where I was in a mentor teacher's classroom and it helped me tremendously. And so I wanted to be able to help other students who were

coming into our field feel really comfortable and to smoothly transition from being a student to being a teacher... What I feel I can offer them is a different way to bring a joyous peace in maybe a component that might not be so joyous otherwise.

Raquel's joy of connecting to people of all ages through teaching was true for many of the participants like Conrad who expressed herself similarly, "I love teaching. I love my students. I love problem solving. I love that by the way structure something and by the way that we present things that we can truly, truly embed learning." She said that supporting student teachers sometimes means stepping back:

I think that my experience being a cooperating teacher means that you are there for that student to become a more confident and teacher. And that it means stepping back and letting them lead, and supporting them in leading and not overriding them. They are not there as an assistant. They are not there to ease your work load... They're not finished yet. Their job is to get support while they are there.

When talking about supporting her student teachers, Conrad noted that advocacy for classroom students and for student teachers is something that is important for them to see her doing: "I believe that like with anything if you have to advocate for something, you need to do that. So I think that being a good advocate for them and for your students is important." For her, this support extends to public policy:

One of the things that concerns me is all the bad publicity that teaching and education get, and the university gets about not preparing teachers. My student teachers have been academically well-prepared. They've been knowledgeable.

They've been well-supervised and I think that it's a strong accountability piece that it's well documented.

Asked what it meant to him to be a cooperating teacher, Leo said his support was about "Helping young teachers establish a foundation of methodology to experiment with and test out to see what works for them and what doesn't." Leo recalled his cooperating teacher when he was first learning to teach who asked Leo what he wanted the kids to know forcing him to put words to his desires:

I think the most important thing he ever did with me was he asked me what do I want kids to know in ten years. And I couldn't answer that question with some kind of rote memorization dribble.... I want them to remember they felt safe, that they felt valued. That they felt that education had meaning beyond what we did minute by minute day by day in that room. In terms of the bigger picture, that they were building a foundation.

Leo himself has spent time with plenty of student teachers, "I have had probably a dozen student teachers. Um, I think the greatest gift they can give me is that I know they are still teaching."

Legacy. Part of being a professional is ensuring that the principles, practices and ethics of a given field are shared with others (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Knowing that their work is continuing a legacy inspires Sue to be like her own cooperating teacher:

I was taught by a very amazing cooperating teacher who I was with for both semesters, and...I do some of the things she did and there's a lot of things I don't do like she did. But one thing that I love she did was, she really taught me that I was valuable there, you know.

Conrad expressed her pleasure at working with preservice teachers and the connection it brings her to be part of their last stages of becoming a professional:

I've been really proud to be a supervising teacher. I think that we get to work with enthusiastic and... hardworking students. I think it's a privilege to be a part of that final preparation to get them ready for a classroom. I feel like it's certainly not enough, but I feel like it's a well-supported connection.

Being part of a line of good preparation is important to her:

I may never, ever, ever hear, "Oh I learned that from Conrad." But because of something I did, it will impact their students. For me, I see my student teachers that have gone on to very successful teaching careers and I am really proud of that... I was very fortunate to have good role models and to work at some quality schools. My own student teaching experience was very, very, very different. It was really non-supervised and non-structured, and I just wanted to utilize some of my experiences to help someone out.

Assuring the student teachers have a good start and avoid a rocky one was in many participants' lists of reasons to be a cooperating teacher. Alice was passionate about this when remembering her own student teaching:

I had some really some tough things thrown my way as a 23-year-old and I didn't have any kind of mentor from the university or even with my supervising teachers in the schools that I felt like I could really talk to and ask, like for help...It was a really, really frustrating year. And I certainly learned a lot and felt like when I started teaching that I was ready. But a lot of that was because of learning from really tough experiences rather than really positive, really supportive

experiences...I mean I never had anyone ever come out and observe me. Ever. Ever. I could have been doing anything. And all sorts of things were going on with, you know, my supervising teacher just leaving, you know, taking off...I was 23 years old. I was just a baby also!

Given the chance to be a cooperating teacher, Alice had a specific goal in mind so that her student teachers would have a better experience:

I want other people to see what that looks like because then I want them to go out and offer a similar type of experience for children. I want them to go out and be great teachers. There are so many terrible teachers out there and I would like to do something about that ((laughs)) and this is my way of contributing to that problem. So it's that combination of me enjoying it and me also really wanting to do something about this reality that we have a lot of people in classrooms that shouldn't be there.

The beginning of his student teaching was initially the same for Peter as for Alice, but changed once he established a relationship with his cooperating teacher:

I feel like I went into education with a little chip on my shoulder too. I wanted it to be different than a lot of the experiences I had, and I tried to bring that into the classroom. I had this mentor teacher who was a totally outside-of-the-box thinker. You know, using proverbs to explain parts of speech and just really lots of hooks to get kids interested. I think I have a lot of that to give back and just help...support teachers and advocating for themselves, and advocating for teaching on the whole as keeping school interesting and fun for students.

It is important to him that they feel welcomed as part of the profession:

I hope they can expect to understand that they are going into a profession. This isn't just another job; that they are committed to this. I want them to understand that. And so they really figure out if they enjoy it, they are gonna stick in it for the long haul. Maybe they don't all-- I know sometimes they don't.

Alice made an explicit connection to the sub-theme of reflection as she empathically described her feelings for new teachers:

I had some really some tough things thrown my way as a twenty-two-year-old and I didn't have any kind of mentor from the university or even with my supervising teachers in the schools that I felt like I could really talk to and ask for help.

Another example that is less direct but still illustrates the commonality of this was Floyd describing the first days with a student teacher in his special education room, "So most of the first month I just let them acclimate and take it all in and try to explain it as best as—well, some of this just can't be explained ((laughs))." Floyd said he was lucky to be around effective teachers, and he gives his student teachers skills to keep them going right from the beginning:

I think for me it's imparting survival skills...I was really fortunate where I took my education classes and special ed. in particular, and who taught them. It's imparting survival skills or giving them my little black book of tricks so that when they do come up against their week or two weeks when they teach, I really want them to be a success. I am not setting anyone up.

He said he has had great interactions and being a cooperating teacher is an investment for the future:

I consider it paying it forward. Paying it forward for some really great people with whom I worked... I am just paying it forward. I enjoy the interaction with the new teachers and I realize— listen, I am not going to teach forever you know.

Summary

After reviewing recent literature about cooperating teachers who work with preservice teachers, I found an emphasis in reporting on the external aspects of being a mentor teacher (actions, expectations) with little reported about the internal aspects of being a mentor teacher such as their thoughts and beliefs. I conducted a study to answer the question: What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers? A qualitative study was designed to capture first-hand accounts from the cooperating teachers themselves by asking them to talk about their work with student teachers.

Interviews were conducted with eight cooperating teachers from a local teacher preparation program who mentored student teachers in order to record their perspectives and their experiences. Using a constant comparative method for thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I identified three major themes of knowledge, learning and sharing along with 11 subthemes, and these described the dynamic and fluid nature of attributes cooperating teachers. The stories and thoughts of the participants provided a primary account of a group of professional teachers who mentor preservice teachers in a genuine and authentic way I did not read during the literature review. My interpretation of these findings and the implications for future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The relative lack of current research I found investigating the literature around attitudes and rationales of experienced teachers who decide to become cooperating teachers for preservice teachers led me to my research question: What do cooperating teachers report as their experiences while mentoring preservice teachers? I thought a current perspective of these teachers' experiences mentoring in teacher preparation programs might give valuable information about working with preservice teachers. Eight cooperating teachers in local public and private schools who worked with the student teachers from a special education dual licensure teacher preparation program in the Southwest of the United States were interviewed to hear first-hand about their experiences that highlight some of their reasons for choosing to be cooperating teachers. Their interviews were transcribed for review and thematic analysis.

Through a constant comparative analysis, three major themes were identified to support mentoring student teachers as part of being a professional teacher. The first theme of Knowledge was a category that included having various skills; access to resources; imparting wisdom and fulfilling a professional obligation (duty). The second theme was Learning that included the elements of modeling best practices; showing a love of education; and of reflection during and after teaching. The last theme of Sharing was about conversations involving feedback and planning; relationships; overall support for the student teachers; and creating or participating in a line of cooperating teachers who have given a lot to student teachers through their actions and attitudes.

As I analyzed the results, I realized that my findings went beyond the research questions. I considered what implications my findings had for teacher preparation programs. I wondered if finding commonalities among the cooperating teachers might identify areas that institutions of higher education could use to help in preparation of the student teachers for their new career while also giving information that could be useful in the university's recruitment and support of cooperating teachers. The subthemes helped provide strong examples of what cooperating teachers recognized as important skills, activities and attitudes for working with preservice teachers. Instead of assuming what it was like to be a cooperating teacher simply because I had that experience myself, these teachers spoke directly about what might be needed to support them as they mentor preservice teachers as well as what might be needed when recruiting future cooperating teachers. Also, these themes and subthemes can be included in conversations with preservice teachers as they prepare to work with cooperating teachers so that they too are better prepared for what their new working relationship might require.

My research results are full of personal thoughts by the cooperating teachers about their own experiences and reasons for mentoring. Noddings (2006) described the positive and welcoming atmosphere of ideal education that these cooperating teachers encourage: "Where possible, it avoids coercion. It prefers the language of invitation, offering, encouragement, guidance, sharing, advice and trying-out to that of requirement, compulsion, prescription, testing and assignment" (p.339). They tell of how they came to be a cooperating teacher and why they want to continue. They recognized that it can be more work to have a preservice teacher with them than without. Riverratt said, "Yes, it's more work in terms of me having to sit down and plan and coordinate, but I think the

benefits outweigh the extra time most definitely. I think that otherwise I would not do it.” Peter questioned if it was worth it, “That’s kinda one of those where [I ask] how much effort are you gonna put into it as a cooperating teacher? Sometimes I see so many suggestions or pieces of advice given but not taken.” When discussing cooperating teachers’ responsibilities and work load, Alice readily said, “Oh definitely, definitely. It’s so much more work for me.” But these were just a few sentences about an issue that conceivably could influence anyone considering being a cooperating teacher since despite the extra work, there is no added pay, prestige or glamour involved for them. These concerns did not seem to carry much weight in this study in comparison to the testament the participants gave to the positive value of being a cooperating teacher. The added strain of mentoring a preservice teacher was quickly dismissed by each of them much like Conrad who shared:

I can’t tell you how many times I have overheard somebody say, “Oh good! I’ll have help with my classroom.” I think that taking a student teacher is...time consuming. It’s stressful. It’s a lot of additional work and planning because you can’t always just do things when you want in the middle of the night, or that morning because you just have to be better at communicating with that other person. It’s an amazing experience. I love it.

The overall enjoyment of being a cooperating teacher was evident in the way the teachers expressed themselves and in what they chose to talk about. Voluntarily joining a study about mentoring preservice teachers and speaking about sharing knowledge while nurturing and encouraging people who may have little practice until their assignment

with a master teacher was a bold step indicating a desire to have their experiences be heard.

Since teaching content and skills is a major responsibility for teachers of any level, I was surprised that the cooperating teachers did not talk much about the quality of the incoming student teachers' content knowledge or even their own depth of experience with the topics they taught. In fact, Conrad pointedly said, "My student teachers have been academically well-prepared. They've been knowledgeable." The knowledge that was shared during the interviews was less about what subjects that were being taught than how the knowledge of being a teacher was being relayed to student teachers by the cooperating teachers. Certainly, the cooperating teachers were interested in teaching the necessary content and skills to their classroom pupils and the student teachers. They also were interested in the act of teaching itself and making sure the practices and attitudes they had gained over the years were transmitted to newer teachers. They wanted their knowledge about learning to be given to incoming teachers so those new careers could be successful and those teachers could have a positive beginning to a long career.

When thinking about what they reported in their interviews, I also note that the cooperating teachers did not speak of raising their classroom pupils' test scores as something that they helped the student teachers learn to do. This would not be because the cooperating teachers do not value test scores necessarily, but rather that test scores were not the primary focus of their interactions when working with beginning teachers as demonstrated by the self-selected topics of conversation of their interviews. Instead, the participants spoke about relationships and caring as part of their primary duty as cooperating teachers. When encouraging student teachers to care of themselves so they

do not get over-tired, Peter said “We want you to survive in this profession, not burn out in two or three years.” Conrad described working with student teachers on things that were not in their textbooks like performance anxiety and conviction:

They get nervous. They turn red. They can get really shy, or they can get maybe escalated pretty easily. So really, I just kinda monitor that and give them – I don't know—small skill-building responsibilities maybe to develop that confidence.

Before I began this study, I reviewed recent literature about cooperating teachers that focused on cooperating teacher or mentor participation, their roles, and teacher preparation. I found five major themes: social aspects; skills transmission; involvement; competency; and identity. The interviews I conducted contained many elements of some of the themes I found in that review.

The theme of Sharing that I found with the eight participants in my study had a counterpart in the review theme of “social aspects.” The subthemes of Sharing like legacy and support were built off the many references to a desire create a positive start for the new teachers and came from a position of empathy rather than requirements of an agency. Relationship was reported as being something cooperating teachers were aware of and valued (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005), and relationship was important to my participants as well. Leo said that “Teachers that are successful have great relationships with kids. Teachers that struggle don't have relationships.” Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) noted a range of styles in mentoring that cooperating teachers had.

Aspects of the theme of Knowledge was seen in the themes of the review as “skills transmission” and “involvement”, but in my study I found more disclosure about having wisdom coming from knowing what is ahead, and a desire to be someone who is a

resource with know-how to be given to the student teachers. Comparing Sue and Raquel's styles, some clear differences appear in terms of expectations and practice of the cooperating teacher with the student teachers but they both thought their knowledge and expertise would be needed by the student teachers. Exposing preservice teachers to the real world of the classroom that would supplement the ideal classroom portrayed in their college classes was an important goal for cooperating teachers in some studies (Ganser & Wham, 1998). This had a strong showing with my participants too, and the individual stories emphasized how their past so clearly influenced what they do with their student teachers. These types of personal disclosures were barely evident in the reviews articles.

I found a theme of Learning that emphasized reflection and being an exemplar of good teaching that were in the review articles, but the love of education that the eight participants talked about simply was not part of what I found in the review. Riverrat said she would not be a cooperating teacher if she did not love it, and Conrad bubbled over many times, "I love teaching. I love my students. I love problem solving."

What was different for me with my participants' accounts was how what they reported was specifically about themselves in relation to student teachers as opposed to relating how the student teachers were affected by the cooperating teachers, and then the subsequent thoughts the cooperating teachers had about their influence in the student teachers. I noted in my review of literature that the focus on the majority of the studies reviewed was from an external viewpoint; one where a label was given to actions and attitudes from an observer-researcher perspective. Surveys with predetermined choices were filled out (Ganser, 2002; Portelance & Gervais, 2009). The review of cooperating teacher literature done by Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen and Bergen (2008)

reported the many names assigned to teachers who work in differing capacities while mentoring preservice teachers.

In the studies I reviewed, there was little actual dialog from the cooperating teacher participants that is descriptive of their individual thoughts (Cuenca, 2011; Ganser & Wham, 1998; Portelance & Gervais, 2009). No doubt the researchers had plenty of such dialog since they typically reported that their participants' interviews were transcribed from recordings. But very often I was left wanting to hear what the cooperating teachers said in order to know if I agreed with the conclusions of the researcher.

When I reread these studies after conducting my interviews, the work with my own participants became more animated for me because what they said was so personal. The cooperating teachers naturally referenced aspects of their student teachers, but the focus was on themselves and their own thoughts and reasons. Their conversational points were made mainly to support ideas regarding their own feelings and their own experiences about teaching. As I continued listening to my participants' recordings and read their transcripts, I was struck by how often they started to answer a question about their mentoring with student teachers but then slipped into talk about their pupils and what the student teachers were thinking. This took the attention off of them, and it became confusing since it was hard to tell if they were speaking of "teacher" as the "student teacher" or "cooperating teacher" or even "teachers in general."

DHL: What would be an ideal cooperating teacher in your opinion?

Peter: They're motivated to learn, willingness to try on new things try out new things ((pause)) just eager to like work with children too.

DHL: Now is this for a student teacher or a cooperating teacher?

Peter: A student teacher. Oh, you're talking about a cooperating teacher?

The de-emphasis of themselves when talking about their work of starting student teachers off well was noted by Conrad who said she thought that humility is characteristic of teaching and especially of good teachers:

I think that that teaching is humble; it's a humble career. You have to put your students first. And I've seen it whether my own student teachers or others where their ego really gets in the way... they don't put the kids' needs first. They are worrying more about the product than the process and not really understanding that education *is* the process.

I approached this study with a constructivist model of learning that was influenced by the work of Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979) with his ecological model of human development (see Figure 1. The ecology of human development model of Bronfenbrenner), and symbolic interactionism developed by Herbert Blumer (1986) that explains life's meaning is created by numerous social exchanges that is processed throughout life. When people (the actors) have interactions with others, they form their reality over time that is used to create their identity:

According to the theory of symbolic interactionism there are no objective realities, only multiple realities based on actors' interactive experiences and definitions of the situation. An actor's reality is created over time and founded upon numerous interactions in society. These interactions become internalized and shape or mold an actor's reality that is used to form an actor's identity (Hund & Knaus, 2011, p. 51)

Both theories emphasize the how social exchange creates and influences meaning over a course of time; forming relationships matters.

The preservice teachers may be adults but their current role as a student trying out new activities and responsibilities means they will have all the typical anxieties and hesitations as children do when they are learning. Hearing what Raquel and Conrad did for these college students was underlined by the tone of their voices as they spoke about their attitudes for student teachers, and how they wanted them to feel at ease during a potentially stressful time. Peter and Alice also had round, calm voices and they spoke using positive terms even when describing trying time or situations. They offered their student teachers what they offer their classroom pupils: a warm and nurturing encounter with new information.

Floyd and Sue changed their careers to become teachers and they felt a strong need to help instill professional values for their student teachers because they wanted them to succeed. They were not shy to hold out their own pasts and use them as examples of how that informs their current work as teachers. They did this with me and recounted how they do it with the student teachers. Leo described his pragmatic approach to working with school-age students: meet them where they are and add some entertainment values to keep them interested. He thought this was important partly because this approach appeals to his pupils but more importantly he related to me because he wanted to share a successful model with new teachers that works.

The nurturing and warmth that the participants show with the incoming preservice teachers was something I personally found reassuring. Listening to their passion of teaching and the joy they felt about helping up and coming teachers inspired me. I was

heartened to know that student teachers have master teachers available to them who teach adults using the practices they expect from themselves like reflection, being prepared, patience and tenacity when faced with the complex tasks of teaching a large group of children with varying abilities and interests.

Limitations of this study

There are four limitations that should be noted. First, finding commonalities among participants that could be construed as true for all cooperating teachers would be difficult since this study was limited by the size of the participant cohort which then limited the experiences reported. Ethnographic research is not easily generalizable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and size of the identified group is part of the reason here. Since the eight participants were cooperating teachers who were recruited from the same local special education dual license program, being from a single institution would have an undetermined effect on their answers especially considering that some had worked exclusively with this program while others reported having been cooperating teachers with other sponsoring institutions. Additionally, there is no way to accurately account for how any similarities or differences in the professional experiences of this relatively small group would reflect the experiences of the population of cooperating teachers in the USA much less how they would compare to all cooperating teachers worldwide.

A second limitation is the singular way the data were gathered. An increasing understanding of the subject at hand is gained as more data are gathered in a variety of ways (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998). A lot of opinion and recounting happened during the interviews which lasted approximately 60 minutes each plus the member check follow-up conversations. While more detailed and nuanced information could

come from longer interviews together with other ways of data collection such as review of reflection journals or observation of a larger cohort of cooperating teachers, I believe the interviews presented here adequately contributed to answering the research question.

A third limitation concerns the confidentiality on behalf of the participants and how it affected the analysis of the data. Reporting too much demographic information such as participants' personal identification markers like ages, specific years of teaching in specific grades, cities of employment, and collaboration with differing types of student teachers could compromise their anonymity. I can enforce the protocols and assurances of confidentiality that were approved by the IRB and acknowledged by the participants when they agreed to join the study, but I have no control over participants who may have met and had private conversations about the study. Having a larger and more heterogeneous cohort would address these.

A fourth limitation is my own professional background. At one time or another, I have been all of the roles related in this study: student teacher, cooperating teacher and supervising representative from varied sponsoring institutions. I have taught general education and special education from early childhood through high school in a variety of settings, both public and private, and I have taught a range of education courses in higher education to graduates and undergraduates. Usually this education and experience serves me well in my professional life, but it remains unclear how it affected my interactions as a researcher for this project. My background could have had an influence on how the participants saw me during interviews depending on which parts of my background they knew. Looking from the other side, my background could have affected my own interpretation of their experiences working with student teachers and working with the

teacher preparation program primarily as confirmation bias where unconsciously “I found what I went looking for.” I took this into account by mounting safeguards from the beginning by presenting myself and my purpose of interviewing in as neutral a way possible in order to limit preconceived ideas the participants may have had about what they thought I may have wanted to hear. Some of the participants knew me before the interviews and some did not, and my education or experiences was not wholly known to them. I did not volunteer any information about it so as not to introduce bias on their part. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I maintained a stance of regular reflection on what I was hearing the participants say and what I thought it might mean while doing analysis of the interviews. Building trustworthiness in my reporting in the study was increased by having a “critical friend” read my work (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and for me to debrief with the participants for clarification and suggestions about my use of their interview data. I felt more confident about my interpretation since these measures helped increase the consistency and reliability of data and results in my analysis.

Implications

Teacher preparation programs should take into account what cooperating teachers say about their activities and beliefs regarding student teachers when recruiting for cooperating teachers. Locating experienced teachers who are willing to add another student to their daily teaching routine involves considerable time and energy to find then engage competent and knowledgeable teachers. Recommendations from current or past cooperating teachers is a common and practical route. Prospective teachers should be informed not only of what their peer has done while mentoring but they should also be told about the needs of the sponsoring institution for the student teachers and what the

experience of mentoring has been for a variety of cooperating teachers. Adequate and accurate description of what constitutes being successful cooperating teachers could weed out teachers who have the mistaken idea that having a student teacher is a handy set of hands for making copies and handling discipline problems.

While it can certainly be true that having a student teacher could be an advantage by having someone who can be a help, it needs to be emphasized that the student teachers may in fact know very little in terms of classroom management or motivating students. Their self-confidence may be low and so they could be hesitant to take the necessary leadership role a teacher has. Conversely, they may have a strong sense of confidence but in ways that may prove to be counter-productive. It cannot be assumed that they will know what to do or that it will be done well without supervision. The chances of increased instruction for the cooperating teachers can easily outweigh any "extra" help the student teachers may bring. This needs to be taken into account as one of the participants said about her day at school when she has a student teacher in post-interview conversation, "When I get home, I go to my room after telling my family I need genuine quiet since I have been talking and explaining everything to everybody all day long." Prospective cooperating teachers need to know that they will be teaching adults every day along with their regular room of pupils, and this requires energy, time and planning. The sponsoring institution has an obligation to represent the duties and responsibilities of mentoring new teachers as part of a fulfilling teaching activity that requires attention and constant communication with the student teachers as well as the teacher preparation program.

Student teachers entering in a relationship with a cooperating teacher should have as clear a picture of what to expect as possible. Institutions of higher education are notorious for often promoting an ideal that is divorced from reality. Programs designed with classes, procedures and expectations that were created in the ivory tower are a disservice in many ways to educators and consequently to the pupils they are teaching in their classrooms every day. The experiences of Floyd and Sue come to mind because they were alert to how different their classrooms could be for incoming preservice teacher. In the beginning, Floyd provides them with “something upbeat to go on ‘cause a lot of them come in... a little overwhelmed I’ve noticed because it isn’t completely like they were told.” Sue said the qualities of student teachers should match that of cooperating teachers, “I mean etiquette-- professional etiquette, you know. I think you need to come with that and some of them don’t come with that...I don’t know what some of them are thinking.”

Student teachers are quite naturally expecting to apprentice to master teachers who know what they are doing, and that they will do it well. If the student teachers have taken classes that focus on theoretical and analytical aspect of education at the expense of accompanying information on how to turn theory into practice as a competent teacher, the discord can be jarring. Again Floyd, “I’ve noticed in other rooms [those] who were just not prepared for the reality for what they face, and it’s causing a crisis as they reconsider a career choice as a second-semester senior...that’s a crisis.”

Student teachers need to know what the cooperating teachers expect of them in terms of how they will contribute to the classroom teaching, the pace of demonstrating their new teaching skills and overall professional behavior. The student teachers need to know in what ways they will receive feedback and when they can talk about their

performance for candid critique. They need to have relationships formed with their cooperating teachers in order to feel safe and valued as a learner who is expected to also be a leader to a group of pupils.

Considerations for future study

One of the issues that arose in this study was taking the experiences of this group of eight cooperating teachers and generalizing to a larger group. Having such a small group where all teachers work in one metro area limited the experiences, concerns and successes available for exploration and discussion. A larger sample group would change the dynamics of data collection and analysis. Expanding the number of participants and sampling from different regions of the country would address this so that a more complex understanding of being a cooperating teacher would be deepened. Having a larger sample would also enable comparing subgroups' experiences and rationales for being a cooperating teacher. How are the expectations of general education teachers regarding their preservice teachers similar to or different from the cooperating teachers in special education settings? The teaching and educational needs of these groups can be markedly different just as the differences between primary grades and secondary grades can be.

Other areas of interest are seeing how the experiences of cooperating teachers who have had professional careers and then switched to teaching compare to student teachers who have gone straight into teaching as their first career choice. How would the differences in ages affect their work when mentoring, if at all? The adage applies here that "there is a lid for every pot." Student teachers are a varied lot coming in all different ages, abilities, backgrounds and disciplines as are the cooperating teachers. With the combination of a realistic view of mentoring new teachers and being aware of differences

as strengths that can be shared and built on, people can be paired for success as a student teacher and as a cooperating teacher.

It remains to be seen if stronger and more meaningful outcomes for the student teachers might happen when the expectations for working with a cooperating teacher are more universally understood. More information from the cooperating teachers themselves about what their needs are and what they identify as successful experiences with student teachers could drive the sponsoring teacher preparation programs in higher education to provide the supports needed to retain qualified cooperating teachers.

Conclusion

This study was made possible by a group of master teachers who chose to share their thoughts and ideas about education with me, and they did this free of charge and with no apparent expectation of any kind of reward. No promise of a bonus or a photo shoot. No adulation from a popular television personality with cheering from the audience while they are given a shopping spree for all of their typically ignored time and effort with children – and they did it *anonymously*. What to make of this? Why would they regularly take on so much extra work in their classrooms and then talk to me who really was a stranger to their inner thoughts and motives, and do it with no recognition?

I finished my study with the greatest respect for my participants and their drive to bring new teachers into the world of teaching. Clearly, they have moved deep into personal fulfillment and professional realization. Erik Erikson (1963) identified eight stages of psychological development with the adult seventh stage task being Generativity that is "primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation" (p. 267). Being a teacher implies a reciprocal action between someone with knowledge and

someone in a position to learn. The identity of the teacher as a teacher depends upon having a student to whom information and skills can be imparted; without a student, the teacher cannot teach. A mature person "needs to be needed, and maturity needs guidance as well as encouragement from what has been produced and must be taken care of" (Erikson, 1963, p. 267).

These cooperating teachers simply wanted better things for people and felt that teaching was one way to make that happen, no matter the age of their student or even if it meant more work. Nel Noddings (2012) has researched the connection between care and education, and she wrote about the necessity of teachers being caring from the beginning as part of the complex job of teaching:

I am often asked how they can 'do this' – establish a climate of care – 'on top of all the other demands'. My answer is that establishing such a climate is not 'on top' of other things, it is *underneath* all we do as teachers. When that climate is established and maintained, everything else goes better. (p.777)

I'm heartened that not only are there people who still want to be teachers despite a growing list of mandates and requirements, but there are experienced teachers who want to help them be the best they can be. These new teachers have experienced open-minded and supportive people waiting for them in their schoolrooms, wanting to guide them away from ineffective practices and give them the skills and knowledge to be confident and competent educators. These cooperating teachers know the difference between pie-in-the-sky idealism that is promoted in many venues like politics and the ivory tower, and what the real world of teaching is like. But the most important thing for me was hearing the amount of kindness, patience, and support that is given away every day to anyone

who came to them. The excitement they had in telling me their stories struck a note of hope that anyone wanting to be a good and effective teacher can get valuable help from these dedicated mentors.

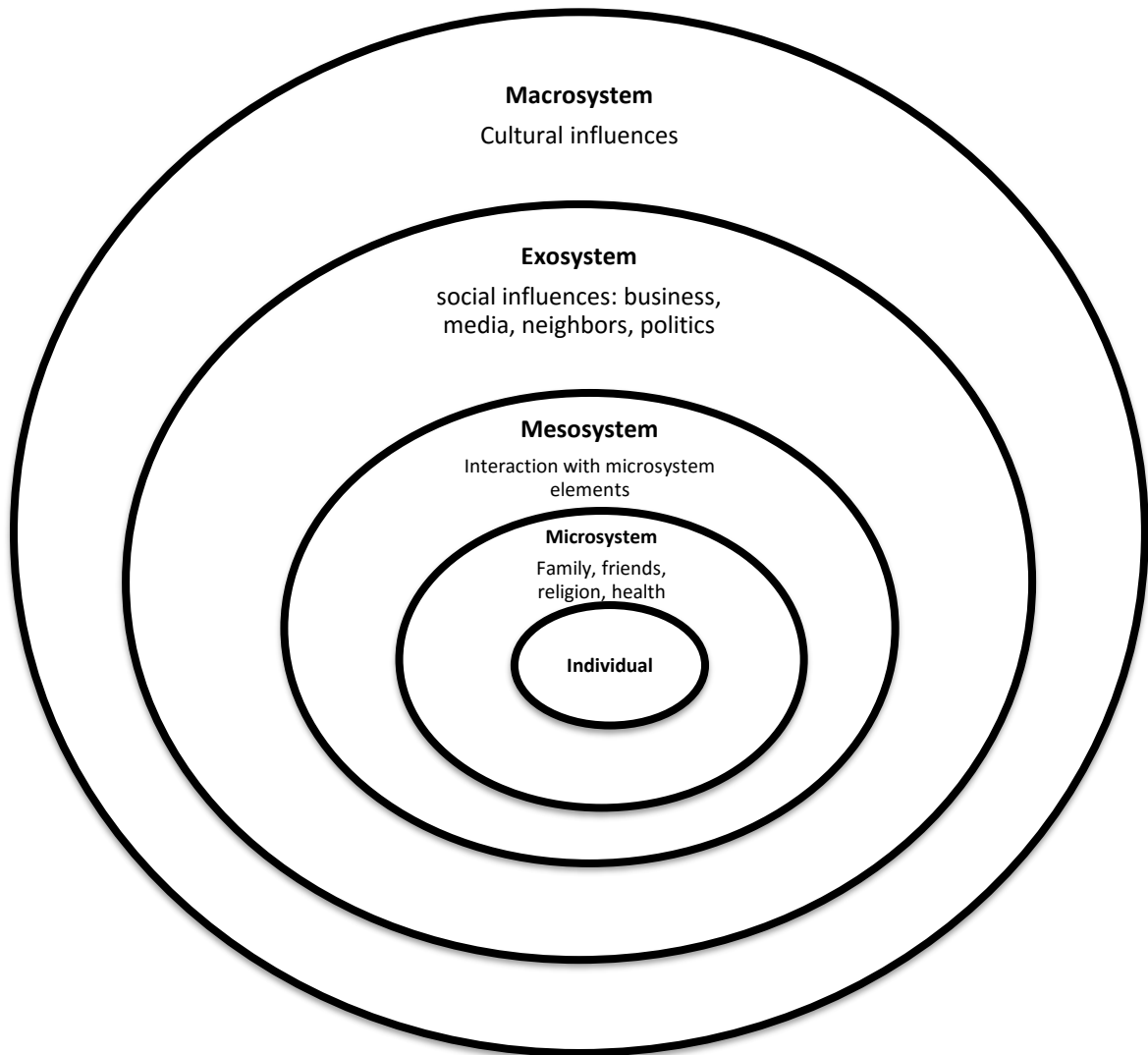


Figure 1. The ecology of human development model of Bronfenbrenner (1977) showing the concentric arrangement of structures with each contained within the next.

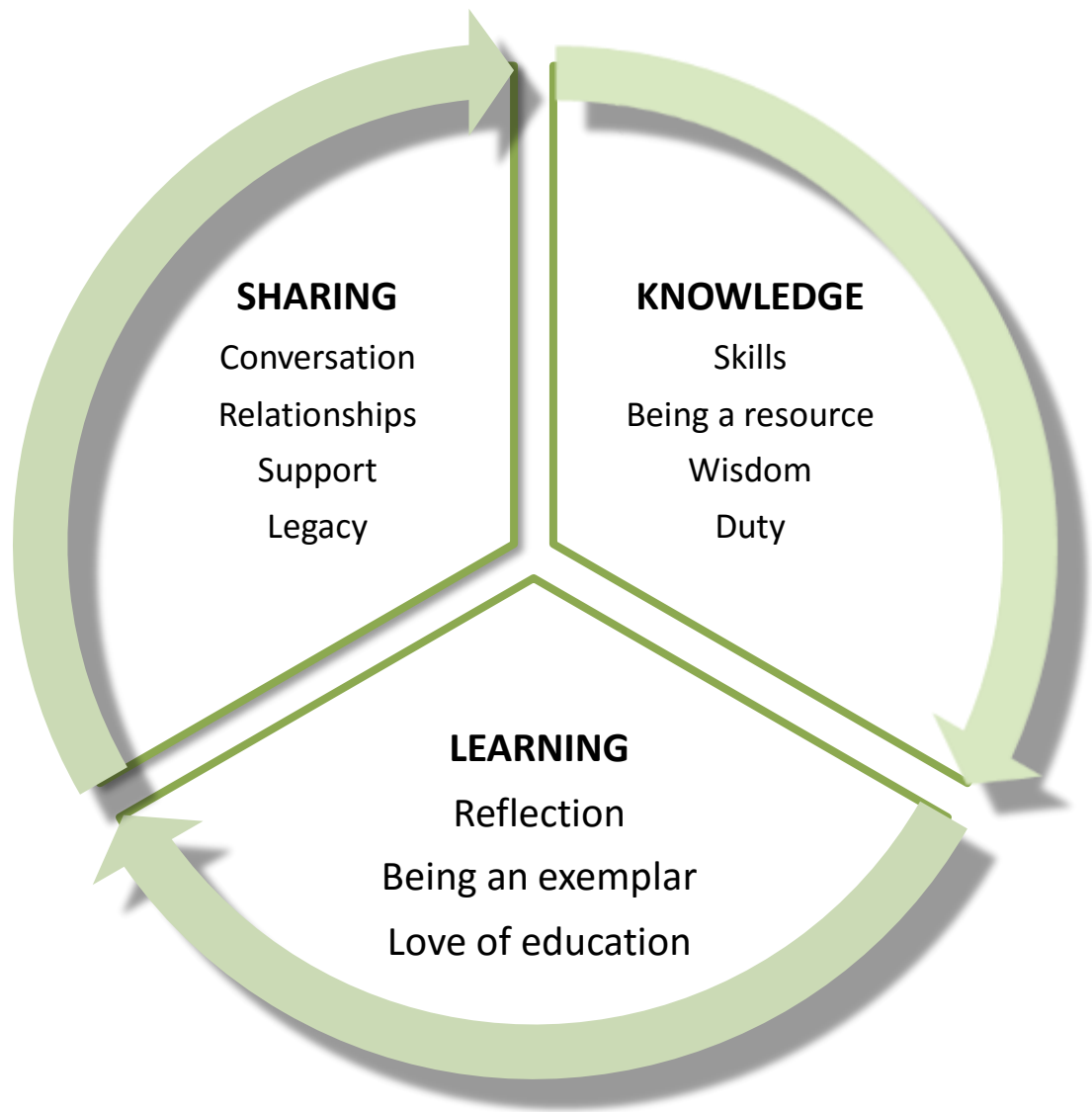


Figure 2. Cooperating teachers' attributes

Appendix A

TRANSCRIPTION KEY FOR INTREVISTAS BILINGÜES RESEARCH PROJECT

Prepared by Julia Scherba de Valenzuela Ph.D.

Use participants' pseudonyms as you transcribe, including for anyone mentioned on the tape (e.g. other family member, therapist, teacher), other than the researchers. If you haven't been provided with a pseudonym for someone, contact Susan or Julia so they can come up with one for that individual. Do not make one up yourself.

- Type EXACTLY
- what you hear and type everything exactly as you hear it. Don't clean up the grammar or what sounds like an error. Use conventional spelling for regionalisms, as below:

| | | |
|----------|---------|----------|
| ○ 'cause | ○ ain't | ○ wanna |
| ○ 'kay | ○ gonna | ○ y'know |
- If you don't understand what someone says, listen to it a couple of times, the back up a bit and play it through (sometimes that helps) and then, if you still can't understand it, put XX, to indicate an unintelligible utterance.
- When one person talks, keep typing in the same paragraph. Don't hit the paragraph return until a new person starts talking.
- Don't use punctuation like you would when you write. When transcribing, punctuation has very specific meanings. For example:
 - Put a period at the end of a phrase that sounds like someone is ending a sentence, when their voice goes down at the end of a sentence.
 - Put a question mark at the end of a sentence which sounds like a question, when their voice goes up at the end of the sentence. It doesn't matter whether it is a question, grammatically. And, if a question doesn't sound like one, where someone's voice doesn't go up at the end of the sentence, don't put a question mark.
 - Don't use dots (...) to indicate that someone trailed off. I will need to use that later to indicate that I deleted part of a quote. Instead, if there is a pause, use a comma.
 - Use a comma to indicate a very significant pause, like where you might feel like you need to use dots (...) but can't because of our previous rule. Don't use a

comma for grammatical purposes if there person hasn't actually paused in their speech.

- Use a dash to indicate when a word is broken off. For example, "w- what" would indicate that someone started to say 'what' but only started it, but then said it again.
- If two people talked on top of each other, put a square bracket ([) at the beginning of when the overlap occurs for the person who is talking and then, put the end bracket (]) at where the overlap starts. You will then do a paragraph return and type in what the second person said who was talking over the first person. That will also be in square brackets. Look at the example below to see how that works.
- If someone is talking along and doesn't stop their flow of conversation but someone else interjects, then you use the = sign to link two parts of the transcript. This tells us that the first person didn't have a break in the conversation, but lets you also indicate where the second person was talking interjecting without overlapping.
- Use double parentheses to indicate a description that you are including. For example, is someone laughs or pounds the table, or snaps their fingers, you would include it as ((laughing)) ((pounds table)) ((snaps fingers)) ((claps hands))
- Use all caps when someone uses a HUGE emphasis on a word.
- If there's a break in the recording, like when the tape is turned over, use double slashes to indicate that. (see below)

Example One

- 1 Barb: ((laughing)) XX
 2 Julia: Yeah people used to say that they a::, thought I was a::, talkative, 'till they met
 3 my family
 4 Barb: Oh really. XX
 5 Julia: Okay well hopefully this will re- yeah I think its recording, yeah
 6 Barb: We can play it back in a second and see if it's
 7 Julia: Yeah, well, it's pickin' up. The little monitor's going
 8 Barb: Okay [XX]
 9 Julia: [Okay, thanks] this: makes it a lot easier for me to transcribe if I'm not taping
 10 questions, uhm do you want to see a copy of the questions I'm gonna ask?
 11 Barb: Yeah yeah
 12 Julia: It makes it easier to follow along.
 13 Barb: [okay]
 14 Julia: [This is] very open ended and we'll just, go though 'em, and, ((chuckles)) and, if
 15 it's okay with you I'd like to interview you:, two more times and then come back to
 16 you at the end. for some. member check.
 17 Barb: M'kay
 18 Julia: So, to see if any of your, ideas about this change, through the whole process like
 19 the thirs time-, the third time I'll interview you would be a:fter, the external reviewers
 20 co:me
 21 Barb: Oh okay

22 Julia: So.

23 Barb: And- the purpose to interview us? Why are you interviewing us?

Example Two

1 Julia: ((microphone noise)) I'm gonna move this closer to you so XX don't get a lot of
2 uhm, fan ((noise in background))

3 Beth: Okay. That's not gonna hurt the, computer. Bill dropped something on it
4 yesterday. ((laughing))

5 Julia: Okay, and you said were, both enlightened and confused. Can you tell me a little
6 more about that?

7 Beth: Uhm, it seemed to me that THIS particular OGS review

Example Three

Julia: Okay. Today is, September 19th I believe? Is that right?

Chris:Uh huh.

Julia: September 19th and I'm interviewing Christine Mitchell for the second round of
questions,=

Chris:M'kay.

Julia: =uhm, prior to the OGS visit. Which will happen next week. WELL, [Dr.
Mitchell=]

Chris:[((laugh))]

Julia: =what do you see as the purpose of this OGS revie

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