Abstract

This dissertation explores the experiences of middle childhood pre-service teachers (PST) across two academic years as they learn to teach English language arts to diverse students from conflicting sociocultural contexts. To help PSTs navigate the tensions across contexts, this study introduced culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014) and ethnographic (Heath & Street, 2008) perspectives in one Middle Childhood Education (MCE) teacher education program and then considered how such a perspective shapes PSTs’ instructional approaches during student teaching. Specifically, this study examines how interactions during “mentoring sessions” between one university supervisor (me) and the PSTs foster a cultural perspective within the PSTs’ conceptual and practical development (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). It also follows the PSTs into their student teaching to consider how PSTs appropriated a cultural perspective during interactions with me as their university supervisor and with their peers into their pedagogical decisions in the classroom.

It is important for the field of teacher education to understand what and how ideas about teaching ELA in diverse classrooms are taught in pre-service teacher education and
how they are taken up by PSTs. Although previous studies have examined some of these conflicting messages that PST must consider, there is a need to study how these conflicts get taken up interactionally (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005) to better understand the moments in which teacher educators can learn how to support PSTs in becoming reflective teachers with a deep commitment to all of their students. By focusing in on how learning is constructed during specific interactions and then zooming out to consider the larger settings and people that are reflected in and constructions of these interactions, this study provides significant theoretical and pedagogical implications for the field of English teacher education.
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Publications


Fields of Study

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Chapter 1: The Challenges of Learning to Teach English Language Arts

Whether based in experience as teachers or presented in academic research, educators understand that pre-service teachers’ (PST) evolving beliefs about teaching and learning English language arts (ELA) are shaped by often competing, if not conflicting, messages about so-called “urban schools” and the students who attend them. Accordingly, it is important for the field of teacher education to understand what and how ideas about teaching ELA in diverse classrooms are taught in pre-service teacher education and how they are taken up by PSTs. Although previous studies have examined some of these conflicting messages PST must consider, there is a need to study how these conflicts get taken up interactionally (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005) to better understand the moments in which teacher educators can learn how to support PSTs in becoming reflective teachers with a deep commitment to all of their students. This is especially important work when the conflicts are shaped by issues of race, culture, and social justice.

This dissertation is about introducing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014) and ethnographic tools (Frank, 1999; Heath & Street, 2008) in one Middle Childhood Education (MCE) teacher education program and then considering how such a perspective shapes PSTs’ instructional approaches during student teaching. Specifically, this study examines how interactions between their university supervisor (me) and the PSTs during “mentoring sessions” foster a cultural perspective within the
middle school PSTs’ conceptual and practical development (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999) across two academic years. It also considers how PSTs appropriated a cultural perspective during interactions with me as their university supervisor and with their peers during student teaching. As a university supervisor interested in fostering a cultural perspective in the work of PSTs, I understand some of the challenges of this work, as well as the challenges that teachers who work in under-resourced urban middle schools often encounter. Schools have long been institutions designed to ignore students’ cultural differences and regard them as irrelevant to their learning and literacy practices (Florio-Ruane, 2001). In many ways, the prevalence of and increased pressures related to standardized curriculums and testing have contributed to uniform ideas about teaching and learning in schools (Fecho, Falter, & Hong, 2016). But as notions of “literacy” have expanded to account for our increasingly diverse society and variety of texts within it (e.g. Street, 2005), teacher education programs must also prepare teachers who understand how students’ attitudes toward school and academic learning are framed by culture. That is, what students value, and the lives they lead both in and out of schooling.

Few studies have been conducted to explore how ethnographic methods might be used to highlight the relationships between PSTs’ learning and cultural perspectives (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Frank, 1999; Lewis, Psycher, & Stutelberg, 2015), and even less have explored how teacher education might be accomplished within such a framework. Much of the research (Conaway, Browning, & Purdum-Cassidy, 2007; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006) on understanding how PSTs adopt a cultural perspective about teaching, learning, and students focuses on PSTs’ self-reported claims about what they say or believe about their learning (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). However, few studies
follow the experiences of PSTs over time to understand how they appropriate these understandings into their teaching practices as they interact with teacher educators, classroom teachers, and students with differing experiences with and knowledge of specific content areas such as English language arts. Specifically, teacher education has very few studies about the role of discourse among university supervisors and PSTs in supporting PSTs’ appropriation of conceptual and practical tools for teaching (Grossman et al., 1999). This dissertation is an effort to continue and extend this conversation about PST learning and development over time.

A Need for a Cultural Perspective in Teacher Education

While the cultural makeup of the teaching force has remained largely the same (Snyder, deBrey, & Dillow, 2016), the diversity of the students that they teach is more varied than ever (Dalton, Sable, & Hoffman, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). This demographic divide between teachers and students has been the cause of concern and research in teacher education since the 1990s (Banks & Banks, 1993; Nieto, 2000). As the U.S. has long been a country of immigrants, the divide existed in previous decades as well. Since the predominantly white, middle class teachers in U.S. schools can impact their students’ participation and success in the wider society (Florio-Ruane, 2001), it is imperative that they understand and engage their students in conversations around of issues of power, language, and culture. As a part of this understanding, “it is vital that teachers and teacher educators explore their own beliefs and attitudes about non-White and non-middle class people” (Delpit, 1995, p. 179) and try to understand the perspectives of others before making judgments about them. Schools have often served as institutions designed to socialize or assimilate students into a standardized way of
thinking and acting, which prioritizes certain values and types of knowledge over others. “Because teachers and teacher educators are enmeshed in a web of shared knowledge, relationships, and practices sustaining this status quo, teacher education tends to be a weak intervention into teachers’ default beliefs about diversity” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 34).

Adopting a “cultural perspective” towards teaching and learning is to study the human experience and to understand that in doing so, individuals actively create meaning and culture (Geertz, 1983). Rather than naming and categorizing culture by a set of defining characteristics, I draw from Geertz and maintain that it is a process made up of many contextually situated actions and interactions in which individuals create meaning to identify themselves as part of various groups. Culture was manifested in various ways in this study. For instance, as the teacher education program and I worked to foster a cultural perspective of teaching with PSTs, it established a particular culture in our group as PSTs were continuously constructing notions about the culture of teaching. By adopting a cultural perspective, I aimed to help PSTs interrogate how their own histories shaped their ideas about teaching, what their roles are as ELA educators, and what that means for the language they use and the pedagogical decisions that they make in their classrooms. In attempting to foster a cultural perspective in PSTs, I was guided by an understanding that teaching occurs within a particular historical and social moment and is embedded within nested layers of context, including the social and academic structures of the classroom; the history and norms of teaching and learning at the school; and the attitudes, values, beliefs, and language uses of the community and its web of historical, political, and social relationships to the school (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 504).
Within the context of teacher education, the purpose of adopting a cultural perspective is to show PSTs “that differences do make a difference in school, especially as they confer or deny privilege and power” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 26). By considering the narratives and experiences of themselves and others, PSTs begin “a process of reflection and re-construction that places [them] on the threshold of development” (Salvio, 1990, p. 288). This development occurs when teachers take the time to consider the tensions between beliefs, or “wobble” moments, for the purposes of contemplating new perspectives about practice (Fecho et al., 2016). In doing so, they move away from categorical and estranged generalizations and notions of culture to a more personal understanding, which includes a recognition of the range of experiences and emotions that help to create one’s culture. The interactions between me, as university supervisor, and the PSTs in this study show how viewing teaching and learning from a cultural perspective requires sustained work across time and settings – a situation that is not always prioritized or considered in teacher education programs.

The “Problem” of Teacher Education

As teacher education research begins to study the sociocultural contexts for learning to teach, it is important to recognize that the purposes, desired content, and overall benefits of teacher education have been and continue to be widely contested (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Of the criticisms, a lack of understanding and consistency regarding the types of knowledge necessary for quality teaching and a disjuncture between the university and K-12 schools where PSTs are placed are among the most common. The problem of teacher education has led to numerous calls for reform, enactments of various policies, and foci of teacher education research all aimed at
improving the preparation of teachers, and ultimately, the teaching and learning in our nation’s schools. With the current proposed legislation to track the effectiveness of teacher education programs (The Washington Post, 2014) and more portfolio-based assessments to evaluate PSTs like the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), universities are under even more scrutiny, and thus, understanding the issues and intricacies involved in learning to teach is of renewed and increased attention.

Specific to issues of addressing race in teacher education, due to heightened racial violence in the U.S., national literacy organizations have begun to take a stand. They have advocated for research on the teaching of ELA rooted in “anti-racist scholarship, particularly research that might shape more equitable educational practices for children and youth of color” (Literacy Research Association, 2016, p. 2). Although a great deal of research in teacher education largely examined only the structural and logistical aspects of programs and experiences, within the last 20 years some researchers have shifted their concerns to what and how PSTs learn, which is made evident in their teaching practices (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

**Challenges of Field Experiences**

Despite (and included in) the controversies surrounding teacher education programs, field experiences\(^1\) have long been considered as central in learning how to teach (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2010; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE],

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this study, I consider field experiences to be PSTs’ placements in local schools, including those that occur before student teaching and the official student teaching experience.
Perhaps just as valuable is utilizing field experiences to support PSTs’ learning about cultural awareness and responsiveness in their pedagogical practices. Studies have demonstrated that they help PSTs “develop deeper understandings about the role of culture in students’ lives…, greater awareness about the presence of cultural difference in classrooms…, more positive beliefs about urban students and communities…, and/or more sophisticated competencies in working with diverse students” (Anderson & Stillman, 2013, p. 45).

While the opportunity for deep and intense learning exists in field experiences, field experiences can also initiate or perpetuate PSTs’ cultural biases if the experience is not coupled with guidance and reflection (Dressman, 1998). Classrooms are often open to criticism from outsiders who may not understand the complexities of the school and classroom contexts (Frank & Uy, 2004). For example, in my work within the MCE program that is the focus of this study, I observed that rather than using “close observation as a frame of reference” (Frank & Uy, 2004, p. 269), PSTs can be quick to judge negatively their students, mentor teachers, and the schools in which they are teaching. The MCE program in the large research university in which I conducted this research has a partnership with an urban school district in a mid-sized Midwestern city that permits all the PSTs to be assigned to the district’s middle schools. The PSTs often come from different worlds and cultures than their students, and such different backgrounds, as I will describe, may lead to limited understanding and stereotypical evaluations of people and communities. Additionally, PSTs who have not reflected on their own culture and that of their students, may have goals of transforming their students, which can prove to be problematic for various reasons.
The tensions that PSTs face in teaching students from different backgrounds can cause them to make ungrounded judgments and seek easy solutions to the “problems” that they perceive about their students’ funds of knowledge (Moll, 2014), learning process, family involvement, etc. Cultural differences are often viewed as deficits. However, preventing this limited and problematic way of thinking about teaching and learning, issues of diversity and cultural awareness cannot be addressed monolithically in single areas of teacher education programs, such as field experiences or a single course (Deering & Stanutz, 1995). Instead, culture must be a part of all aspects of the teacher education program, particularly in the discursive exchanges between university supervisors and their PSTs during field placements in order to bridge the divide between understanding and application. Given that the supervisor and PSTs have the possibility of establishing a relationship with each other throughout one full school year and across coursework, field experiences, and student teaching, these contexts allow multiple opportunities for ethnographic methods to be utilized across spaces, events, and time. As knowledge is constructed interactionally (Bloome, et al., 2005), and learning to teach from a cultural perspective involves questioning, challenging, and reconsidering the connections between language, culture, and power (Cochran-Smith, 1991), the discursive nature of the relationship between university supervisor and PSTs can allow for deep and meaningful learning to occur. For example, as PSTs are introduced to new concepts and practical tools for teaching ELA, it becomes imperative that they engage interactionally with a mentor or someone to guide them through the complexities of applying them to the classroom (Smagorinsky, 2013).
Learning to Teach Through Ethnographic Methods

The use of ethnographic methods to teach PSTs in this study is warranted by the idea that it is important for PSTs to suspend judgment and refrain from making instructional decisions without knowing about the experiences of middle school students in the classrooms that they observe and teach. In turn, as PSTs use ethnographic methods to examine their own perspectives and histories as well as those of their students, mentors, and schools, they learn how viewpoints inevitably shape beliefs about teaching and what gets enacted in the classroom. As these viewpoints may also conflict with those of their students, it is important to examine how power is circulated (Rex & Schiller, 2009) in the classroom and the implications of this for teaching and learning.

This study aimed to help PSTs socially construct and challenge what is assumed about knowledge and literacy for their students and the schools in which they teach. As part of learning from a cultural perspective, I asked PSTs to question their positioning in the classroom and that of their students. In doing so, both formal and informal discussions during field experiences and student teaching seminars, after classroom observations, and ethnographic interviews focused on issues of cultural relevancy with regards to ELA instruction. Street (1995) argued that some texts and literacy practices more closely represent and privilege dominant ways of doing and being literate than others. Asking “questions of who can do or say what, when, where, under what circumstances, for what purposes can also support teachers in understanding issues of equity and social justice and help them explore ‘other ways of being’” (Frank, 1999, p. 14). Issues of power are layered within various aspects of PSTs’ student teaching experiences. They often feel powerless in the schools in decision-making processes and
in their abilities to help their students. On the other hand, they also possess power “over” their students in that they have knowledge and ways of thinking and speaking that are privileged in our society, whereas many of their students do not.

I used ethnographic methods to study the experiences of two groups of PSTs across one year each but I also taught the same PSTs how to use ethnographic methods and perspectives to support them in making curricular and instructional decisions that help students from diverse and minority populations achieve academic success. Drawing on ideas from Green and Bloome (1983), Heath (1982), and Zaharlick and Green (1991), I define ethnography as the intensive, extended study of a group of people that is theoretically and culturally driven and aims to understand their ways of doing and knowing. The researcher is both a participant and an observer (Hymes, 1982) and asks questions pertaining to how issues of power impact relationships and ways of doing. The researcher constantly refers back to the research questions and theoretical framework through the data collection process to (a) revise questions, assumptions, and definitions, (b) detect patterns and trends in the data, and (c) compare these trends and observations with literature on the topic. As a teacher education researcher I used ethnographic methods by immersing myself in PSTs’ teacher education program and relevant opportunities for learning to teach over the full cycle of the year-long MCE program for two groups of PSTs. In year one I worked to understand PSTs’ perspectives and experiences in learning to teach students from cultures different than their own. Then in year two, I saw the need for a more deliberate mentoring curriculum rooted in ethnographic methods, such as teaching PSTs to conduct observations over time and use interviews to understand others for the purpose of learning more about their students’
cultures to improve their teaching. The two phases of this study are outlined in further detail in Chapter Three.

**Studying How Pre-Service Teachers Learn to Teach English Language Arts**

**The Challenge of Teaching English Language Arts**

English language arts is a subject area that is often contested and filled with ambiguity, causing confusion for beginning and experienced teachers alike. Canonical versus young adult literature, expressivist versus more formal approaches to teaching writing, and grammar and vocabulary as integrated or isolated instruction, are among the many debated contraries in ELA. For PSTs learning to teach, this means that they must first understand that there is a range of conceptual and practical tools (Grossman et al., 1999) available for teaching ELA that are valued differently in various settings. In addition, through their experiences across activity settings, they need to identify what is valued by different stakeholders, as well as to conceptualize what is personally important to them and their instructional approaches as they are socialized into the profession. As PSTs learn more about the culture of their schools and students in their field experiences, they should also make pedagogical decisions that align with the schools’ and students’ needs and goals (Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson & Fry, 2003). The vast range of often conflicting knowledge within the ELA content and the choices that PSTs must make regarding the ambiguities and goals of varying people and ideologies as they move from university course work to schools and classrooms can cause great tension for PSTs as they are learning to teach.
Adopting a Cultural Perspective for Teaching ELA

Scholars have argued that traditional teacher education programs are not effectively preparing PSTs to work with diverse populations (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). To address this concern, and as schools are becoming increasingly diverse, teacher education research over the past two decades has focused on teacher preparation for diverse contexts has exponentially increased (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Some scholars have argued that PSTs adopt a commitment to multicultural education in stages (Paccione, 2000) based on the notion that learning to teach is part of a continuous and regular arc. Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, and Haviland (2009) found it to be a more uneven and individualized process characterized by “insights and understandings expressed on one occasion erased by lapses on another and instances of reflective thinking intermingled with essentializing assumptions” (p. 843-44). Considering the transformation of self that may be necessary towards truly adopting a cultural perspective towards teaching and learning (Nieto, 2000), understanding PSTs’ experiences is a central tenet of this study. Pre-service teachers’ appropriation of ideas about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective were examined at the group and individual level, focused on how their transformations, confusions, and regressions were evident in their teaching practices during student teaching. However, the field still has limited understanding of how PSTs adopt and appropriate ideas about teaching from a cultural perspective in their urban and high-needs school contexts.

Tensions Among Activity Settings

Pre-service teachers inevitably learn to teach from and within a variety of settings. Their apprenticeships of observation (Lortie, 1975), university courses, and field
experiences all shape their existing and evolving ideas about the role of culture, learning language in teaching. While these varying contexts can provide PSTs with many experiences for developing a foundation of conceptual and practical tools for teaching (Grossman et al., 1999), numerous activity settings with differing goals can also be problematic to PSTs’ development. Conflicting ideas about what or how to teach can be confusing for PSTs and contribute to PSTs choosing the goals or ideas of one setting over another. However, the tensions between activity settings and their impact on PSTs’ evolving philosophies about teaching can also provide a site for learning, that is, if these tensions are examined and discussed with others (Alsup, 2006; Fecho et al., 2016). The empirical and theoretical literature on how PSTs learn and experience tension from a variety of settings is expanded upon in Chapter Two.

**Learning from the University Supervisor**

Although the role of the university supervisor is to guide PSTs so that each experience and activity setting is optimized for better learning, this is yet another area of teacher education in which the field has limited knowledge and understanding (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Through interactions between the university supervisor and the PSTs, the supervisor can serve to challenge PSTs and support them in moments of confusion as they appropriate a cultural perspective towards teaching and learning. The university supervisor can create activity settings to enrich and positively contribute to PSTs’ repertoire of instructional strategies, but there are significant difficulties in doing so. One of these is the “two-worlds pitfall” of thought and action, in which PSTs need help in understanding how to bridge ideas about teaching with actions in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1985). As PSTs are exposed to a variety of teaching problems,
strategies, and goals for learning, they “need instruction in judging ways of doing and in adapting them to particular settings as well as to their own capacities” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 178). As there are tensions among settings, teacher educators, such as the university supervisor, can help PSTs develop a sense of agency with regards to their teaching and bridge the divide between understanding and application (e.g. Newell & Connors, 2011). As there is scant research on the relationship between the university supervisor and PSTs and the activities that they engage as a part of this mentoring (e.g. Zeichner, Liston, Mahlio, & Gomez, 1988), this study also contributes to this lack of understanding in teacher education.

**How Pre-Service Teachers Learn to Teach ELA with a Cultural Perspective Across Time**

This study addresses four problems: (1) the lack of understanding of how PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective in teacher education might shape their learning to teach in culturally diverse schools, (2) the tensions across teacher education settings such as the university classroom and the school, (3) the vagaries of the role of the university supervisor in supporting PSTs’ learning to teach in complex and often conflicting sociocultural contexts, and (4) the challenges of teaching ELA within a context of high-stakes testing, teacher accountability, and under-resourced urban schools. To consider these interrelated challenges, I studied PSTs’ interactions during “mentoring sessions” and then traced the consequences of these sessions on PSTs’ uptake of conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA during their student teaching. In other words, by examining the discourse around cultural perspectives of teaching, and then PSTs’ subsequent pedagogical decisions as shaped by conceptual knowledge, I highlight the
juxtaposition between what PSTs said and did, thus contributing understanding to the four problems described above.

**Research Questions and Terminology**

I entered this study curious about the nature of interactions with PSTs, specifically mentoring sessions, and their influence on PSTs’ learning to teach ELA from various settings. As I began to notice the tensions that they experienced in learning to teach students different from themselves, I was interested in using the mentoring sessions to create a curriculum for teaching ethnographic perspectives. As such, the overarching question for this study was: What happens when one university supervisor guides pre-service ELA teachers to engage ethnographic perspectives when learning to teach urban middle childhood students? Because I conceptualize teacher learning to occur through interactions across spaces and time, understanding the ways in which PSTs’ discourse impacted their pedagogical decisions that they made during student teaching was of significance. The three specific research questions guiding this study included:

1. **What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA instruction occurred?**
   What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective?

2. **Within these settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?**

3. **How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation**
debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’ understandings of a cultural perspective?

Some of the key terminology used in this research study have been defined and taken up in a variety of ways by scholars in the field. As such, I have indicated how I am using the terms below. As terms are not defined every time in use throughout this paper, this table serves as a reference for the meaning of the terms as I am conceptualizing them.

Table 1.1

*Research Study Terminology*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse schools</td>
<td>Schools that have students who represent a variety of racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Or schools that have students representing primarily one background, but which that is different than the dominant cultural group in the U.S. — white, middle class, English speaking, Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Talk and nonverbal cues that individuals use to engage with each other and construct meaning and identities for themselves, others, and the world around them, which are influenced by the past and future too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>A view of the lived world shaped by history and social interaction (Geertz, 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural perspective</td>
<td>Particular to understanding students and learning, a cultural perspective asks PSTs to consider how students’ lives, backgrounds, and ways doing and thinking have value and how, as teachers, they can show this understanding of students and learning in their teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic tools</td>
<td>Tools such as extended observation and questioning for the purpose of gaining perspective and understanding, rather than for evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic talk</td>
<td>A focus on the function of talk as participants act and react to each other, thereby creating and resolving tensions within themselves and between each other (Nystrand, 1997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dissertation Outline*

In Chapter One, I provided some context for my research problem and outlined the research problems and questions that I will address in this dissertation. In Chapter
Two, I articulate a theoretical framework for learning how to teach through interactions with others and review the literature about learning to teach ELA in diverse settings. In Chapter Three, I discuss my research methodology in detail, which is complementary to how I am theorizing PST learning. This includes descriptions of the research sites and my case study participants, and then an examination of data collection and data analysis for each research question. In Chapter Four, I describe the principal learning settings from which PSTs appropriated tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective and the tools that were valued in these settings. These settings include their MCE foundational courses and ELA methods course, the field placement sites and the case study mentor teachers that represented these, and mentoring sessions with peers and me as their university supervisor. As I examine the mentoring sessions, I consider how the interactions in these spaces influenced PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective in teaching ELA. Then in Chapter Five, I highlight the experiences of three case study PSTs to consider how they learned and appropriated tools within the contexts of ELA classrooms and post-observation debriefing sessions. Finally in Chapter Six, I review the findings and then discuss the implications that this work has for research in English teacher education.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Frame

As the research questions and aims of this study interrogate how PSTs learn to teach ELA from a cultural perspective in urban schools, it is important to consider the topics of teacher education settings, learning through interactions, and teaching ELA through conceptual and practical tools in the review of literature. These separate, but intersecting areas of research provide a means for conceptualizing the current study, developing data analytic procedures, and considering significant and new understandings about learning to teach ELA in sociocultural contexts that the PST are entering for the first time. The theoretical framing and review of literature in this study help to highlight how discourse is used to support learning and is a reflection of the values, motives, and histories that are a part of the various settings from which PSTs learn to teach. Beyond emphasizing the role of talk in learning to teach, this chapter also highlights other factors inherent in ELA teacher education that mediate the process of learning how to teach, such as numerous settings with conflicting expectations and the ever-changing and increasingly standardized field of ELA teaching. As language is embedded with varying values, motives, and histories, the study’s multiple foci, or units of analysis, are important towards developing a complex understanding of the process of learning how to teach ELA from a cultural perspective. I will first briefly review the fields of teacher education, teaching in diverse classrooms, and teaching ELA and then discuss the theoretical framework that I used to conceptualize this work.
Review of Research on Learning to Teach ELA in Diverse Classrooms

The collective research on understanding the fields of teacher education settings, learning through interactions, and learning to teach ELA from conceptual and practical tools has been conceptualized – in terms of theory, methodology, and analysis – in a multitude of ways. In the following sections, I will review the research as it pertains to my three research questions. First, I will consider the literature on programmatic and policy developments in teacher education, which connects to my first research question on the principal learning settings in English teacher education. Next I provide literature on the importance of mentoring and learning through talk, which aligns with my second question on understanding how PSTs learn through interactions. Finally, I consider the literature on how PSTs appropriate tools and concepts into their teaching despite the limited base of research in this area. This review of research will examine how learning to teach ELA in diverse classrooms has been conceptualized in various ways and how these variations contribute to the field and provide directions for future research.

Question #1: Review of Literature on Principal Teacher Education Settings

Research in teacher education. Research in the field of teacher education has seen dramatic shifts since the 1960s, when it was first largely recognized as a field of research. The focus of research in teacher education has been based on the political climate at the time and how we might address the “problem” of teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Teacher education was first defined as a training problem, so research was largely conducted to understand what “good” teachers do (e.g., Carroll, 1963; Doyle, 1986; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974) that relied on a process-product approach aimed at understanding teacher effectiveness. Grounded in a relatively
positivistic perspective that relied on counting observable behaviors in classrooms so that researchers would know what good teachers do so that they might train future teachers to replicate these behaviors, process-product research dominated teacher education studies through the 1970s and 1980s. Research then gravitated towards conceptualizing teacher education as a learning problem (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005), which focused on the types of knowledge that teachers need to know, one of which that Shulman (1986) described as pedagogical content knowledge. In our current era of standardized, portfolio-based, and high-stakes assessments, teacher education has largely been considered a policy problem (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). As a result, policies and legislation have been centered around creating teaching and learning standards and program entry requirements at the university level, mirroring similar moves in the standardization of K-12 education, aimed at improving teacher quality. In spite of efforts to understand the impact of these policies on PST learning (e.g., Dover & Schultz, 2016), research in teacher education has shifted and circulated among differing ideas of what teachers should know and be able to do, opening the field to criticism on the grounds that because it does not have a stable knowledge base, it is inadequately preparing teachers for the realities of teaching in K-12 classrooms today (Grossman, 2008).

**Research on learning to teach in diverse classrooms.** The field of research on learning to teach in diverse classrooms has also evolved considerably in the past few decades. Prior to the 1990s, there was very little research about teaching in diverse classrooms. However, since then, perhaps due to an increasingly diverse student population in the U.S. and emphasis on inclusive teaching practices, there has been a proliferation of this work (Hollins & Guzman, 2005) fostered by current conditions in
U.S. schools related to the disparities in the quality of education as shaped by tracking, the hidden curriculum, and the demographic divide between teachers and students. Given the stakes for children from urban communities, there is now a clear rationale for why teachers need to be prepared to recognize the inequities in schools and our society and understand how they can make changes in their teaching to more appropriately prepare all students to meet the demands of and make changes in our world today. The prevalence of research related to culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1996) multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 1995), critical multiculturalism (Sleeter & May, 2011), teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991), and humanizing research (Paris & Winn, 2014) are examples of how research in understanding how PSTs learn to teach from varying backgrounds has been conceptualized and coined in various ways.

There is no one set of practices that one can replicate to teach an openness to and acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity, but strong work in this area can come about as PSTs, in-service teachers, and teacher educators work together to consider and challenge our own assumptions and values about culture, learning, and literacy, which allows us to “construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways” (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 495). Multicultural teacher education has been taken up in university coursework and through the use of field experiences to allow PSTs to work with diverse populations. However, field experiences aimed at showing PSTs how to teach diverse populations without coursework grounded in multicultural education, are not effective in altering the cultural sensitivity of PSTs. Instead, they can steer them towards encouraging assimilation of students into mainstream ways of thinking and learning aligned with a deficit view of students’
differences (Deering & Stanutz, 1995; Goodwin, 1997). Therefore, incorporated into all aspects of teacher education, is fostering PSTs’ knowledge of self, knowledge of students, and the knowledge of how to continue to learn in teaching (Banks et al., 2005). Within this knowledge of self, PSTs are often encouraged to reflect on and question their own personal narratives and autobiographies and how they are constructed by culture (Florio-Ruane, 2001). Knowledge of students should include recognizing students’ skills and experiences as assets or resources, rather than deficits (Kinloch, 2011; Paris, 2012) and understanding how to construct knowledge with students based on these assets. PSTs should engage in practices where they are “expected to construct their own emerging theories of teaching and learning, call into question conventional practices, write about their work, and participate with their experienced mentors as inquiring professionals” (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 305). While culturally relevant pedagogy or multicultural education do not have a set of strategies that PSTs can learn and apply in all classrooms, these elements within courses and field experiences can help prepare PSTs to engage in the critical work that is inherent in this learning process.

While multicultural teacher education can be significant towards helping PSTs learn to teach students of diverse backgrounds, there are many challenges of this work. For example, the differing worlds of the university and K-12 schools can be evident in the goals versus actual practices of teacher educators. Teaching with a multicultural perspective could be interpreted as “‘missionary work’ if the intended goals and motivations are not interrogated” (Haddix, 2015, p. 46). Additionally, by emphasizing a narrative of difference, it can circulate the idea that difference is a deficit (Haddix, 2015) or an obstacle to overcome (Greenleaf, Hull & Reilly, 1994). There is a lack of clarity in
much of the research in this field about the context in which it was being conducted (Hollins & Guzman, 2005) and what is local and specific to the setting and what is not, which provides directions for future research.

**Research on learning to teach ELA.** Research in the field of ELA teaching has also seen significant changes over the years that have come about as conceptualizations of literacy, language, and learning have been reconceptualized (Bloome, 2003). English teacher education has evolved over the years by allowing for more expansive notions of literacy, texts, and language, and moving from psychological notions of learning to sociocultural theories that consider contexts and conditions for learning (Brass, 2015). There is great potential within the content area of ELA for teachers and students to use texts and discourse to challenge existing conditions in our society, better understand the perspectives of others, and use written and oral communication to construct new possibilities for our future.

As our school populations are becoming increasingly diverse and as the field broadens its conceptualizations of literacy, notions of what it means to teach ELA are also changing. “Thus, the possibilities of teaching the English language arts are no longer confined to educational psychologies or the traditional ‘tri-pod’ of literature, language, and writing (Applebee, 1974; Elbow, 1990)” (Brass, 2015, p. 11). As there is increased attention towards understanding how cultural identity affects how students think, read, write, and speak (Rosen & Abt-Perkins, 2000), the field is shifting to understand how differing interpretations and representations of knowledge can be fostered and encouraged in the classroom, despite the increasing presence and pressure of standards-based curriculums (Appleman, 2015a; Brass, 2015; Fecho et al., 2016).
While the open curriculum of ELA can provide PSTs the autonomy to make pedagogical decisions based on the needs of their students, it also can provide confusion as PSTs are faced with navigating the purpose of these choices. As Newell, Gingrich and Beumer-Johnson (2001) argue about this effect on teacher education, “the problem of preparing teachers is compounded by the difficulty of pinning down just what is meant by English as a subject area” (p. 304). ELA is a subject area that is often contested and fraught with ambiguity, causing confusion for beginning and even experienced teachers. For instance, at one level teachers may assume that students in middle and high school already know how to read and write and that teaching these skills is reserved for elementary teachers. Instead, the role of middle and secondary ELA teachers is to facilitate literary discussions and use reading and writing as tools for thinking (Harste & Carey, 2003). Yet there remains a strong and persistent basic skills movement within the field of ELA concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with teaching the “mechanics” and structures of traditional grammar, formulaic writing, and reading comprehension that has been reinforced by what Hillocks (2002) terms the “testing trap.” This “pedagogical schizophrenia” (Appleman, 2015b, p. 184) that ELA teachers experience with their curriculum and instruction can be daunting. The conflicting messages regarding how to frame ELA instruction, such as approaches to writing instruction (Johnson et al., 2003) or organizing a literature curriculum (Appleman, 2015b), can leave PSTs unsure of how to teach. This often ultimately leads PSTs to appropriate the practices of the settings that are most influential (Johnson et al., 2003), thereby helping them to manage the “survival state” that is often inherent in student teaching.
Despite the ever-increasing standards-based curriculum and high-stakes assessments in K-12 settings, understanding the impact that these may have on ELA methods courses has not been the focus of recent research (Pasternak et al., 2014). In fact, there has been “little research on how English teacher preparation is changing to meet the curricular, cultural, political, and economic challenges faced by the ELA discipline, its teachers and its teacher educators” (p. 174). The field of English teacher education has explored what and how PSTs learn to teach, but it would benefit from a more complex understanding of this made evident by an increased focus on how this learning is constructed through interactions, particularly with the influence of standards-based education and high-stakes assessments at both the K-12 school and university levels.

**Learning to teach ELA in diverse settings.** Although progress has been made in the separate fields of teacher education, teaching in diverse classrooms, and teaching ELA beginning in the second half of the 20th century, more research is needed to explore the intersections between these three fields. The work of teaching ELA in diverse classrooms has been practically achieved in a variety of ways. By engaging students in critical literacy analysis (Freebody & Luke, 1990) in the teaching of literature, teachers and students have explored what is included and left out of texts and questioned the ideological foundations of the texts (Haddix & Rojas, 2011). Additionally, by considering alternate forms of expression and literacy practices, such as performance of plays (Winn, 2011), poems (Jocson & Cooks, 2011), and hip-hop, (Kim, 2011), teachers have solicited students’ stories who are often not asked to share them, thereby fostering empathy, understanding, dialogue, and reflection (Winn, 2011). This work can and should be a part of all ELA classrooms, as all students are diverse and differ from their teacher and
classmates in varying ways, and there is no one set of practices that can be applied to teach culturally responsive practices (Ladson-Billings, 1996). Their use in urban classrooms in particular have been documented as pedagogically sound practices (Haddix & Rojas, 2011), but all teachers should consider the languages, histories, and assets of their own students and conceptualize literacy events, learning, and classroom culture based on this understanding.

As political and social change has inevitably impacted classrooms and schools, however, there are numerous challenges to and conflicting opinions of this work. While the texts being used in ELA classrooms are beginning to shift to mirror our increasingly diverse students (Desai, 1997; Lytle, 2006), the teaching of these texts also needs to change to reflect the types of students in our classrooms and the experiences and ideologies of the authors of the texts. As Appleman (2015b) suggests, “we cannot simply change the texts that are taught; we must change how they are taught” (p. 182). To engage in this work, teachers need the autonomy to construct a curriculum and instructional strategies that work with their understandings and meet the needs of their students, rather than operating within requirements about what and how to teach from outsiders not familiar with their students. Additionally, to foster culturally relevant teacher practices, schools must work to reconceptualize professional development where teachers engage in collective problem-solving rooted in dialogue and use cultural conflicts as opportunities for their learning in order to meet the need of their students (Fecho et al., 2016; Souto-Manning, 2011).

This changing field has resulted in increased demands and ambiguities for both PSTs and teacher educators. As Brass (2015) posits, “those seeking to bridge teacher
education with contemporary scholarship now must embody multidisciplinary ways of knowing and learn several specialized languages to navigate the many frameworks that legitimate and structure language and literacy education” (p. 11). We know that the work of preparing PSTs to teach ELA in diverse classrooms is not as simple as providing them a list of practices considered to be culturally relevant to enact with their students. So how do we theorize this work? What undergirds our decisions at the university level for teaching? Ladson-Billings (1996) explained that “The first problem teachers confront is believing that successful teaching for poor students of color is primarily about ‘what to do’” when instead, she argues, “the problem is rooted in how we think” (p. 34). The underlying assumption of this research is that PSTs’ thinking impacts their actions in the classroom (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). As such, understanding first what PSTs think, and then disrupting, altering, or expanding that thinking, is at the root of this work. To guide the preparation of PSTs for teaching in diverse classrooms, English teacher education programs can make PSTs aware of their own cultural values and assumptions and that there are also ideologies and values inherent in any given literacy practice, which send certain messages to their students about ways of doing, thinking, and knowing.

Additionally, PSTs should understand that cultural identity affects how students think, read, write, and speak and help their students make connections between their culture and texts (Rosen & Abt-Perkins, 2000). Further, to develop in PSTs attitudes and beliefs necessary for teaching from a multicultural perspective, English teacher education programs should foster PSTs’ understanding of and sensitivity towards how linguistic and cultural differences impact learning. They should engage in activities and discussions around how to construct a classroom culture rooted in openness, curiosity, and
acceptance of the diverse experiences and perspectives of others (Rosen & Abt-Perkins, 2000). Framed by these conceptions of teaching,

Becoming a teacher, then, is not so much a matter of acquiring skills and strategies that enhance student learning (although that may be a byproduct) as it is acquiring a shared cultural knowledge base that allows one to know how to act and think like a teacher and claim a teacher identity (Bloome, 2003, p. 61).

This work allows for the exploration of self, others, and the systems and practices that foster or inhibit both PST and student learning.

A challenge facing both PSTs and teacher educators is the multiple and sometimes contradictory goals of pushing for progressive education. Cochran-Smith (1995) argues that for student teachers, the dilemma is how to teach children about the canon of literature, language, and history while also teaching them how to critique it as well as teaching them their own literature, language, and history. For teacher educators, the dilemma is how to teach student teachers about ‘best practice’ while also alternative practice (p. 521).

Having PSTs work with a teacher who is also engaged in and committed to transformative teaching is ideal (Cochran-Smith, 1991), but not always possible given the need to have many teachers who share the same vision as the university available and willing to work with PSTs. To get around this obstacle and maintain a responsibility towards providing PSTs the experience necessary for preparing them to teach in diverse classrooms, teacher education programs may need to get creative with the structure of
field experiences, considering both in and out of school and university settings (e.g., Meier, Choi, & Cushman, 2015).

Understanding how PSTs learn to teach ELA to diverse students comes with challenges and no clear road map for how this might be achieved. As Ladson-Billings (1996) suggests, we have to first approach this work by drawing PSTs’ attention to their own beliefs and how they impact their actions in the classroom, rather than tackling the issue by initially considering what they might “do” in the classroom. We also know that field experiences in diverse settings can help, if paired with reflection and ethnographic research methods, to prevent deficit-oriented thinking or the perpetuation of stereotypes (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Dressman, 1998). Pre-service teachers should engage in analysis of texts, curriculums, lesson plans, and their own discourse, to explore how these facets of daily classroom life are laden with values and ideologies that impact how students think and perform. Still, there are many gaps in the research, which provide directions for future work in the field. Given the current climate of standards-based education, the field would benefit from understanding more about how this impacts the trajectories and identities of students who may “fail to engage (read or write) traditional classrooms texts, either because such texts lack relevance to them or because such texts promote perspectives or interests that are threatening to them” (Kirkland, 2007, p. 131).

In addition, while various languages and forms of English present in classrooms continues to push back on the long-established goal of assimilation into standardized English in U.S. schools, we need further understanding about how ELA as a content area is practiced by teachers and students and the role of talk in this teaching and learning.
Question #2: Review of Literature on Learning from Interactions

To better understand PSTs’ pedagogical decision-making and their process of learning to teach, there is a definite need to understand how learning is facilitated by language, rather than studying a program’s statement of goals or purposes, which do not necessarily equate with what PSTs are learning or appropriating in their teaching (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982). Because of the increased political attention towards improving K-12 education by training stronger teachers, there has been a proliferation in mentoring programs in the U.S. over the past few decades (Little, 1990). As such, some scholars have argued that the programs and resulting research have often been rushed and poorly theorized (Little, 1990). So while there has been a quick increase in the amount of research on mentoring, there have been very few studies that are “well informed by theory and designed to examine in depth the context, content, and consequences of mentoring” (p. 341). Work on learning to teach ELA in diverse classrooms is highly contextualized in that it is based on the histories and ideologies of individual PSTs, their students, and schools. Despite (and because of) the contextualized nature of PST learning, studying PST interactions is one way to conceptualize the means through which learning occurs and to account for the context-specific nature of PSTs’ learning settings (Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015).

Until Weller’s (1971) widely heard call for more research on the content and nature of supervisory conferences and how they get taken up by PSTs, there was little to no research conducted on the subject. Since then, a multitude of studies, which aimed to better understand supervision practices (e.g. Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980; Reavis, 1977; Reavis, 1978) began to tout Clinical Supervision as a
highly effective model for conducting supervisory conferences. The model provides practices that supervisors can employ to help their PSTs and beginning teachers become more analytic and reflective by rationalizing and talking through their teaching practice with the supervisor. While a plethora of scholarship has been written on coaching (e.g. Joyce & Showers, 1985) and Clinical Supervision, the model is not without criticism. Zeichner and Liston (1985) were some of the first scholars to question the model for its lack of specificity regarding a clear notion of rationality and its direction and reasoning for encouraging PSTs to become more analytic. This initial research on understanding how language and discourse can facilitate learning, theorized largely from a behaviorist approach towards learning, laid the groundwork for future research in the field.

Scholars such as Zeichner and Liston (1985) and other critics of the Clinical Supervision model for mentoring sparked an increased research focus on understanding mentoring practices in teacher education. Researchers began to question not just what mentors do, but how they conceptualize and define their role and how this impacts their mentoring practices. For example, Glickman’s (1981) work on Developmental Supervision maintains that a supervisor’s approach to mentoring is dependent upon his or her views about how teacher learning is acquired and that to be effective mentors, supervisors should be aware of their beliefs about learning. This type of professional support differs from emotional support or help giving, as can dominate the mentoring of beginning teachers (Little, 1990). The notion of what it means to be a mentor continues to be contested and is dependent upon the perspective and role of the individual describing a mentor. Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner (2002) questioned mentor teachers and PSTs, two
often overlooked perspectives in teacher education (Clift & Brady, 2005), about the role of the university supervisor, and found that mentor teachers are typically viewed as role models, who should provide support and the space to try out ideas, rather than mentors, which is reserved more for the university supervisors.

While issues surrounding mentoring are still widely debated, the field of mentoring in teacher education has experienced some overall conceptual shifts, mirroring evolutions in how learning has also conceptually shifted since the 1950s. Theories of learning how to teach generally began with a behaviorist approach of acquiring teaching skills, then moved to a cognitive approach of meaning construction, and then to a sociocultural approach aimed at understanding the contexts and conditions for learning how to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). There has been a growing trend to conduct research from a sociocultural approach that considers contexts, rather than from a cognitive psychological one (Clift & Brady, 2005). Zeichner (2010) has called for the conceptualization of mentoring that is less hierarchical and based on the needs of PSTs and the contexts where they are learning to teach. Included in this approach to mentoring is a focus on the relationship between the mentor and PSTs and how this is created by and apparent in the discourse between participants. One example of this is Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) notion of “educative mentoring”, which conceptualizes mentoring less as a set of procedural practices that can be applied in a range of mentoring contexts, and more “as a set of ideas from which a variety of actions could be generated” (p. 19). For the purposes of this research, I draw on the work of Zeichner (2010), Feiman-Nemser (2001), and Kroath’s (1990) notion of the “critical friend” to define my approach to
mentoring as a focus on how discourse, relationships, and past, present, and conflicting contexts work together and impact mentoring efforts to “to confirm, to support and to provide authority on the one hand, and to challenge, to destabilize and to withdraw authority on the other hand” (p. 5). I define discourse as the *means through which mentoring occurs* and also the *object of study* (Bloome, et al., 2005) for understanding relationships, mentoring, and learning in teacher education.

Current scholarship in the field of mentoring and discourse in teacher education, which also serves as groundwork for the theoretical framing that is to follow, highlight the importance of an integrated analysis of the varying factors that contribute to the process of learning to teach. It encourages research that closely examines the content, context, and purpose of the ways in which we support PSTs in teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). It also advocates for research that considers the perspective of those other than university teacher educators (such as PSTs and mentor teachers), is conducted longitudinally, and considers how practice is influenced by context in sophisticated ways (Clift & Brady, 2005). Finally, the field needs alternative and collaborative models [that] encourage supervisors and teacher candidates to understand each other’s perspectives, create a sense of community that is sustained by deeper conversations, enable supervisors to refine their focus and feedback for visits, and emphasize a new goal: emerging professional identity of the new teachers, instead of institutional standards or uniform expectations (Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015, p. 4).
This research hopes to expand upon and clarify existing approaches to the conceptualization of mentoring in teacher education and progress in addressing scholars’ concerns about much existing and past research in teacher education.

This work has been theorized with the understanding that a part of learning to teach students of differing backgrounds is practice in problematizing existing societal and educational structures and practices, building theory about teaching and learning, creating curriculums specific to the needs of students, and positioning students as knowledge producers who come to the classroom with existing and valuable sets of knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 1991). As a part of the process of navigating the tensions between their evolving hybrid identities of student and teacher (Alsup, 2006), PSTs learn about themselves and critical pedagogies for teaching diverse learners by engaging in reflection, metacognition, and problem-solving with their students and teachers, a process Ball (2009) terms *generativity*. For learning to occur, particularly in teacher education specifically designed to prepare PSTs to work with diverse students, it should be an explicit process rooted in dialogue and synthesizing knowledge gleaned from differing contexts, including students themselves (Ball, 2009; Bieler & Burns, 2009; Perry, 2015).

We know that PSTs need a network of people and critical pedagogical experiences in teacher education who view themselves as school-based reformers and are actively working to challenge and create new curriculums, view situations with students and parents from alternative perspectives, and think about students’ strengths and funds of knowledge differently (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Moll, 2014; Perry, 2015). These critical pedagogical experiences can exist in the form of small group discussion around self-
identified problems that they perceived to exist in their teaching. Additionally, teacher educators can guide PSTs through conducting ethnographic research and examining discourse in their own classrooms to help them make informed decisions based on a more encompassing knowledge of students, communities, and schools (Davila, 2011; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Frank, 1999; Lewis et al., 2015; Rex & Schiller, 2009). Throughout this process, teacher educators can guide PSTs to reflect on their own practices and beliefs about language, literacy, and power (Lewis et al., 2015) and also to collectively share and analyze their teaching practices, discourse, and lesson plans with others to interpret how they might portray particular values (Rosen & Abt-Perkins, 2000). Research on examining ELA teachers’ facilitation of classroom discussions around literature that evokes issues of prejudice has shown that new teachers often pass up opportunities to serve as critical guides in challenging and disrupting prejudices from being reinforced (Davila, 2011). So rather than allowing personal responses to literature to exist that function to rationalize problematic ideologies, teachers could benefit from examining classroom discourse so that they are more prepared to engage in critical conversations with students in the future.

**Question #3: Review of Literature on Appropriation of Tools in Teacher Education**

Activity theory has widely been used to theorize how PSTs learn to teach ELA with a focus on goal-oriented problem-solving across settings (e.g., Grossman, et al., 1999; Newell et al., 2001; Grossman et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2003), but research in the field has also been framed by other strands of sociocultural theory as well (e.g, Lewis et al., 2015). The types of knowledge that PSTs need to teach effectively and from where they appropriate this knowledge has been the focus of much research in the field.
Schulman’s (1987) work on understanding and naming the types of knowledge that PSTs need has been reinforced and expounded upon by other scholars in the field. For example, researchers have argued that PSTs need a particularly strong pedagogical knowledge base from which to draw on as they tackle teaching ELA (Smagorinsky, Wilson, & Moore, 2011) and an expanded notion of Schulman’s (1987) subject-specific pedagogical knowledge to include an awareness that that expertise was learned (Holt-Reynolds, 1999). Additionally, understanding how PSTs’ predispositions about their goals for teaching ELA that developed prior to their teacher education program can impact their pedagogical decisions in the classroom is important (Newell et al., 2001). Finally, the extent to which there is consistency between the university and school settings, and a clear focus and cohesion of the teacher education program, can impact the appropriation of teaching tools by PSTs (Johnson et al., 2003; Newell et al., 2001).

Understanding how PSTs learn to teach ELA has been practically achieved in a multitude of ways, namely by considering the content and form of university courses and field experiences. Reviews of research on the ELA methods courses inherent in teacher education highlight how the courses considered to be a hallmark of teacher education typically include the teaching of both practical and conceptual tools for teaching and have evolved over the years to include a greater emphasis on technology integration and literacy skills (Pasternak et al., 2014; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). To ensure a higher degree of appropriation of conceptual tools, teacher educators should supplement and demonstrate these ideas with clear and numerous practical tools and strategies (Grossman et al., 2000). Grossman and her colleagues also maintain that teachers need opportunities to engage with these practical tools in order to aid in their appropriation of them and
suggest the power of curricular materials or practical tools in helping early teachers take up the concepts of teaching ELA. If PSTs do not have preparation in the various strands of ELA from their teacher education programs, they tend to rely on their own experiences as a student or emulate the practices of their colleagues to help them make pedagogical decisions (Johnson et al., 2000; Smagorinsky et al., 2011). Finally, an integral aspect of English teacher education is fostering PSTs’ reflective thinking practices, which includes the ability to understand their own assumptions and values about language, literacy, and culture that guide their decision-making and to provide rationales for their choices (Lewis et al., 2015; Newell et al., 2001; Perry, 2015). Teaching PSTs how to adopt a cultural perspective towards teaching and prepare them to teach ELA in our increasingly diverse schools presents numerous challenges related to understanding how to impact one’s thinking and how to enact a culturally relevant teaching agenda in standards-based times. Pre-service teachers’ beliefs about culture, literacy, and language and the opportunities that they have to engage in interactions with others of differing ideologies, while merging conceptual and practical tools for learning, can foster the potential for productive problem solving and perspective-taking in their teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher Learning

The theoretical framing in this study helps to capture my theory of teacher learning and also worked to frame my decisions around my research methodology. I will first address how marrying concept development rooted in activity theory (Grossman et al., 1999) and analysis of interactions (Bloome et al., 2005) contributes to my
understanding of how PSTs learn. The need to study how PSTs learn to teach ELA in diverse classrooms is based on the premise that teachers’ knowledge frames and belief structures are the filters through which their practices, strategies, actions, interpretations, and decisions are made. This means that knowledge and beliefs play an important mediating role in what candidates learn during their teacher education programs and also how and what they teach once they are in classrooms (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) (Hollins & Guzman, 2005, p. 482). This underlying assumption that PSTs’ ideologies impact their learning how to teach and then their actions in the classroom is central towards understanding and theorizing the current study. To conceptualize this learning then, I have considered how PSTs were influenced by the varying settings from which they learned to teach, how a culture of teaching and learning was created as PSTs and teacher educators acted and reacted to each other, and how PSTs’ evolving beliefs impacted what they did in their teaching. Therefore, to theorize the study of learning how to teach ELA in diverse classrooms, I am relying on the integration of concepts driven development from a line of research rooted in activity theory (Grossman et al., 1999; Smagorinsky, 2013) and microethnographic discourse analysis (Bloome et al., 2005). Within this frame, human action is said to be mediated by language with a particular focus on how language shapes and is shaped by social and cultural contexts, or how the macro influences the micro (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). As people form and associate themselves with different social contexts, they create and acquire information, skills, and cultural understandings that become funds of knowledge that they might not have otherwise had (Moll, 2014). Particular to my
research, these funds of knowledge should be considered for both PSTs and the middle school students that they teach.

These theories are particularly useful for the study of teacher education because of its emphasis on understanding the conditions that provide opportunities to learn. This integration of theories can help to conceptualize how PSTs learn to teach and complexify traditional sociocultural theories to provide a more nuanced understanding of learning to teach. A sociocultural approach to the study of teacher education marks a shift from past research trends rooted in process-product theory (e.g., Dunkin & Biddle, 1974), which has been criticized (e.g., Garrison & Macmillan, 1994) for its assumption of generalizability and lack of a consideration for context, content, and intention. While this approach dominated research on teacher training in the 1970s and 80s, there became a need, possibly as a result of increasing social and cultural change in our country, to account for differing notions of learning and what it means to be an “effective teacher”. As such, scholars have argued that sociocultural theory is a means to account for “the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and cultural, historical, and institutional setting, on the other” (Wertsch, 1995, p. 56).

**Research Methodology**

In addition to contributing to my conceptualizations of how PSTs learn, integrating theories of concept development (Grossman et al., 1999) and microethnographic analysis of interactions (Bloome et al., 2005) also impacted my research methodology for the study. That is, it created a framework for my decision-making regarding my data collection and analysis. While the specific tenets of this are
outlined in Chapter Three, I briefly explain here how theory contributed to my methodology.

**Activity theory.** Activity theory has commonly been used to conceptualize research in teacher education (e.g., Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Newell & Connors, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007). Activity theory is seemingly fitting for theorizing teacher education because it “starts with the assumption that a person’s frameworks for thinking are developed through problem-solving action carried out in different settings” (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, Place, 2000, p. 2). This process of problem solving inherent within student teaching and other experiences during teacher education helps individuals construct their identities as teachers. As such, there are numerous elements of activity theory that can be useful for conceptualizing teacher education research, particularly its emphasis on settings – understanding the motives, tensions, and issues in moving across settings – with the awareness that these settings mediate action and human development. Since understanding the variety of settings from which PSTs learn to teach and appropriate ideas is central to improving teacher education praxis and research, elements of activity theory can be of great use. Particular to this dissertation study, I drew on the concepts of practical and conceptual tools and PSTs’ appropriation of them to help guide my analysis.

To help individuals solve problems within settings, they adopt *tools* to help them reach their goal, a central focus of activity theory. Tools are typically categorized as being either conceptual or practical. Conceptual tools are defined as “principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English/language arts that teachers use as heuristics to guide their instructional decisions” (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 3).
These include broad ideas about learning, such as the need for collaboration, or more content-related concepts like a process approach to writing. On the other hand, practical tools are classroom practices, instructional strategies, or resources that “have more local and immediate utility” and guide teachers toward solving the problems that they encounter in various activity settings (Grossman et al., 1999). These can include resources like the course textbook and district curriculum guides or specific strategies, such as peer-conferencing to teach revision in writing.

Additionally, the appropriation of tools and ideas that occurs, or does not occur, within activity settings is a key unit of analysis. Appropriation (Leont’ev, 1981; Wertsch, 1995) is the process through which someone utilizes and adopts conceptual and practical tools that then influence their ways of thinking. Often times teachers appropriate ideas that are dominant within certain cultures or settings of which they are a part, such as “accepting a community’s value on high pass rates for a statewide test and teaching to maintain those pass rates” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 143). The extent of appropriation is dependent upon a person’s past experiences, relationships with other members of the main activity setting as well as supplementary or competing ones, and their goals. “Through the process of appropriation, learners reconstruct the knowledge they are internalizing, thus transforming both their conception of the knowledge and in turn influencing how that knowledge is construed and used by others” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 144).

While there are facets of activity theory that I have found to be useful, studies that closely examine the role of talk and moments of agency in helping PSTs navigate settings, and how goals and values are evident in discourse, are not common in activity
theory research (e.g. Jahreie & Ottesen, 2010). Activity theorists, while concerned with how culture mediates individual human action, also tend to focus largely on the collective activity systems impacting this action, which some find to be problematic if there is also the desire to focus on the micro – the role of talk, relationships, and specific contexts as they relate to learning (Gutierrez & Larson, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2011). Various conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA are valued across settings in teacher education, as evident in the language PSTs, mentors, and teacher educators use. Therefore, to best conceptualize this work, I also relied on microethnographic analysis (Bloome et al., 2005) to provide a theory and methodology for interpreting the role of discourse, as it contributes to PST learning in this research.

Discourse analysis. To examine the role of discourse in learning to teach, I needed a methodology that demands questions both about how people act in response to and create the events in which they are engaged (Bloome et al, 2005). Discourse analytic theory helps to understand relationships between people, and how they act and react to each other, thereby constructing culture (Bloome et al, 2005). Given the prominent role of talk in mentoring practices in teacher education, it is important to pay attention to how people learn from talk, which is made evident in the varying settings in teacher education. As such, I relied on recorded interactions with and between PSTs to primarily guide my data collection in this study. Perhaps because the field of teacher education has traditionally relied on activity theory to conceptualize its work, or perhaps because there are relatively few studies that highlight the talk between participants (relying instead on PSTs’ self-reported claims or program descriptions, as previously mentioned), the field has few studies that utilize a discourse analytic approach (Davila, 2011).
My data analysis was guided by understanding that social identity is constructed through language in interactions with others, which has meaning for people over time (Bloome et al., 2005). This cultural construct positions PSTs as active agents who are influenced by the local and global, present and historic contexts, and cultural ideologies around them, which help to define who they are (Bloome et al., 2005; Egan-Robertson, 1998). Social identities can be interpreted as “in motion, as part of a process of continuity and change within and across events, settings, and social institutions” (Bloome et al., 2005, p 158). A focus on social identity in this study is warranted by the need to understand how PSTs’ social identities in this mentoring group impact their engagement in learning.

**Summary of Theoretical Framing**

Guided by my conceptualization of teacher learning across time and events, this study warranted the use of theories that focus on tensions, different perspectives, and evolving ideologies about ELA teaching. Rather than just naming how learning occurs or does not occur in broad terms, the theories of concept development and interactional analysis use discourse to support interpretations. It is specific to the exchange. Rather than expanding activity theory or using discourse analysis simply as an application of methods, these theories add complexity to traditional approaches towards understanding teacher education, such as activity theory, and grounds analysis in the process and product of language.

**Implications for this Study**

How do we encourage PSTs to be progressive ELA educators when there is not a set of established best practices for doing so? And how can this be achieved within the
confines of standards-based teaching and high-stakes assessments at both the K-12 and university levels? What does it mean to transform PSTs’ thinking and can it be accomplished despite (and because of) their predispositions and influences across others settings? Complicating this is a lack of understanding regarding how PSTs’ perceived changes in thinking impact their actions in the classroom (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Clift & Brady, 2005). Based on the assumption that teacher learning occurs through problem-solving and reflection by engaging in discourse with others across contexts (Alsup, 2006; Ball, 2009; Fecho et al., 2016), teacher educators are charged with designing these learning experiences in English teacher education that transfer to actions in the classroom. As a standards-based curriculum and high-stakes assessments in ELA as a content area can foster, inhibit, or otherwise affect learning to teach students in diverse classrooms (Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, & Rush, 2014), this became a theme in the research data.

This research on understanding how PSTs learn to teach ELA in diverse classrooms impacted how I have conceptualized PSTs’ appropriation of tools and ideas across settings in this dissertation study. By working with them to create understanding into how language, learning, and culture are socially constructed and dynamic, rather than static and assumed (Bloome, et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith, 1991), I observed them problematize conditions in their schools and society and make curricular and instructional decisions based on this knowledge to varying degrees. In mentoring discourse throughout the year, I helped PSTs to consider the resources and assets that their students brought to the classroom and built theory about learning and practices for teaching with these in mind. Specific to the nature of adolescence and middle childhood education, I
encouraged PSTs to build on students’ emerging interests and awareness of the global world and move towards the abstract thinking that can be fostered at that age (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010). Rooted in interactional and concept driven theories of learning, PSTs’ learning as facilitated by our discourse, goals, and tools valued across settings and opportunities for learning, will be explored in Chapters Four and Five.
Chapter 3: Research Method

As I discussed in Chapter One, this study is guided by an overarching question: How did interactions between me, as a university supervisor, shape pre-service ELA teachers’ appropriation of conceptual and practical tools for an ethnographic perspective as part of their learning to teach ELA to urban middle childhood students? Specifically, this study was also shaped by three sub-questions related to interactions in various contexts across two academic years: the MCE teacher education program, mentoring sessions and school contexts:

1. What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA instruction occurred? What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective?

2. Within these settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?

3. How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’ understandings of a cultural perspective?
These questions derive from an understanding that learning to teach is constructed by and apparent in social interactions across sociocultural contexts where issues of identity, agency, and power are part of the process (Bloome et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 1999; Smagorinsky, 2013). In order to answer these questions within this theoretical framework, I examined my interactions with PSTs, over time, during mentoring sessions and during post-observation interviews a part of their student teaching to explore their understandings and enactment of ELA teaching within a cultural perspective. To consider, with some depth, the possible appropriation of conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective, I studied how three case study PSTs appropriated ideas of cultural awareness as they engaged in discourse with me during their student teaching experience in under-resourced urban middle schools. In brief, this study sought to understand the values and goals of the various learning settings from which PSTs were learning to teach ELA, how social interactions influenced appropriation of the ethnographic methods for adopting a cultural perspective of ELA teaching, and how the case study PSTs appropriated this understanding into their teaching practices.

**Context of the Study: Middle Childhood Teacher Education**

I chose to study my work with MCE PSTs for several reasons. The MCE program has a commitment to urban education, as evidenced by the fact that all PSTs are placed in an urban school district in a mid-sized Midwestern city for their field placements, followed by a semester of student teaching. Based on my previous experiences with mentoring in the MCE program, I have observed that PSTs experience this as both an opportunity and a source of tension in their process of learning how to teach. The cultural backgrounds of the MCE teacher candidates reflected that of the teaching force across
this country: primarily White and middle class. Pre-service teachers often brought concerns to the group and to me about how to “get students to care”, how to work around the “lack of parent involvement” in their schools, and teach in a way “that excites and interests” their students. As I previously taught in a diverse middle school, in the past I offered advice based on strategies that I had found to be successful. Since I attempted to structure my mentoring sessions with PSTs in a way that lets them know that we are all socially constructing meaning together and are all learners as well as teachers (Bieler, 2010), I also opened PSTs’ questions for group discussion so that we might work toward possible solutions together. However, I saw a need to utilize the group mentoring sessions in a more meaningful way that was also aligned to the goals and values of the MCE program. Hence, the creation of a mentoring curriculum with a focus on the teaching of using ethnographic methods for the purposes of understanding students from a range of cultural and social backgrounds that differ from those of the PSTs (see Appendix A). My goals as a university supervisor of addressing issues of culture and diversity in the mentoring program, paired with the urban education focus of the MCE teacher education program, provided a suitable context for answering my first research question, *What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA arts instruction occurred? What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective over time?*

The nature of the university supervisor role is primarily discussion based, with the goal of jointly solving problems that PSTs may face in their field experiences. Although supervisors have the autonomy to rely on any materials or establish certain foci for the
mentoring sessions, creating a curriculum to be used throughout the year was not a requirement. The expectation was that supervisors use discussion to foster critical thinking and reflection in PSTs in aims of helping them improve as educators. Because of the emphasis on using discourse to socially construct and interrogate what it means to teach and learn, this site was fitting for answering my second research question: *Within these settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?*

Without a transfer of an ethnographic perspective to teaching ELA in classrooms the mentoring sessions would seem largely a waste of time. Accordingly, I was particularly interested in the intersection between the concepts and principles of teaching with social justice in the mentoring context to the realities of teaching middle school students how to read and write. This suggests the importance of my third research question: *How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’ understandings of a cultural perspective?*

**Structure and Content of the Middle Childhood Education Program**

During the two years of my data collection for this study, all of the PSTs were enrolled in the MCE program at a large Midwestern university. According to state-wide teacher education requirements where this research was conducted, MCE programs prepare PSTs to teach grades 4-9 with a licensure in two different content areas of their choosing, including language arts, social studies, science, or mathematics. All three case study PSTs who participated in this study, to be introduced in a later section of this
chapter, had ELA as one of their content areas, and did their student teaching in this content area. Because the MCE program prepares PSTs to teach in grades 4-9, they can be placed in these middle grades in a variety of different school settings, including schools that also house grade levels that are traditionally considered elementary or secondary, like a K-8 school or a 7-12 school. However, the case study PSTs were all placed in traditional middle schools that housed grades 6-8.

The MCE program maintains a commitment to urban education both in terms of field placements in the local urban school district and in courses rooted conceptually in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although there were three B.S.Ed. PSTs part of the study in the first year, they were not case study PSTs, and as such, I will elaborate only on the course work of the M.Ed. PSTs, although there were many similarities. During the year of data collection, which occurred during the singular year in the M.Ed. program, PSTs completed course work and field experiences across the academic year as outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Graduate Middle Childhood Education Course and Field Experience Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Autumn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUTL 5220: Foundations of Middle Childhood Education</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and Diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for Content Area #1</td>
<td>Field Placement (3 days a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for Content Area #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and New Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continued</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned Field Experience 5189</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Seminar 5195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Ed. Capstone 6890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, the M.Ed. PSTs began their program during the summer where they took three foundational courses that served as their initial and seminal introduction and exploration into the conceptual tool from which they were guided by, culturally relevant pedagogy. Also of significance are the methods courses that the PSTs participated in during their autumn semester of the program. As I am focusing on how the PSTs learned to teach ELA specifically, their course schedule is notable in that throughout the year-long M.Ed. program, the PSTs only have one course where they learn about theories and methods for teaching ELA. I highlighted the course and field experience schedules of the PSTs here to illustrate when and to what extent (per the number of courses) that PSTs had the opportunities to learn about conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective.

As I had supervised PSTs in the MCE program for one year prior to the study, I have had fairly extensive experiences working with the MCE program that have helped me to understand its values and overall goals and expectations for students, that is, what Smagorinsky refers to as the MCE’s “conceptual home.” For example, in the spring of 2014, I co-taught the M.Ed. Reflective Seminar and Capstone courses with one of the Program Managers. During the entire 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 academic years, I worked as a University Supervisor, the first two years of I collected data for this
dissertation study. During these years, I was made aware of some of the goals and values of the MCE program, especially in terms of my interactions with the PSTs. For instance, as University Supervisors, the Program Managers encouraged us to stop and counter any discussion or the content of any lesson planning rooted in deficit thinking about their students, parents, schools, mentor teachers, or communities. Additionally, as we responded to PSTs’ weekly lesson plans during their student teaching, we were asked to comment on and push PSTs to create lessons that were culturally relevant for the students that they were teaching.

To understand more about what the MCE program means by a “commitment to urban education” and how this is embodied in course objectives, texts, and assignments, I observed some of the class sessions of two different MCE courses. During the summer of 2015, I observed three sessions of “Foundations of Middle Childhood Education” to understand more about what PSTs are taught before entering their field placements in the autumn semester. A review of the course syllabus and the field notes taken during my observations indicated that during the course, the main texts that students read were *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice* (Kumashiro, 2009) and *Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds: Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Practices in U.S. Classrooms* (Nieto, 2013). There were also over 25 additional required readings, which included articles by authors such as Freire, Gay, Irvine, Ladson-Billings, and Darling-Hammond. These texts and authors suggest that throughout PSTs’ coursework, they were immersed in readings that contributed to the MCE’s conceptual home of culturally relevant pedagogy.
During class sessions, I also observed what appeared to be a tightly woven amalgam of discussions about culturally relevant teaching with modeling of traditional pedagogical practices that are often central tenets of foundational education courses. In other words, conversations around teaching for social justice were not removed or separated from conversations about the benefits of inquiry-based learning, for example. For instance, during one of the sessions that I observed, each small group of PSTs was given two vocabulary words/concepts from the Kumashiro (2009) text to work with by sorting out their ideas through one of six different vocabulary graphic organizers. Some of the concepts from the text that were a part of this activity included: social justice, racial consciousness, troubling knowledge, socially engaged Buddhism, impossible insights, crisis, always and already, cultural imperialism, and marginalize. Later in that same class session, the instructor explained and then modeled a Socratic Seminar/fishbowl activity so that the PSTs could learn this pedagogical tool, and used the following questions to guide the discussion:

- What does Kumashiro believe the role of the student to be in anti-oppressive pedagogy?
- If we are going to be anti-oppressive educators, what do we do with the knowledge that students come in with?
- How do we know if we have led a student into crisis so that they can engage in deeper learning, but prevent them from shutting down (pushing into crisis too far)?
- What is the role of hope when we bring students to crisis?
• If knowledge is becoming, what does that mean? How does that help us work with students who are in crisis as a way of bringing comfort to them?
• What does it mean to be an expert in your content area?
• What does it mean to be a “good” teacher, if Kumashiro says “good” teaching is oppressive? Is being “good” the process of continually trying to be “good?”
• Does the idea that we’re always becoming bring you comfort or anxiety?
• Why might researchers disagree about “best practices?”
• How is teaching about learning how to let go?

I also observed conversations around fostering empathy, teaching with heart, and being “colorblind.” Empathy was discussed with regards to relationships with students, in that teachers can have empathy, while avoiding a false sense of involvement because we can never truly understand what someone else is going through. In conversations about teachers’ roles to teach students responsibility and preparing them for life, the instructor encouraged the PSTs to consider whether it was worth it to teach their future students a hard and fast lesson about the need to bring a pencil to class, for example, or whether it is okay to sometimes disregard the class rule of being prepared. Some PSTs’ claims of and goals for being “colorblind” were deconstructed throughout the course through readings, online discussion posts, and class conversations. The instructor showed PSTs that being colorblind is not ideal, nor necessarily possible, and that they should learn to understand and value the varying backgrounds from which their students will come. They openly discussed that being racially conscious is not natural for them, being an all-White cohort of M.Ed. students, but that for many of their future students, it is. As a final project, the PSTs had to design a highly effective middle school in small groups justifying all of their
decisions in theory and the readings from class. Things that they had to consider included: schedule, grading, technology, professional development for teachers, activities for students, family involvement, etc.

As the course readings, activities, and assignments suggest, the foundational courses were seminal in the MCE program’s commitment to urban education. In particular, conceptual tools of culturally relevant pedagogy, oppression, power, privilege, and dismantling deficit thinking were central to the MCE program. By reading numerous eminent scholars and engaging PSTs in discussions around the readings, the program worked to ensure that these conceptual tools were threaded the courses, rather than appearing in singular class sessions.

**Research Participants**

**Allison, Ms. Rees, and Eastwood Middle School**\(^2\). The first case study PST that I chose to focus on comes from the breadth phase of my study, which occurred during year one of data collection. Allison was a M.Ed. student in the MCE program during 2014-15 with areas of concentration in ELA and social studies. As was the case with most of her cohorts in the M.Ed. program, she transitioned from an undergraduate degree program in Middle Childhood Foundations into the one-year long M.Ed. program, so she was in her early twenties during the time of the study. Based on my observations of and conversations with Allison across the year, I would describe her as a strong teacher candidate. In the recommendation letter that I wrote for her, I wrote that “she is very conscientious and devotes much time and effort to her professional obligations. She has

\(^2\) Pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation to preserve the anonymity of people and places in this study.
great work ethic and strives to bring energy and creativity to her daily lesson planning and implementation. In discussions with [Allison] regarding her teaching practices, it is clear that she is knowledgeable, but also reflective and receptive of feedback in aims of growing as a professional and ensuring deep student learning.” And I really meant these praises. Allison was a people pleaser and wanted to make others (her mentor teacher, professors, and me) proud, but she also wanted these things for herself. She tirelessly reflected on her own teaching and the relationships that she developed with her students and pushed herself to consider how she could improve in every area. While other PSTs in the group could sometimes shy away from admitting their weaknesses or struggles, Allison freely shared hers with the group because I think that she truly believed in the process of using discussion to help each other problem solve. This trait helped to establish her as a vocal member of her cohort.

Allison was placed in Ms. Rees’s 8th grade language arts classroom at Eastwood Middle School for her year-long placement. Eastwood Middle School was an urban middle (6-8) school with over half of the students coming from white, working class homes and about one-quarter of the students coming from working class homes of color (Ohio School Report Cards). There were three PSTs from the MCE program placed in Eastwood Middle that school year and all of them frequently described the culture of school similarly. They stated that students were often suspended, fought in the hallways, and teachers lost their tempers when correcting student behavior and were generally exhausted from the demands of such a teaching context. Despite this, Allison worked hard to develop positive relationships with her students and prove her mentor teacher wrong when she proclaimed to her “you won’t still be smiling here come January.” As
was the case with most PSTs, Allison had hopes of being inspired by her mentor teacher and developing a close relationship built on friendship, help giving, and emotional support (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Little, 1990). However, she eventually claimed that her mentor teacher’s focus on test preparation and frequent use of skills-based language arts workbooks did not “really mesh with [her] teaching philosophy” or goals (Interview – 11/20/14). This clash of expectations is discussed in further detail in a section below. My point for now is that Allison shifted her focus from establishing a relationship with her mentor teacher to establishing strong relationships with each of her students. These bonds were something that Allison was particularly proud of, as evident in her written reflections and discussions with me. In my observations of Allison’s teaching and her interactions with students, it was clear that to me that many students also felt strongly about the positive relationships that they had formed with her. They enjoyed having her as a teacher and when Allison was the first among her cohort to get a teaching position for the upcoming school year, they were sad when her student teaching placement ended.

**Cory, Ms. Willow, and Riverside Middle School.** Cory grew up in a middle-class, predominantly white midsize town. He frequently compared his field placement school to his hometown school saying it “blows my small town school out of the water. It’s nice that we have [diversity]. It is easy to bring in different points of view. Like [Pari] the other day asking ‘why does everyone hate Muslims?’ You aren’t going to get that at an 87% white school” (Evaluation Meeting – 12/11/15). Cory was in a 6th grade ELA classroom at Riverside Middle School for his year-long field experience and student teaching placement. He was strongly influenced by the goals of the MCE program. He explained numerous times in interviews and mentoring sessions that he was heavily
influenced and even at first shocked by the ideas surrounding CRP (culturally relevant pedagogy), the idea that white males could be considered oppressors, and urban students being oppressed. Ideas from the MCE program impacted his ultimate decision to do his capstone project on CRP and his motivation for many lessons that he created.

Additionally, Cory had a strong, positive relationship with his mentor teacher, Ms. Willow. He deeply respected her energy and creativity and worked well with her as they collaborated on much of his lesson planning throughout the year. The appreciation that he had for his mentor teacher was also reciprocated. Ms. Willow stated numerous times throughout the year that she appreciated Cory’s work ethic, the relationships that he established with his students, and his drive to create lessons with the goal of engaging all students. Cory’s relationship with his students was important to him. He mentioned that it was one of his earliest efforts to get to know each student individually and find ways to reach the ones who were often in trouble and/or did not turn in assignments regularly.

Based on my observations of Cory interacting with his students, I observed his relationships with them to be congenial – Cory made efforts to hear from all and varied students, and his students seemed to respect his efforts too.

In terms of Cory’s social positioning in the MCE cohort, he was one of two males (out of 10 PSTs) and was treated as a leader in the group in many ways. He was more vocal in the group mentoring sessions than many and often used humor in discussing his experiences with teaching or meeting the demands of their university courses. Based on the stories that he shared in group sessions, other PSTs seemed to respect him and some were potentially envious of the relationship that he had with his mentor teacher and the autonomy that he had in the classroom. As a student, he joked that he was a
procrastinator – and did tend to turn in assignments at the last minute – but his reflections and lessons always seemed to be thoughtful and genuine, particularly with finding ways to “reach” various students. Cory was also well regarded by his professors, by the MCE program manager, and by me, his supervisor. One side of Cory’s successful work during student teaching was that he was amongst the first to get a job for the coming year, where he is again teaching 6th grade ELA.

Cory had many strengths as a student teacher, as outlined above. The area in which I tried to push and support him to grow as a teacher was mostly with lesson planning and incorporating cultural perspectives in his teaching. Like most new teachers, Cory was often focused on the particular day, or at most, week at hand with regards to lesson planning, rather than thinking through how each lesson fit into a larger unit goal of some kind. He was very busy with coming up with new and creative ideas for the next day or week’s lesson, and I urged him to consider how these ideas fit into the bigger picture. The feedback that he received from his mentor was vast, frequent, and supportive, and it often focused on issues of classroom management and time management. Overall, I know everyone, including Cory, would say that he had a very positive student teaching experience. He learned and grew tremendously, was very receptive to feedback, and respected and had the respect of his students and mentors.

**Carmen, Mr. Truman, and Mack Middle School.** Carmen was a white female in her early 20s who was part of a middle class family from a suburb of a large city. Her mother worked in higher education and both of her parents placed a high value on education. Carmen was initially hesitant to go into education because she had often heard the stigma that teachers are unhappy and dislike their jobs. But after working at a science
summer camp for adolescents and being around other teachers, she decided to teach in hopes of making a difference in the lives of others. Upon hearing that she would be placed in an urban district for her student teaching, Carmen remarked that it was “daunting” “without having the experience of being in the thick of things” since she was from the suburbs. However she also thought that it would be a good learning experience even if she did not see herself teaching in an urban school in the future.

Carmen had a student teaching experience with many ups and downs. Her mentor teacher, Mr. Truman, was very involved in the mentoring process and was an experienced mentor and teacher of over 20 years. He conferred with Carmen often after her teaching, usually in the form of questions to her about what she noticed, why she did certain things, and what could have gone better. To describe their mentoring process, I would say that Mr. Truman typically adopted the role of the knower/teacher, and positioned Carmen as the inexperienced learner, rather than it being a collaborative process of what did we notice, what could we do better, etc. I think that the mentoring that Carmen received her mentor teacher’s efforts to have her defend and analyze her practice likely helped her improve in many ways. However, Carmen also expressed to me at times that it made her feel judged or that she could never do enough. It was clear that the many pressures during student teaching (lesson plans for two content areas, edTPA, course expectations, and a challenging teaching situation) impacted Carmen’s emotions and greatly increased her stress levels at times.

Carmen’s relationships with her students also had ups and downs. Carmen taught 8th grade at an urban, primarily black, middle school − Mack Middle School. It was an arts magnet school, although according to both Carmen and Mr. Truman, the influence of
the arts in the curriculum had greatly dwindled over the years. Carmen’s students often pushed her to her emotional limits and on more than one occasion I overheard students commenting that she did not respect them. I also witnessed moments of disrespect (eye rolls, not doing as she asked, etc.) towards Carmen as she was teaching. Carmen often showed her stress and aggravation with her facial expressions, which her mentor and I discussed with her on multiple occasions. The strained relationship with her students came to a halt about two-thirds of the way into spring semester, when she and Mr. Truman had a “come to Jesus” meeting, a term used by Mr. Truman, with the students about the environment in the classroom. The students openly expressed that they felt that Carmen did not respect them, and Carmen conveyed to students their actions that she found to be disrespectful. Both the students and Carmen vowed to work on their behavior, and according to Carmen, Mr. Truman, and my observations, there was some positive change moving forward, which we discussed in future debriefings.

In terms of the written and verbal feedback that I provided to Carmen, it typically surrounded her approach to developing positive relationships with students and culturally relevant lesson planning, which I argued would help with student behavior and buy-in. For example, in her Holocaust unit, I constantly urged her to connect it to the varying types of oppression that exist (and that her students experience) today. Carmen’s efforts in this area were strongly impacted by the goals of her mentor teacher and her own struggles with identity and agency as a teacher struggling to connect with her students and to find her place in her field placement classroom. As she reflected on her year, Carmen recognized that it was a big learning curve for her and that she was not as successful in some areas as she might have wanted to be, which she attributed to not
having her own space in the classroom, a theme that remained constant in her discussions with me throughout the year. “When you’re not a permanent fixture in the classroom, it’s hard to assert yourself, kind of like a substitute teacher” (Interview – 4/26/16). Carmen’s reference to herself as a substitute teacher was an indication of many of the struggles she experienced with appropriating a cultural perspective in her teaching, to be discussed further in Chapter Five.

**Gaining Entrance to the Research Site**

During the summer of 2014, I received IRB approval to conduct a study of my work with MCE PSTs during the 2014-15 school year, which allowed me to develop a more focused approach to my teacher education research, and constituted the breadth phase of this dissertation study. In July 2015, IRB approved an amendment and continuing review for the study allowing me to collect data with a new group of PSTs in 2015-16, to add video data collection, and to extend the study for another year.

Having worked with the MCE program before put me at an advantage because I began my group mentoring sessions with a clear understanding of the program’s values (made clear through observations that I conducted over the summer of 2015 to understand the content and structure of MCE core classes), typical struggles that MCE PSTs encounter in their classes and field experiences, and expectations of me as a university supervisor (e.g. amount and types of observations necessary for each PST). However, the PSTs are different people with different histories, and I also changed many parts of the mentoring curriculum in year two due to an increased effort and goal for PSTs to adopt a cultural stance towards teaching. It was important that I began data collection seeking to make strange the familiar (Agar, 1996). In other words, it is
imperative that I worked with the group of PSTs in year two by remembering that they were a new group of people with different histories and struggles than the group of PSTs that I worked with in 2014-15.

Prior to the first group mentoring session in both years, I introduced myself to the PSTs, explained my study, and explained how the PSTs would be involved in the research process if they consented to the process. I distributed the consent forms and all of the PSTs gave their consent to be a part of the study in both years. I chose the case study PTs about six weeks into each school year, after I interacted with the group and observed them interacting with their peers during our mentoring sessions. I chose three case study PSTs in case anyone dropped from the program or changed their mind about participating in the study. I chose a small amount of case study participants to do an in-depth study in small numbers. Since MCE PSTs have two content areas for their program major (e.g. language arts and social studies), I chose PSTs who have language arts as one of their two focus content areas, so that I was able to see how they appropriated a cultural perspective towards the teaching of literature and writing in their field placement, as language arts is both my teaching and research background. Additionally, I chose case study participants based on their willingness and tendency to be vocal and frank during our group mentoring sessions so that I had more data to draw from when analyzing our interactions.

**Data Collection**

**Design of the Study**

This study took place over two years within my small supervisory group of PSTs who participated in the Middle Childhood Education (MCE) program at a large public
research university in the Midwestern U.S.. I started with 9 PSTs in my mentoring group for the 2014-15 academic year, although one left the before the end of program, leaving 8 in the group. I had 10 PSTs in my supervisory group for the 2015-16 academic year. My supervisory duties began at the start of each autumn semester and lasted through the spring semester. My role as university supervisor in the MCE program was also my assignment as a graduate assistantship across the two school years. As I began my assignment as a university supervisor in the 2013-14 academic year, when I began my study in autumn 2014, I already had a history and familiarity with the MCE program and knowledge of the expectations for university supervisors coming into the study. The research design, with breadth and depth phases to describe these two years, is captured in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1. Study design by breadth and depth phases.**

Figure 3.1 illustrates the key differences between the breadth phase of year one and the depth phase of year two in that the depth phase in year two included group
“mentoring sessions” designed and led by me. These sessions were grounded in teaching from a cultural perspective and the bridging of theoretical and practical ideas about teaching ELA from this perspective. The second integral difference was that in year two, I included the three mentor teachers that were paired with the case study PSTs in the study. I interviewed them and their voices were present in audio recordings during university required evaluation meetings and some observation debriefings. These changes were made based on needs that I observed in year one of the study. I noticed that PSTs struggled with how to conceptualize and make practical decisions around teaching from a cultural perspective, so in year two I created the curriculum to provide more opportunities for this learning to occur through discussion. Additionally, in year one I recognized that many PSTs’ pedagogical decisions were influenced largely by the goals of their mentor teachers and school settings. As a result, I wanted to learn more about the histories, philosophies, and motivations of the mentor teachers that were paired with the case study PSTs, which is why I chose to interview them and record their contributions to any observation debriefing or evaluation meeting of which they were a part. The inclusion of the mentoring curriculum and the perspectives of the mentor teachers in year two allowed me to explore the PSTs’ experiences of learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective more “in depth,” hence the name. On the other hand, year one served as an exploratory phase where I sought to understand their experiences more broadly and did not explicitly guide PSTs to teach ELA from a cultural perspective through an established curriculum as I did in year two. As such, I have termed year one the “breadth phase.”

Central to my research was the collection and triangulation of data sources across spaces, events, and time. Ethnographically informed and rooted in discourse analysis, the
focus on language in the types of data used in this study aim to “uncover how people, signs, knowledge, dispositions and tools travel from one event to another and facilitate behavior in subsequent events” (Wortham & Reyes, 2015, p. 1). This work aimed to understand how PSTs perceived and appropriated a cultural perspective in teaching. In doing so, they were impacted by the goals and motivations of the people across settings and PSTs often therefore spoke and acted differently across settings as they tried to meet the expectations of others. As such, the primary sources of my data collection included mentoring sessions in a variety of forms, interviews with case study PSTs and their mentor teachers, and the collection of documents and artifacts.

Mentoring Sessions

Theorizing multicultural education in a mentoring curriculum. I shaped the mentoring curriculum to promote multicultural understanding and teaching by grounding this setting in two key ideas: (1) that PSTs need to think culturally about their students’ learning and their own student teaching experience, while (2) simultaneously considering their personal cultural history. The curriculum and interactions with PSTs throughout the year are rooted in an understanding that people learn through interactions across sociocultural spaces and that learning is heightened with opportunities to blend conceptual and practical tools for teaching (Bloome et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 1999). The mentoring curriculum was created for the purpose of having PSTs understand the “situatedness” (Heap, 1980) of classrooms and teaching and learning. By utilizing ethnographic and discourse analysis methods, I hoped to have the PSTs build an awareness of the importance of interactions and how they can examine and reflect on these to improve their teaching. This included a consideration of how their teaching is
shaped by their own experiences and how this intersected and clashed with the differing worlds from which their students come.

There are several guiding principles from which the activities and discussions in the mentoring curriculum were based.

• By taking an ethnographic perspective, PSTs are able to be more open and thoughtful as they observe and work with students, and thus, better understanding the culture of the classroom of which they are becoming a part (Frank, 1999).

• Social interaction enhances the understanding of complex ideas and shows the value of collaborative talk in building knowledge and perspective-taking (Bloome et al., 2005).

• Taking up or working towards an emic perspective of the classroom culture and the people in it will allow PSTs to better understand the experiences and worlds of various people and re-conceptualize the notion of one “truth” or way of knowing and doing (Heath & Street, 2008).

• Written and verbal reflection of teaching and learning can show PSTs the importance of this practice for improving their teaching (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013).

• The use of ethnographic and discourse analysis methods can help PSTs explore the role of power in classrooms and society (Frank, 1999; Rex & Schiller, 2009).

• Modeling elements of ethnographic methods in my interactions with PSTs and approaching mentoring from the framework of a “critical friend” could enhance their learning to teach and utilization of such methods (Frank, 1999; Richardson, 1999). This was evident in the type of notes that I took during observations (e.g.
descriptive vs. evaluative) and the nature of post-observation debriefings (e.g. questioning that allows them to describe their instructional choices from the emic perspective of the classroom that they have developed throughout the year, rather than the etic perspective that I inevitably had in regards to their classroom).

These guiding principles align with how I theorize how people learn, which as explained above, is through social interactions rooted in culture and concepts (Bloome et al., 2005; Smagorinsky, 2013). The histories of individuals and the assumptions and values that they carry because of this are evident in their discourse and impact how they learn and engage with others (Frank, 1999). The mentoring curriculum, which encouraged observations over time and place and questioning to learn, rather than to judge, helped to work against the potential for PSTs to create more stereotypes about communities different than their own. The outline of the mentoring curriculum used in this study, including a description of the plan for both autumn and spring semesters, is included in Appendix A.

As learning occurs through and is evident in talk, mentoring sessions where PSTs discussed issues of teaching with others are a large part of my corpus of data. Mentoring sessions occurred in a variety of forms where the PSTs were discussing their teaching with their peers, me as their university supervisor, and/or their mentor teacher. The frequency, type, and details of each mentoring session where data were collected during both the breadth and depth phases of the project is outlined in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2

*Mentoring Sessions by Type and Frequency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mentoring Session</th>
<th>Year One: Breadth Phase</th>
<th>Year Two: Depth Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Mentoring with university supervisor</td>
<td>Sixteen 60 minute sessions, audio-recorded, with 8 peers.</td>
<td>Sixteen 60 minute sessions, video-recorded, with 9 peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Mentoring with university supervisor (sometimes with mentor teacher too)</td>
<td>Seven to eight 25-45 minute sessions per case study PST, audio-recorded.</td>
<td>Seven to eight 25-45 minute sessions per case study PST, audio-recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-Way Evaluation Meetings with university supervisor and mentor teacher</td>
<td>Three 25-60 minute sessions per case study PST, not recorded with field notes.</td>
<td>Three 25-60 minute sessions per case study PST, audio-recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These mentoring sessions, which occurred throughout the entirety of each school year, allowed me to gain an emic perspective of each case study PST’s experience by observing and participating in their interactions with peers, myself, and their mentor teacher. These meetings also occurred across both university and field placement spaces, which at times, impacted the content, form, and function of PSTs’ talk.

**Data from mentoring sessions.** As previously mentioned, during year two of the study, I added video recordings of group mentoring sessions to the IRB, and thus, to my data collection. Discussions with advisors and a desire to better understand how PSTs’ struggles, changes, and assertions were evident in their contextualization cues, like body language and facial expressions (Bloome et al., 2005), guided my decision to add the video recordings. As such, all of the group mentoring sessions during year two included video data, which I arranged at the front of the small classroom/large meeting room where we met each week. I also used an audio-recorder as a backup, which I placed in the center of our rectangular discussion table. During year one of the study, I relied on one
audio-recorder, which I also placed in the center of what was a square discussion table in a small meeting room where we met. As we rarely broke off into smaller group discussions, these modes of recording sufficed in terms of being able to hear all participants. For the individual mentoring sessions, I also used an audio-recorder that I placed on the table between the PST and myself, either in the library, copy room, or empty classroom in the PSTs’ field site, or in my office on campus.

Data from three-way evaluations. The three-way evaluation meetings occurred at the PSTs’ field placement site and were discussions between the mentor teacher, PST, and myself surrounding a university-required evaluation form. (See Appendix B for the form.) Each person completed the form and then we used them to guide our discussions of the PST’s progress, strengths, and goals for future teaching. We completed these at the end of each fall semester, at the midterm of spring semester, and at the end of spring semester, and thus, the completion of the PST’s student teaching, as required by the university. The forms addressed issues such as planning using standards and objectives, research-based teaching strategies, assessment of student learning, consideration of the diverse needs of students, use of technology, and PSTs’ professional dispositions.

As I served as the PSTs’ university supervisor, I also served as a participant researcher in the mentoring sessions and in the study. As such, I listened, posed questions, and led conversations depending on the circumstance. I made an effort to do less talking as the year progressed by positioning the PSTs as problem-solvers capable of demonstrating agency and considering the complexity of issues that they face in teaching, rather than assuming that they should soak up the wisdom from a more experienced educator (Bieler, 2010; Bulfin & Mathews, 2003). I did not take notes during mentoring
sessions, but instead relied on field or anecdotal notes written before or after the session, to be described in the section on interviews.

**Interviews**

I conducted three interviews with each of the case study PSTs throughout the school year. The first interview occurred in October and was related to the PSTs’ backgrounds and perceptions of their initial summer courses in the program about culturally relevant teaching and their field placements in the urban district. The second interview occurred in December and was related to PSTs’ perceptions of their autumn courses and their plans for student teaching the following semester. The third interview occurred in April at the culmination of their student teaching and was related to their perceptions of their lesson planning and implementation, relationships with students, and overall successes and struggles during student teaching. These interviews took place at one of two local Cup o’ Joe coffee shop locations, with the exception of two interviews, which took place in my office on campus. I tried to conduct these interviews off campus for two reasons: 1) many of my PSTs did not have a campus parking pass, so in a public place, they did not have to pay for parking, and 2) I wanted the PSTs to feel as comfortable and conversational as possible, so by doing them outside of my office, I hoped to break down some of the power differentials. The two that I did conduct in my office took place there because of scheduling reasons. These interviews lasted between 25-50 minutes each.

I also conducted one interview with each of the three case study mentor teachers during year two of my study. These occurred in April in the teachers’ classrooms. One interview (with Mr. Truman) stretched over two days because his planning period was cut
short and because he was also rather verbose and eager to share his experiences. These interviews lasted between 45-80 minutes each. Interview protocols for the case study PSTs and their mentor teachers are included in Appendix C.

**Document Collection**

Document collection occurred in the form of PSTs’ weekly lesson plans during student teaching, my field notes taken during my observations of PSTs’ teaching, my anecdotal field notes taken from the 16 group mentoring sessions each year, and from bi-weekly written reflections that PSTs submitted to Carmen.

**Weekly lesson plans.** Per the requirements of the MCE program, PSTs had to submit lesson plans for the week ahead to Carmen by Saturday at 5:00pm using the designated MCE lesson plan template. As the university supervisor, it was one of my responsibilities to read the lessons and provide feedback on them before the PSTs plan on teaching them. I used this data to for my dissertation study as well to help me clarify what the PSTs did (or planned to do) on the days when I was not in to observe their teaching. I also used this written communication as one form of feedback and mentoring that I provided to the PSTs during their student teaching experience. An example of one PST’s full lesson plan using the MCE template is provided in Appendix D. An example of the written feedback that I provided to PSTs for their weekly lessons is below.
Example 3.1 Example of lesson plan feedback

LP#8 due 2/27/16

Hi Carmen,

Social Studies Plans: What strategies will you put into place to help you achieve your challenge of encouraging students to learn from their peers before asking the teacher for the answer? Some teachers give students or the whole group tickets of some kind to hand to the teacher to ask a question. You can also ask the students if they've asked every member of their group first, etc. Decide what you want to do, but you will have to choose something to do to see improvement here.

I like your questions for SS 2/29 particularly. Just be sure that you have scaffolding questions prepared if they are not able to answer them.

Language Arts 3/3: I really like your guilt activity and discussion questions following the video. These are true discussion questions and I envision students actually wanting to discuss them! This is a good change in your plans from previous ones. Make note of how students respond to this lesson :) I like this closer, but I am wondering if you could give another option for it. Maybe students could choose between this one and asking them to elaborate on the relevance of this theme to events happening today. This may get them more interested and also prepare them for your unit assessment.

3/4: One thing for you consider discussing with students is the purpose and audience of this particular piece of writing. Who is their audience? How will this impact their writing? Students may be a lot more interested if the audience is someone in addition to just you, as their teacher. Could you consider ways for this work to have a broader audience? The whole school somewhere? Community members? Who would care about what students have to say about this? Maybe let them help you brainstorm!

*This is the best that your plans have looked. Keep working hard to implement feedback and continuously connect your lessons to students' lives and to your overall unit goals and you will see great improvement as you are teaching them too!

Eileen

Field notes of PST observations. Also per the requirements of my supervisory duties for the MCE program, I observed PSTs teaching 7-8 times per year and took notes while doing so to guide our subsequent debriefings about their teaching. During observations, I typically sat in the back of the room, wrote notes on my laptop guided by the MCE required form, and occasionally walked around the classroom to hear students’ conversations and individual work more closely. The observation form entails four
columns across the top for the observer to highlight and expand upon the materials, content, strategies, and skills, evident in the lesson. An example of this portion of the observation field notes taken from an observation of Cory’s teaching is below.

*Example 3.2 Example of observation form*

**Field Observation Form—Observation # 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: Cory</th>
<th>School: Riverside Middle School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade/Topic: 6th LA</td>
<td>Date/Time: 2/5/16, 7:39 – 8:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor teacher: Ms. Willow</td>
<td>Observer: Eileen Buescher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary sources</td>
<td>Connections to prior learning</td>
<td>Warm-up: T posed questions about the Nacirema article</td>
<td>Literacies: Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>Foreshadowing: to the rest of this unit</td>
<td>Student centered: S created questions about the video and semi S-led discussion</td>
<td>Conceptual development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Support:</td>
<td>Vocabulary; stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic language (edTPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>Content specific; Questioning texts, making connections between texts</td>
<td>Teacher Centered:</td>
<td>Critical thinking: naming and challenging stereotypes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/Technology:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of information/sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger of a Single story video clip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphic Organizer creation/completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handouts:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content specific:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: passport booklets; notecards for video questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second part of the form is space for the observer to write script notes about the interactions between the PST and students throughout the lesson. Finally, the third part of the feedback form is space for the observer and PST to write goals for improvement and things to consider. I always used this form to guide my debriefings with PSTs, drawing on things that I heard them say throughout the lesson, and then kept the space open at the
bottom for us to co-construct their goals for improvement together, ensuring that the PST’s voice was evident in the goal.

**Anecdotal notes.** I wrote anecdotal field notes after each mentoring session to summarize topics addressed, highlighted any PSTs whose stories, triumphs, or concerns stood out, and tried to capture the overall tone of the mentoring session. I also described any methodological issues that stood out, such as issues with recordings, timing, etc. An example of one of my anecdotal notes is in Appendix E.

**Written reflections.** For seminar course requirements, the PSTs are given 8-10 reflection prompts each semester, to which they are expected to respond via Carmen. Per my supervisory duties, I responded to each of the PST’s reflection in Carmen and also sometimes used these anecdotes to initiate conversation in our group mentoring sessions. Topics generally were often about building relationships with students, establishing classroom management, and analyzing lesson plans and student learning. An example of one prompt and a portion of Carmen’s response is provided below.

*Example 3.3 Example of written reflection*

**Reflection #5 due 2/13/16**

**Prompt:**
Respond to each question
(1) Identify one classroom management situation. Briefly describe the events and the choices you made to resolve the situation. Upon reflection, what other choices could you have made to resolve the situation.
(2) If you were to rate the classroom climate on a scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (incredible), for THIS week, what would you give yourself and why. Cite specific examples across multiple days.
(3) How would you evaluate your week? In what areas do you feel you are gaining confidence and in what areas are you looking for support and feedback?

**Carmen:**
1) In one classroom management situation, students were working in groups to complete Continued
Example 3.3 cont.

questions based on a chapter of the book they had read. In most of the groups, students were pretty focused; there was a little bit of off-topic conversation but overall they were working very efficiently. I noticed one group however was very off task so I went over to try to redirect them with some questions but after leaving, they were back off task. I observed one student in particular that was pulling his group members from their work so I went up to him and asked him to move to another table to finish his work. He would not move but wouldn't continue working either; he just started to doodle on his paper. I told him to move again and after about 30 seconds he finally picked up his things and moved. Once he was moved, the other students in the group were much more focused. He, however did not complete the rest of his questions. Looking back, I probably should have spoken with him after moving him to check in and make sure he got his work done or see if something was wrong (his behavior wasn't new but his resistance was a little surprising). I think it may have helped to ask him directly to get back on track rather than tell him to move immediately.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study occurred in various phases. First I will describe my methods for data organization and then I will describe the analysis that I did to help me answer each of the three research questions. As I worked to answer each question, the process was a recursive cycle of constantly returning to my research questions and theoretical framing and looking across data samples, which occurred both during and after data collection. I also switched between both fine-grain discourse analysis and bigger picture analysis of discourse for its content, but not necessarily for its form or function of talk. My presentation of data represents this process and in doing so, I hope to show how my research benefitted from both lenses by contextualizing the findings in different ways.

Data Organization

Data organization in this study consisted of analytic writing, compiling and charting data sources from varying locations, and transcribing audio and video
recordings. The writing and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up (along with all video and audio recordings) on an external hard drive. I organized all forms of data by the person(s) it pertained to; so, I had a group sessions folder, and then one for Allison, Cory, and Carmen. As described in the previous section, I wrote anecdotal field notes after my group mentoring sessions and also wrote field notes during observations of PSTs. Both of these forms of writing contained elements of analysis in them, and were thus the first steps in my analysis process.

After initial writing, I did a rough transcription of every PST and mentor teacher interview and individual debriefing session that I had with each PST throughout the school year. This process is often also referred to as indexing, although my work was more in line with transcribing, than listing topical aspects of discussions, as indexing can imply. This rough transcription entailed writing out speakers’ general messages, typically without any of the hedging, qualifiers, or repetition that is often evident in talk, and dividing the speech by turns of talk. I created a three-column chart, which included the time, speakers’ general message (or specific depending on the detail in my transcriptions), and my reflections about it. My reflections typically consisted of listing initial conceptual and practical tools and incidents of appropriation that I thought were evident in the data and also writing notes to myself about future issues to look for in the data. I then pulled (from the university online course database) all of my feedback on each PST’s lesson plans and my responses to their discussion board reflections that they wrote throughout the year. I compiled interview and mentoring transcriptions and these documents into one document for each case study PST.
Research Question #1: Learning Settings

I returned to the data that I had transcribed and compiled to help me answer the first research questions, *What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA instruction occurred? What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective?* At the heart of this question is describing the conceptual and practical tools that were favored across PSTs’ central learning settings: their university courses and their field placement sites. Their university courses included an analysis of some foundational MCE courses like Foundations of Middle Childhood Education and Seminar (see Table 3.1) as well as the ELA Methods course that the case study PSTs all took. An understanding of what was valued in the field placement sites was gleaned through interviews with the three mentor teachers.

I used the field notes that I took during observations of some MCE class sessions, the MCE and ELA Methods course syllabi, transcriptions of interview with PSTs where I explicitly asked about their coursework, and transcriptions of the mentor teacher interviews to help understand what was valued in these two settings. For the coursework, I read over my notes and the syllabi and then did some initial coding (Saldaña, 2013) of the interviews with PSTs about their coursework to understand the conceptual and practical tools that were valued in these settings. By observing a few class sessions, examining the course syllabi, and asking the PSTs about them, I hoped to triangulate the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and understand the courses from the perspective of an observer and from the perspective of the students of the courses. Some of the tools from the university courses that were apparent from the coding process were culturally relevant
pedagogy, privilege, oppression, graffiti walls, and gallery walks, to be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four. To identify the tools that were valued in the field placements, I coded the mentor teacher interviews for conceptual and practical tools that they explicitly mentioned as being important to them, or that became apparent in their narratives as being important to them. Also a part of these discussions were the problems that teachers attempted to solve with the tools and their goals for teaching. I created a list of the tools that were valued by the teachers as apparent from my coding process, which included text choices, literary terminology, vocabulary, and the CCSS, to be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

**Research Question #2: Appropriation in Interactions**

Throughout my analysis, I constantly zoomed in and out, or looked at the part and then the whole, of my data (Rogers, 2011). To understand how PSTs learned from interactions that they had during mentoring sessions, I zoomed in to answer the second research question, which was, *Within the learning settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?* Initially interested in understanding the tensions that PSTs experience as they are learning to teach ELA, I conducted a preliminary round of coding (Saldaña, 2013) in which I marked conversations in which PSTs seemed to be co-constructioning and negotiating understanding regarding expectations, goals, and values across spaces. I noted places where PSTs referenced varying sources for their evolving beliefs, provided rationales for the applicability or inapplicability of particular ideologies and tools, and expressed tensions as they considered the opinions of others and navigated their own learning process. While this rough transcription and initial coding helped me to
recognize the interactions that I ultimately highlighted in Chapter Four as significant, I also engaged in a series of other tasks, which led me to keep returning to the key interactions.

Coding portions of transcripts helped me to identify some of the tools valued across spaces, but their use did not help me understand the complexities of PSTs’ experiences, nor would they have advanced the field of teacher education much. For example, it is widely accepted that PSTs learn about a multitude of conceptual and practical tools across settings, many of which do not align with the same goals, and even contradict each other (e.g., Johnson et al., 2003). I needed to focus in on specific exchanges between PSTs to better understand how issues of identity, agency, and power, were evident in their interactions, thus helping to advance theory regarding PST learning across spaces. Seeking to understand more about these issues, I kept returning to interactions and asking myself “What is happening in this event? And how is it happening?” (Bloome, Beierle, Grigorenko, & Goldman, 2009) with regard to how PSTs’ language helped to depict their experiences across spaces as meaningful. This questioning necessitated a focus on the linguistic form and function of PSTs’ talk, as well as the contextualization cues that they used. As both the function and contextualization cues stood out from other interactions during group mentoring sessions, I considered this to be relevant and worthy of examining further. The specific ways in which the talk stood out will be explored in more detail in the analysis of the transcripts in Chapter Four. In selecting and defining the boundaries of the interactions, I noted that the beginning and end were signaled by changes or shifts in goals, patterns of interaction, and discussion of tools and resources. The rough transcription, initial coding, and analytic questioning
described here supplied the groundwork for the following steps in the transcription process.

The group mentoring sessions from which the transcripts came, were rooted in conversation. The language that the PSTs used reflected and constituted the culture of the group and of the process of learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective. This focus on the “languaculture” (Agar, 2006) and the meaning that can be inferred from it, led me to divide the transcript up by message units (Green & Wallat, 1981). I reviewed the recordings numerous times listening for the contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) that the speakers used to signal conversational meaning, which included pauses, intonation, changes in volume and speed, and the use of reported speech in story-telling. As participants signaled to each other the boundaries of their messages from which meaning can be constructed in conversation, I also examined how boundaries of message units were conveyed. In designating changes in message units in an attempt to understand this event from an emic perspective, the changes had to be public and evident in the material. With the understanding that meaning is constructed as people act and react to each other, it provides the theoretical warranting for the focus on message units for analysis (Bloome et al., 2005).

Because I was interested in PSTs’ identity construction and evolving notions of what it means to teach ELA from a cultural perspective, made evident through their talk, I employed discourse analytic procedures that paid particular attention to not just what participants said, but how they said it. Therefore, the transcription conventions that I used, modified from Jefferson (1984), highlight participants’ cues that impact the function of their talk (see Appendix F for transcription conventions). This focus provided
a means for understanding how the PSTs assigned and constructed identities and understanding through taking up existing discourses or challenging and reconceptualizing fixed discourses (Bloome et al., 2005; Lewis & Ketter, 2011; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

These acts of participation and enactment of varying identities across spaces facilitates PSTs’ learning. Moje and Lewis (2007) argue that “as people acquire, appropriate, resist, or reconceptualize skills and knowledge within and across discourse communities, they continue to be formed as acting subjects” (p. 19). Throughout the transcription process, linguistic features emerged in the data, which included the use of: 1) evidentials to frame their narratives, 2) adverbial clauses that show changes in ideas before and after experiences or across differing spaces, and 3) pronoun usage and switching that shows evidence of PSTs positioning themselves and others in varying ways and appealing to their audience. The focus on these linguistic features allowed me to narrow in on how PSTs’ identity and knowledge construction were apparent in their talk.

**Research Question #3: Appropriation in Teaching Practices**

Based on my transcriptions and discourse analysis of key events in mentoring sessions, I returned to my third research question to examine how PSTs appropriated ideas of a cultural perspective in their teaching of ELA. The question asked, *How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’ understandings of a cultural perspective?* Once I finished data collection, I wrote an initial portrait or description of each PST’s experiences during their year-long placement based on what I recall sticking out to me – their strengths, struggles, relationships with
mentors and students, etc. These portraits also contained elements of analysis in them, as I drew on key events and my perceptions of them in writing them. I then created instructional chains (VanDerHeide & Newell, 2013) for the case study PSTs’ main unit that they planned and taught during student teaching. I created this by going back and reading over every lesson plan and observation field notes that I took for the lessons that I observed. I read them over and selected the main teaching and learning activities for each lesson, typically evident in their practical tools. This allowed me to compare the tools and ideas evident in conversations with them, per the transcriptions that I had done, with the tools evident in their actual teaching practices. This process was integral for the analysis of the case study PSTs, which followed.

Then, I reviewed data that I had compiled for each PST to look more intentionally for appropriation of conceptual and practical tools in their discourse. Examining the instructional chains ensured that I was focusing both on what PSTs said in conversation, and what they did in their teaching, a large contribution of this research. I used these chains to re-examine PSTs’ understanding of a cultural perspective in ELA teaching, made evident by their tool use, and most importantly, for information about the evidence of these tools in their teaching practices. I then went back and added to my initial description of each PST’s experiences based on this process. I also met with Allison and emailed Cory some of my initial findings as a form of member checking, to which they responded and agreed with what I had formulated at that point about their experiences in learning to teach ELA.

Drawing on other pre-service teacher education identity work (Alsup, 2006), I examined PSTs’ discourse and used PSTs’ feelings, experiences, and ideas to understand
larger themes in my data. I read over all of their data again and highlighted discourse events that I thought were particularly significant moments in which the PST’s discourse about teaching and learning were suggestive of their strengths and struggles. As I read, I looked for patterns within each PST’s data set and articulated the themes that I perceived to be evident in the data. During this process, I contacted Cory and Allison twice each by email with some additional clarifying questions, to which they responded. Once I had read over the entire data set, I created a list of issues and themes that I felt were a significant part of each PST’s journey of learning to teach. Finally, I read over the highlighted portions of the data again and revised and added to the list of conceptual and practical tools that I had identified as being important to each of the PSTs.

**Attribution of tools and themes.** Since I am theorizing my research from the perspective that learning to teach from a cultural perspective is impacted by the goals and motivations of people and settings across spaces, and PSTs’ perceptions and appropriation of ideas impact and are impacted by their evolving teacher identities, understanding from where PSTs attribute their ideas is significant to this work. As such, as other empirical work in pre-service English teacher education has done (Grossman, 1990; Newell & Connors, 2011), I reviewed data to determine attribution of ideas. To help me trace back to see where the themes came from (university courses, our mentoring sessions, from mentor teachers, etc.), I created a new document for each PST where I listed all of the initial themes and then went through my data again and copied and pasted written and verbal discourse events where these themes were explicitly addressed. I did this for a few reasons: 1) so that I would know which themes were more and less salient, and 2) unsure of how I was going to organize my findings still, I then went through this
same process with the other case study PSTs to see which themes overall were more salient for the group (of case study PSTs) and then used that to make decisions about how to structure my findings.
Chapter 4: Learning Settings and Learning from Interactions

In this chapter, I explore the various institutional, historical, and cultural factors of the learning settings for PSTs, including the classroom and school, and the students and teachers. As such, it addresses the first two research questions, 1) *What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA instruction occurred? What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective?*, and 2) *Within these settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?* I will discuss the university settings from which PSTs learned to teach about and with social justice as a conceptual framework with ELA by describing the goals and content (conceptual and practical tools) of some of the MCE program’s courses and the PSTs’ perceptions of them. Included in this description are the conceptual and practical tools that were valued in these settings and taken up by the PSTs. Additionally, I will highlight the values and goals of each field placement site for Allison, Cory, and Carmen, as described by each of their three different mentor teachers. To address the second research question, using discourse analysis as both a tool and theory to guide the presentation of and analysis of interactions (Bloome et al., 2005), I will focus on a few key interactions that were instrumental in Allison, Cory, and Carmen’s learning.
These interactions come from individual and group mentoring sessions and demonstrate how the PSTs socially constructed ideas about teaching from a cultural perspective with each other and me as their university supervisor. These questions represent my focus on both the larger context necessary to answer research questions one and three and the fine-grained analysis of specific interactions necessary to answer question two. In this way I am zooming out, then in, then out again to work to understand how beliefs about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective are reflected in and constructed by the discourse that PSTs used (Rogers, 2011), as evident in the conceptual and practical tools that they take up.

To guide this program analysis and to ensure that I am presenting as close to an emic perspective as possible, as is desired in ethnographic research (Heath, 1982; Heath & Street, 2008), I will consider the various tenets of the MCE program of that I was able to be a part. The areas of the program that I am drawing from are presented in the figure below.
Figure 4.1. Settings for learning in the MCE program

By triangulating my findings regarding the goals and speech events across these spaces and across time, I hoped to understand how PSTs’ learning conceptual and practical tools were socially constructed and influenced by varying people within various settings.

While these four settings were a major part of the program and PSTs’ learning, I also recognize that there were other factors that were harder to account for in understanding PSTs’ appropriation and attribution of ideas and ultimate decision-making in their teaching. In particular, PSTs inevitably relied on their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) in varying ways based on their own school experiences as students, as evident in Carmen’s description of some of her middle school teachers and Allison’s description of some college courses that she took outside of the MCE program. Whether it was evident in their discourse or not, using multiple sources to understand PSTs’ range of influences and to account for moments of discourse in which participants forget or
leave out information (Wortham & Reyes, 2015) helped me to more accurately understand PSTs’ socialization into and learning about the teaching profession.

**Middle Childhood Education Courses and Field Placement Analysis**

**MCE Foundational Courses: A Commitment to Urban Education**

The values of the MCE program and the extent to which the PSTs appropriated ideas from the range of settings into their discourse, lesson plans, and teaching actions was one major foci of this study, to be explored in the remainder of this section. Evidence of the MCE program’s commitment to urban education was heard and seen in the case study PSTs’ language, lesson plans, and teaching in a variety of capacities depending on the particular PST. For example, during interviews and interactions with PSTs during mentoring sessions, some were frequently heard using terms and discussing issues such as *deficit thinking* (Paris, 2012), *the white savior, oppressive ideologies* (Freire, 1968), and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In their lesson plans and post-observation debriefings, many touted their goals for creating engaging lessons to get their students interested in and excited about their ELA as a content area.

**Pre-service Teachers’ Perceptions of the MCE Program**

To understand PSTs’ perceptions of the MCE program, I asked the case study PSTs about their courses during interviews. I asked them to describe their classes, what they learned in each of them, and how they saw them relating to their teaching (interview questions - Appendix C). In particular, I was interested in their MCE foundations courses and ELA methods course. I also pulled data from individual and group conversations with them when they mentioned their courses or the program without my prompting. In looking at the ways in which PSTs discussed their program, the three themes became
apparent in the data: that their experiences in the MCE program was an “eye opening” experience, that the program became a guiding factor with how PSTs established relationships with their students, and that PSTs’ attempted to exercise empathy with regards to understanding their students. I will elaborate on these ideas and the tools that were valued in this setting using data collected in the sections below.

**An “eye opening” experience.** During conversations with Allison, Cory, and Carmen, they routinely referred to how much they learned in the program and how it differed from the types of educational experiences that they had had prior to the MCE program, particularly Allison and Cory. Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and other central conceptual tools of the program seemed to impact these PSTs in significant ways. When asked to describe his summer courses, which are the first three courses of the M.Ed. MCE program, Cory explained:

I think the biggest thing for me was just realizing- obviously there was such a heavy focus on oppression and trying not to oppress your students [slight laugh], but I think- I didn’t even realize how much just being white and male affected that without me necessarily even doing anything. Just my inherent privilege that I never really realized before because I like to think that I earn everything. I hate the idea of being given stuff. Um so that was definitely a big takeaway just realizing how many kids don’t have that. I mean they automatically come in behind. So that was probably my biggest thing was just coming to terms with that. And then just um with the Equity and Diversity [name of required course] as far as, I’d say like we talked a lot about how the LGBTQ stuff in there and just how how much that’s ignored in the school setting. Cuz I know I don’t ever remember
talking about that in a school setting. So just like ways to try and introduce that and the different- how much kids struggle with that because obviously that’s a hard thing to do for them. So that was the biggest thing in those two [courses] that I took away was just finding different ways to make your lessons relevant cuz I mean I grew up in a mostly white suburb so our education didn’t have a lot of that (Interview – 10/23/15).

Here Cory explicitly refers to the Foundations of Middle Childhood Education and Equity and Diversity courses that the PSTs took the summer before their field experiences began. Cory reflected on the courses and considered how they brought ideas to his attention, like his “inherent privilege” and the understanding that “many kids don’t have that” and therefore “automatically come in behind.” As Cory mentioned, guiding the MCE courses were the conceptual tools of culturally relevant pedagogy, oppression, and privilege. Course readings, discussions, and projects were rooted in these concepts that many PSTs were hearing about for the first time. Allison also related the program to her K-12 schooling and said “I had a great education growing up, but I wasn’t forced to think outside the box until I got to [large Midwestern university]. I hear so many different perspectives and think about things that I’ve never had to do until I got here.” She even described one of the M.Ed. courses as “so eye opening” (Interview – 11/20/14). Valuing multiple perspectives, particularly highlighting voices of marginalized peoples that are not often heard, was a central conceptual tool in the program and one that was ultimately evident in Allison’s teaching especially.
For Carmen, the overall ideas from the MCE foundational courses seemed to be less eye opening than they were for Cory and Allison, but the depth with which they discussed these issues was significant for her. As she explained in an interview,

**Carmen:** I knew about these things, but we talked about them a lot deeper than I had in the past... We talked a lot about intersectionality of all of these issues, which I always knew that it existed, but like I didn’t have the terminology for it and I didn’t realize how much like the more you investigate a certain topic the more you see like how many other factors are involved with it so you can’t really just isolate the one, you have to investigate all of the things combined.

**Eileen:** And with the intersectionality, was it talked about with regards to how you’re dealing with students?

**Carmen:** Yeah it was mainly with dealing with students and being like culturally responsive or relevant [slight laugh] all the acronyms um and just like what to keep in mind when you are coming in as a teacher with all of your biases that are like implicit and how you look at your students (Interview – 10/23/15).

Here Carmen mentions that the courses addressed the need to consider the intersectionality of the issues that impact how students participate and have success in school and the implicit biases that teachers have because they come from worlds different than those of their students. Based on PSTs’ descriptions of the MCE foundations courses, my review of course syllabi, and field notes taken during class session observations, it seems that the conceptual tools of cultural relevancy, oppression, and privilege were discussed in terms of (1) awareness of one’s own privilege, biases, and history; (2) the ways in which different people experience the world and how conditions
in society impact their lives; and (3) the need to be both sensitive to the experiences of their students and responsive in terms of creating a classroom culture, procedures, and activities that meet students’ needs. These tools and beliefs about culture undergirded the MCE general, foundation courses and ultimately shaped PSTs’ beliefs about culture too.

These new understandings were not initially easy for all of the PSTs to accept. When asked about how he reacted to the ideas presented in his MCE courses, Cory stated:

It was hard to think of myself like as an oppressor- it’s something you don’t want to think about, it kind of makes you feel like a bad person [laughs] so it was definitely a struggle. You kind of have to overcome your pride a little bit and be okay with that. So it was tough at first and I know a lot of us battled with it, like “what do you mean we’re oppressive? Like we didn’t do anything wrong just because we’re born white.” So I mean, it was hard definitely like “this is garbage, why why am I looked at as a bad person?” But I think just continuing to dig deeper into that really helped, and just like the the environment that [Tracey] kind of set for us to openly talk about these things and kind of get it all out in the open was really beneficial for sure (Interview – 10/23/15).

The open and supportive environment of the MCE courses that Cory mentioned likely fostered his appropriation of the conceptual tools into his thinking and understanding of his role as an ELA teacher. Additionally, Cory explained that because the tools of cultural relevancy, oppression, and privilege were central themes throughout much of the program, the PSTs were able to explore the concepts at a deep conceptual level, reflecting on and (re)considering their own life experiences in relation to their course readings.
Given the cultural and personal shock that many PSTs experience as members of the dominant teaching force (Sleeter, 2008), Cory’s initial reaction to his courses is not surprising. As the PSTs grappled with how they viewed themselves, it also had implications for how they viewed the world.

**Reading the world: the new normal.** For some PSTs in particular, the conceptual tools that served as the framework for the MCE courses shaped how they interpreted societal issues and events beyond ones they were experiencing in the classroom. Cory and Allison began to transfer the ideas from the MCE courses to their everyday lives, which they brought up during conversations with their peers and me. For example, when I asked Cory about whether or not courses ideas transferred to issues that he was experiencing in his field placement, he replied:

> Definitely. Not just in the field, but in everyday life. Everything, whether it’s commercials or things you see on the streets, I find myself criticizing every little thing. It’s made a big difference. And just listening to other teachers talk about stuff it’s like woah…Or as far as the feminism thing, one thing that stuck out to me with women’s rights was going to the Ohio State Fair, all of the people in charge of the games were always reaching out to the guys like, “you need to win this for the girl,” like they couldn’t play the games like they’re not strong enough with a hammer or whatever, so I remember commenting on that when we were there this past summer. So it’s just weird, like things like that I would have never thought of before, so it’s just strange (Interview – 10/23/15).

So for the PSTs, the conceptual tools that were valued in their coursework impacted the ways in which they viewed situations beyond their classroom teaching and immediate
problem-solving needs. Rather than providing practical tools for PSTs to replicate or implement in their teaching, the conceptual tools proved to last beyond the conclusion of the courses and extend beyond the walls of the classroom. As Allison stated, conversations in which she was challenged and forced to reconsider her stance were “refreshing” and allowed her “to talk about why we’re doing this” to ensure that the MCE courses were not reduced to just that – one great course from her program. But instead she reported that they impacted the way in which she viewed situations beyond the tools presented in the courses, which for Allison she did “not want to lose sight of that” (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15).

**Relationships with students.** Another prominent theme was the MCE program’s influence on PSTs’ notions about fostering relationships with students. A central conceptual tool of the program was considering their own life experiences and privileges, a key idea in research surrounding preparing White teachers for teaching diverse students (Sleeter, 2008). This impacted how the PSTs viewed their own life experiences as different from their students. For some PSTs, like Carmen, these differences became barriers between them and their students. She stated towards the beginning of the year that “I am coming from such a different place than my students, so I always want to keep that in the back of my head so that I’m not being like- I don’t want to push myself on them” (Interview – 10/23/15). However, she had a difficult time pulling the conceptual tool through into her practical decisions.

Cory also relied on course principles in how he intended to interact with students: “I know we talked about how teaching isn’t necessarily an authoritative thing anymore, like the guide on the side instead of the sage on the stage, but still just gaining that mutual
respect between them” (Interview – 10/23/15). Allison also considered some of the ideas from her courses in terms of how she conceptualized her relationship with students. She stated: “I want to rely on a more even playing field regarding power. We always talk about it in class, but it’s hard for me. I think it is just the way that I was taught and the way education is, everything is assigned, the teacher makes the decisions. I try to provide freedom and choice. We talk about it, but I don’t know exactly if I’m doing it (Interview – 12/17/14). Respect of students and a recognition of power differentials was a major theme for Allison, Cory, and Carmen.

**Discussion**

In this section, I described the goals of the MCE program through my observations of and experiences with the courses as well as by relying on three PSTs’ perceptions of the MCE program goals, as evident in their talk during interviews. I triangulated the data and perspectives available to me to portray the primary conceptual tools of the MCE program and what its program managers describe as its “commitment to urban education.” The data suggest that while each PST experienced the courses slightly differently, ideas regarding conceptual tools such as culturally relevant pedagogy, oppression, power, and privilege, and dismantling deficit thinking were nonetheless central to the MCE program. A summary of the tools that the PSTs were exposed to in their coursework is included at the end of this chapter in Table 4.1. Issues of diversity and equity have permeated much of educational research over the past few decades (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). The extent to which varying programs fulfill their commitment to preparing teachers with the knowledge and ways of thinking that can help them to better meet the needs of their diverse students has ranged and is still a cause for concern by
many researchers and educators (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). However, the data reveal that the courses in the MCE program described above did not just have one or two class sessions or that typical last chapter of the book about teaching dedicated to issues of diversity. Instead, conceptual tools were woven throughout the courses, they were discussed in depth, and at times, they were rooted in activities and discussions where PSTs were forced to reconsider their own lives and perspectives in relation to their new understandings.

**Literacy Methods for Middle Childhood: A Focus on Practical Approaches to Writing**

Unlike the MCE foundations, seminar, and capstone courses that PSTs took during summer, autumn, and spring semesters, the MCE program required a single ELA methods course during the autumn semester. During this semester, the PSTs also took another methods course for licensure in a second content area. For Allison, Cory, and Carmen this was social studies. As such, one ELA methods course specifically for middle level educators was expected to encapsulate the theoretical underpinnings, practical strategies, and assessment of the many strands of ELA – reading, writing, language, speaking, listening, etc. While I did not observe any class sessions, I reviewed the course syllabus and asked PSTs about their perceptions of it and course takeaways they had during interviews⁴. Their discussion of “Literacy Methods for Middle Childhood” and my review of the course syllabus helped me to understand some of the tools that were valued

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⁴ In presenting information about this course, I am aware that, as I did not observe class sessions myself or interview the instructor, I am presenting only the perspectives of the PSTs, and thus, only one side of the story. Also, as there was only one ELA methods course total, as opposed to the multiple MCE courses, there is less understanding about how PSTs learned to teach ELA specifically.
in this setting, and therefore how learning to teach ELA with a cultural perspective might have been fostered, which is the focus of this section.

Interviews with the three PSTs about Literacy Methods revealed a focus primarily on practical tools for writing instruction. Carmen stated that it was “very writing focused, and less reading” while Cory claimed that it “wasn’t much research – more strategy based things to get kids engaged in the process” (Interview – 12/11/15). One way that the instructional approaches to writing were taught was through “micro-teaches,” a central assignment in the course for which PSTs drew from an approach highlighted in one of the course texts (both of which were writing focused) and modeled for their peers. Both Allison and Cory were excited about the applicability of the micro-teaches that they did with peers where they “paired up with another student and taught the class for 20 minutes” (Interview – 12/17/14). Some of the practical tools that they mentioned were: take a stand, pass the shot, and graffiti walls. Based on PSTs’ description of these tools and my own understanding of some of them, it seems that many of these are aimed at helping students brainstorm topics and find a focus in their writing. Cory explained that they could be used for “stretching an idea, exploding a moment, or shrinking a bigger idea” (Interview – 12/11/15). Specifically, pass the shot provides students with a picture and they “have to write a story about the picture- what you think is going on in the picture” (Interview – 12/11/15). The PSTs explained that strategies such as these could help students get engaged and involved with the writing process and help teachers approach writing instruction in various ways.

Based on my review of the “essential questions and enduring understandings” in the course syllabus and other assignments such as the multi-modal multigenre paper, it is
likely that the instructor included these assignments to encourage larger beliefs, or
cognitive tools, about literacy. These course concepts and assignments were likely
aimed at showing the PSTs that varying approaches to writing instruction are valid and
that valuing students’ writing and composition processes is important for creating interest
and a classroom community of writers. However, the PSTs did not seem to connect (or
the connections were not made for them) how valuing students’ beliefs and writing and
employing varying approaches to writing instruction is important specifically for teaching
writing to students of diverse backgrounds. While there were some implicit references in
the course syllabus about valuing students’ various ways of speaking and writing, the
PSTs did not connect this with the varying practical tools for teaching writing that they
took from the course. Instead, these tools existed for the PSTs as ways to engage their
students and make teaching writing more enjoyable for the teacher and students. The
tools that the PSTs were exposed to in this setting are also outlined at the end of this
chapter in Table 4.1. A lack of focus on linking conceptual and practical tools for
teaching writing to diverse students was evident in PSTs’ takeaways from the course, and
ultimately, their pedagogical decisions during student teaching. This separation of tools
was especially evident in Cory’s teaching, to be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Field Placements: Goals for and Approaches to ELA Across School Settings

In the previous section on university courses I discussed some of the conceptual
and practical tools that shaped PSTs’ learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective
from one of their primary settings highlighted in Figure 4.1, the MCE courses. In this
section I will draw on interviews with the three case study mentor teachers at three
different urban middle schools to understand what they valued in these primary settings
and how they might have impacted PSTs’ learning to teach ELA. As I coded the interview transcriptions by noting the conceptual and practical tools that the teachers likely valued based on their discourse, I found many commonalities amongst the three of them in terms of their ideas about what they feel PSTs should leave student teaching knowing or being able to do. I will discuss the trends and outliers in terms of their beliefs about students, their content area, and managing a classroom in today’s educational environment.

**Relationships with Students**

Ms. Rees, Ms. Willow, and Mr. Truman, all middle level teachers with 15 or more years of experience, commented during interviews that forming relationships was the single most important thing for PSTs to know or be able to do upon leaving student teaching. This conceptual tool was evident in Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman’s discourse about their own philosophies about teaching even before I explicitly asked about what was important for PSTs to know. In particular, Mr. Truman drew on his own experience as a first year teacher in a different urban middle school in the district. After initial frustrations, he said, “I took the attitude ‘I will learn from you and you will learn from me’ and I go ‘I need to understand your world’ because I wasn’t being successful and they weren’t either” (Interview – 4/22/16). So for Mr. Truman, in order to build relationships with students, it was important to understand their backgrounds and histories. Understanding the worlds that students come into school with and from reflects other work on using ethnographic methods to learn about students for the purpose of understanding how these worlds impact students’ frameworks for thinking about school.
and other social issues and the ways in which they participate in school (Rex & Schiller, 2009).

All of the teachers recognized the ways in which adolescence in particular also impacts their roles as teachers and approaches in building relationships. Ms. Rees stated that it is important for her to “come in with a smile on your face and not hold grudges” despite what the students may have said or done previously because it is important for moving forward with relationship-building (Interview – 4/20/16). Similarly, Mr. Truman remarked that “it is important for students to be heard in middle school particularly. We have to take care of the emotional and academic”. In other words, teachers “can have high standards, but the kids need a safety net too” (Interview – 4/25/16). This focus on the need to meet students’ affective needs, particularly at the middle school level, has consistently been a conceptual tool guiding middle level education (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010) and the focus of much research in middle childhood education (Roorda, Koomen, & Spilt, 2011). Despite this, Ms. Willow believed that this is an area of education where teachers are not doing enough: “that’s what we’re losing and it has to be our priority. It is the only thing that makes this work” (Interview – 4/22/16). Building positive relationships with students based on an understanding of adolescence and adolescents’ needs guided Ms. Rees, Ms. Willow, and Mr. Truman’s philosophies about teaching and were specifically present in much of Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman’s feedback to and interactions with Cory and Carmen in varying ways.

Content Area Expertise

Conversations during debriefing sessions and evaluation meetings with the mentor teachers throughout the year support what each of them stated during their
Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman maintained a focus on supporting the many facets of both being a middle school student and becoming a teacher. This included fostering the emotional, organizational, personal, and content understandings for their students and their PST. Perhaps one reason for this focus is that Ms. Willow’s and Mr. Truman’s backgrounds are not specific to ELA, even though that was their predominant content area of teaching for that particular school year. Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman both had K-8 certifications, which they received before most states enacted the middle school certification model. Mr. Truman has taught ELA, math, science, and social studies to students in grades 3-8. Ms. Willow articulated her philosophy about teaching by stating,
I care that [students] are…whole [people] who can critically think and communicate in order to make our world better and to be…contributing member[s] of it. That is truly what my job is. I happen to be doing it as an ELA teacher. I’ve done it as a math and social studies teacher too. I don’t care what standards you give me, my goal is to get my students growing and learning. And if they happen to know what context clues are along the way, awesome for me (Interview – 4/22/16).

The idea that the content of ELA was secondary to other goals in teaching guided the feedback that the mentor teachers provided to their PSTs, and thus, PSTs’ understanding of their roles as teachers. Despite this, the PSTs spent the first half of the year observing and co-teaching with the mentor teachers, and then spent the second half of the year as student teachers trying to meet their mentor’s expectations for ELA teaching and planning. As such, the PSTs were inevitably influenced by the ELA goals, values, and practices of the mentor teachers, which are outlined below.

**Repetition of basic skills and terminology.** One of the tools that proved to be consistently used and valued by the three mentor teachers was the repetition of what they referred to as basic skills, terminology, and vocabulary through the year and from previous grade levels. They often commented on the limited academic backgrounds of the middle school students that they taught as the reason for having to repeatedly practice basic concepts the entire school year. By basic concepts, the teachers were referring to literary elements (e.g., plot, theme, simile, metaphor) and general vocabulary that they felt the students should have known by the time they reached their grade level. As Ms. Rees noted,
We do a lot with vocabulary and a lot of the basic stuff that they should have already learned, and trying to go a little deeper at times, but mostly the basics. When they’re taking a test and they don’t know what *convey* is or a *metaphor* or *personification*, then they can’t answer the question. They can’t dig deeper without the terminology. I still have kids asking ‘what’s a plot?’ They have trouble (Interview – 4/20/16).

This focus on the basics mirrors previous work that has documented the pressures teachers in high needs, urban schools face when their students come in “behind” or “at risk” and still must work to get students to reach “proficiency” in a standards-based educational climate (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Ms. Willow expressed similar concerns in her 6th grade ELA class stating that, as her students came from 41 different elementary schools, she cannot possibly know what they did in their previous school: “We have zero control. In the suburbs you would have 3 to 4, but 41?” (Interview – 4/22/16). That, combined with the shifting emphasis of ELA state tests on reading and now both reading and writing, has resulted in her spending more time teaching students how to write sentences, a skill, she argues, many do not have.

Mr. Truman’s notions of basic skills differed slightly from the others in that he was less concerned with rote memorization of terms like mood, tone, and imagery, and more concerned with vocabulary for the purposes of improving tests scores and engaging in real world conversations with others. He cited standardized testing as a driving factor for the emphasis on the vocabulary lessons: “When we look at our [testing] data, we know vocabulary is a big issue, so we try to come up with strategies across all grade levels” (Interview – 4/25/16). He wanted students to understand that they present
themselves through words, “word choice is so important and it represents who they are. Teaching them what I call register switching. Who they talk to and how matters” (Interview – 4/22/16). Mr. Truman’s use of the term register switching recalls work that encourages teachers to value students’ individual literacies and ways of communicating, while also teaching them the literacies that are valued in our mainstream world (Delpit, 1995). Whether to prepare students for standardized testing or a standardized way of communicating with the world, Ms. Rees, Ms. Willow, and Mr. Truman heavily valued the practical tools of literary terminology and “oral vocabulary” to ensure that their students are successful. Absent from the mentor teachers’ discourse about ELA teaching and mentoring was conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA with a social justice lens.

Unit planning: Text choice and CCSS. When I asked the mentor teachers about their approaches to planning during our interviews, a number of both conceptual and practical tools that each of them used to guide their planning and thinking about ELA teaching emerged. The tools emphasized in each placement impacted PSTs’ appropriation of them, and will therefore be discussed further in Chapter Five. Choosing the texts to center their teaching around proved to be an important issue for all three teachers, as they all brought it up on their own without me asking about texts. For Ms. Rees and Ms. Willow, choosing texts to meet instructional problems of student engagement was central to their decision making process. Ms. Rees explained how she disregarded the text recommendations from the district for 8th grade with the exception of Night because
The others are— I don’t want to say boring— but they can’t relate to them. One is *Nothing But the Truth*. I read it in college, these kids can’t relate to that. With their level of reading and their unwillingness to do work at home, like we can’t get them to do any of that, so we try to pick books that grasp their attention to keep them focused (Interview – 4/20/16).

The idea that texts can serve to hook students’ interest mirrors other work on student engagement (Ivey, 2017; Ivey & Johnston, 2013) and may be particularly important for students in urban settings. Ms. Willow echoed this idea and added that teachers also need to be excited about the text that they are reading with students, otherwise “the kids will see that you aren’t passionate about that and then they won’t be. So you have to be excited about your text, anticipate what your students will be excited about” (Interview – 4/22/16). Both of these teachers used texts, along with the CCSS to guide their unit planning. Mr. Truman also felt that text choice was important, but rather than using texts as a source for student engagement, he chose them based on the “linguistic demands”, or vocabulary, that students need to be reading and using in particular grade levels.

Additionally, he used the CCSS as a conceptual tool to guide his lessons to ensure that he was appropriately preparing students for the demands of high school and standardized testing over the course of the year. He claimed, “I love the Common Core because I like the rigor. I find for this age group it is what they need to know. I try to do mastery learning, so with writing, it is about the writing process” (Interview – 4/22/6). This focus on ELA as a cycle of continuously teaching standards over time, but in different ways and in more depth each time, emulates other work that suggests this is both a challenge and an opportunity in ELA teaching (Appleman, 2015b; Brass, 2015). Allison, Cory, and
Carmen all struggled with conceptualizing unit planning over time, so the particular ways in which they thought about this work and how it might have been a reflection or refraction of their mentor’s practices will be addressed in more depth in Chapter Five.

**Managing the Demands of Teaching**

Other than building positive relationships with students and understanding the content area of ELA, a final theme woven throughout much of the mentor teachers’ discourse was learning and applying tools to help them meet the more general, overarching, or outside pressures of teaching. For example, although I did not ever explicitly ask about the role of standardized testing in their planning, teaching, or mentoring, all three teachers used it to explain varying aspects of their duties or thinking processes. With regards to mentoring PSTs, Ms. Willow stated,

I feel like my job is to show them the secret world of teaching that they don’t get taught. When you get into your own classroom and the things I didn’t know, the politics, the amount of administrative things and details. Where I just went “wait what do you mean it’s my job to blah blah blah?” I talk about that with them because I don’t want them to be surprised. I was and new teachers can be jaded by all of that stuff. I don’t hide it from them that I’m frustrated by all of this testing. I’m not going to pretend that I love it. I don’t sugarcoat what I don’t like

(Interview – 4/22/16).

As previously mentioned, Ms. Willow also recognized that the state test has impacted her teaching of ELA since it has moved towards assessing reading and writing, she now finds that she also focuses more on both strands. Similarly, standardized testing has impacted practical tools around text choice for Mr. Truman, who noted that
kids don’t have a lot of stamina for novels. And the way it is with assessment, I do a lot of short articles. I don’t want to give up the novel, but some quarter I might have to and do all short stories because their ability to recall is not there. With this assignment now, I am reminding them of past things they’ve read and they need reminders (Interview – 4/22/16).

Beyond standardized tests impacting the teachers’ perspectives on teaching and instructional decisions, all three mentors were focused on developing their PSTs’ approaches to classroom management and understanding of other procedural aspects that are a part of maintaining a structured and cohesive classroom. For the mentor teachers, these practical tools ranged from having a system for collecting student papers, to making parent contacts, and allowing for bathroom breaks. These concerns permeated their feedback that they provided to the PSTs throughout the year and because of this, they were ultimately tools that the PSTs felt that they needed to master by the end of their student teaching.

Discussion

In this section I highlighted some of the conceptual and practical tools employed by the PSTs’ mentor teachers in order to describe their approaches to teaching ELA and a major part of the PSTs’ four primary learning settings outlined in Figure 4.1, the field placement schools. The tools that the PSTs were exposed to in this setting are also outlined at the end of this chapter in Table 4.1. As we will see, these approaches are largely misaligned with concerns with social justice approaches to ELA, leading to significant gaps for the PSTs as they transitioned from course work to field work (Newell, Tallman & Letcher, 2009). Outside pressures such as standardized testing, the
CCSS, and students’ varying academic backgrounds shaped many of the mentor teachers’ own teaching and, in turn, their mentoring of the PSTs. In some ways the conceptual and practical tools that they used represented their values about students, literacy, and learning. However, their tool use could also be interpreted as a reflection of the systems of power that the teachers are operating within and around (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Despite these institutional pressures, teachers such as Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman focused on conceptual tools like student engagement, which undergirded many of their practical decisions and worked to prevent “ELA teachers [from] easily fall[ing] into, ‘let’s read and do a worksheet, read and do a worksheet’” (Interview – 4/22/16). The mentor teachers made many pedagogical decisions in response to their students, the standards, and conflicting ideas about ELA instruction. However, teaching ELA from a cultural perspective was either completely absent from their decision-making or was achieved in ways that were more implicitly or loosely tied to the university’s goals for culturally relevant teaching than explicitly. For example, while the mentors had their students’ interests and skill levels at the forefront when choosing texts or (re)teaching basic skills, the university’s notions of culturally relevant teaching were different. Including the PSTs in conversations about the tensions and juxtapositions around the contextualized decision-making inherent within culturally relevant teaching in a standardized curriculum is important work (Fecho, Falter, & Hong, 2016) and would have helped foster PSTs’ appropriation of tools for achieving this had they occurred in field placement sites. Interactions about values and tools and how they can impact PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective in ELA teaching are the focus of the next section.
Mentoring Sessions Analysis

The spaces in which PSTs are learning to teach, their social positioning, and the degree of agency that they have in these spaces impacts their teacher identities and learning to teach (Hall, Johnson, Juzwik, Wortham, & Mosley, 2010). As I described above, PSTs are often placed in the middle of the university-school divide and faced with navigating the differing expectations, goals, and practices across these complex, and sometimes conflicting spaces (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). The spaces in which PSTs learn, the cultural ideologies within them, and engagement in cultural practices with people in these spaces can impact their agency in making pedagogical decisions (Grossman et al., 2000; Johnson, et al., 2003) and their teacher identities (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Creating a space as I attempted to do during the mentoring sessions can offer a way to explore and examine some of the institutional forces and tensions PSTs encounter as well as help to maintain cultural systems as “it influences identities and subjectivities, and provides a ground for accepted and contested positions” (Keating, 2015, p. 255). As PSTs are inundated with varying messages across spaces, they have to socially construct and challenge cultural ideologies that are a part of different spaces regarding what is assumed about knowledge and power for students and the schools in which they teach (Bloome et al., 2005). The university classroom and student teaching spaces can serve to constrain PSTs or provide them with opportunities for agency. This analysis of mentoring sessions shows how dialogic practices can foster PSTs’ sense of agency as they establish their own evolving teacher identities (Bieler, 2010; 2013). Rooted in conversation, PST learning is constructed in these spaces “not because the speakers take turns, but because [discourse] is continually structured by
tension, even conflict, between the conversants, between self and other, as one voice ‘refracts’ another’ (Nystrand, 1997, p. 8). In dialogic interactions, the PSTs and mentor make room for others so that voices and contributions are balanced and used to negotiate meaning (Nystrand, 1997). Through dialogic talk and engagement in cultural practices, PSTs’ agency might be fostered or thwarted, as will their teaching and social identities. Creating a teacher identity is developed in conjunction with the social identities that PSTs also construct as they interact with each other and “as a consequence of the evolving social structures of social institutions” (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 101). These identities and the appropriation of a cultural perspective in learning to teach ELA, shaped by and reflected in PSTs’ language and tensions around tool use, are the focus of this section.

As PSTs engaged in dialogic talk around their instructional choices, they revealed how learning is socially constructed through language and how the representative and telling cases (Mitchell, 1984) that I will highlight in this section demonstrate the significance of talk in PSTs’ learning (Richardson, 1994). Using a fine-grained discourse analysis, I will “zoom in” (Rogers, 2011) and discuss four interactions in which PSTs were constructing knowledge about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective through appropriating ideas about tools, values, and goals from multiple settings into their discourse. The interactions came from group mentoring sessions – one during year one of the study and three during year two. I will first provide some context for each event and then highlight the themes evident in the events from my analysis.

**Text Choice and *The Freedom Writers Diary***

The linguistic features and cultural ideologies present in the first interaction classify it as a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) in this study, which also contributed to my
choosing it for analysis. Telling cases help to make visible the theoretical connections in the event and highlight the how its context-specific particularities have meaning and implications at a larger level as well. The warrant for a telling case is that the internal structure of the case requires “repairs” that make visible the underlying cultural models and ideologies in which the case is embedded. There is evidence within transcript 4.1 that there were various repairs being made by the PSTs, which indexed underlying cultural ideologies. Examples of these repairs and their implications are discussed in the analysis of the transcript. The implications that can be drawn from examining the language in this event about the PSTs’ experiences in this study, as well as learning to teach across settings at a more macro level, provide the rationale for its central focus of analysis.

This first conversation featured in the excerpts of transcript below occurred during the first year of the study (also called the “breadth phase” – see Figure 3.1) in the last group mentoring session of autumn semester – the last session before the PSTs began their student teaching. I asked the PSTs to think about some of their goals for student teaching and gave them a couple minutes to think. Then they shared with the group some of their goals. The conversation picked up after Allison expressed that she hoped to teach I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood up for Education and Changed the World, a memoir by Malala Yousafzai (2014), which would meet her mentor teacher’s request for her to teach a nonfiction book during her student teaching. Allison described why she wanted to teach this particular novel in relation to one that she did not want to teach, or felt that she should or could not – The Freedom Writers Diary, by Erin Gruwell (1999). It is at this point where the transcription for analysis begins.
Transcript 4.1

Because I really want to do it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>because I really want to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>and like the last student teacher did Freedom Writers last year but like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>I really like that but we were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Like I was taught in one of my university classes that that was like not a book to teach because I don’t know in Ethics name of required course right&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of the evidentials used by the PSTs throughout this interaction indicate knowledge based on beliefs. For example, “I think, I feel, I don’t know” were often used and paired with contextualization cues that are significant in indicating the tensions that they face in navigating multiple ideologies across settings and their social positioning in the group. In line 4, Allison, a white female M.Ed. PST in her early 20s, offers the first example of this, as she rather hesitantly explains to the group why she does not think she should read The Freedom Writer’s Diary with her students. Her use of “I don’t know” as she lowered her voice and slows her speech captures an episode in which she resisted or was hesitant to identify with a particular social identity, in this case, the identity of a student adopting the beliefs of her Ethics instructor or that of a “progressive” educator. This tension between university ideologies conflicting with practical decision-making regarding text choices represents just one tension PSTs often face as they construct their teacher identities (Alsup, 2006).

Instead, Allison began the narrative by positioning herself with her peers by drawing on their collective experience in the Ethics course together, demonstrated through her use of “right” at the end combined with a rising intonation aimed at her
peers. Further, Allison initially pulled her peers into the narrative through “we were” in line 3, but then retracted this by shifting to first person pronouns in her statement of “I was taught in one of my classes” in line 4. This switch in pronoun usage highlights Allison’s tentativeness to draw her peers into her evolving, but fraught-filled ideas about the expectations for “good” teaching. As a part of this negotiating of good teaching practices, in this excerpt and in many after, Allison referred to what she was taught in the university setting about cultural sensitivity when making text choices. By continually referring to her classes, and even using reported speech that she perceived hearing in them, she seems to place the university’s approach to culturally relevant teaching in high regard. The tendency to affirm authority figures from outside the K-12 school setting when addressing issues of race in the teaching of literature parallels other work examining the practices of in-service teachers as they navigate conversations of race with their students (Thomas, 2015). Allison’s inclination to do so represents her negotiations between personal beliefs and professional expectations, contributing to her evolving use of conceptual tools for teaching literature.

Allison’s use of adverbial clauses in this interaction further support the tensions that she faces in understanding conflicting notions of “good” teaching. In line 3 Allison uses the word “but”, which shows the contrast between her notion of what is appropriate in teaching and others’ notions, as in the one of her Ethics instructor. Adverbial clauses with elements of evaluation, such as this one in line 3 (“I really like that but we were”), highlight PSTs’ resistance towards explicitly positioning themselves as aligning with one set of expectations over another as they work to construct their own teaching identities. This excerpt shows how Allison uses language conflictingly and unevenly (“I really like
that but”, “we were/I was”, “I don’t know”, “right”) to represent herself and her ideas about teaching.

The conversation continued with Allison introducing the concept of the “white savior” to support her claim, to which another PST confirms. After Allison’s initial speaking turn in this event, Colleen, another white female PST in her early 20s, although one of the three B.S.Ed. students, explained that students may not pick up on the racist implications in *The Freedom Writer’s Diary*. She received some support for this argument from another peer, Misty, who shared that her mother taught the novel in her classroom.

**Transcript 4.2**

*Like that’s a very small aspect of it*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Colleen</td>
<td>I think with that book though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>Like that’s a very small aspect of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td>I think the part is like regardless of her skin color or her.. um.. class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>I mean she was able to build this great community in the classroom where they became motivated and excited about learning and believed in themselves and I think that’s so much more important than &lt;you know&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>And I think with a lot of books it’s like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td>I think sometimes we’re in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s kind of like you’re so nit-picky about all of these little things that are happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>But OVERALL I think if you just focus on the positive message of what you know they did together not just her.. cuz I mean it was ALL of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>Then I think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>You can like teach it in a more positive light instead of that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;but I do know in like our&lt; classes on like Equity and Diversity <em>{name of required course}</em> I always think we’re like very &lt;nit-picky&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td>And sometimes I think it’s better to just focus on the positive <em>{cutesy-voice and smiles as she says positive}</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of evidentials, evaluative phrases, and pronoun switching encoding PSTs’ narratives and negotiations of their social identities and ideas about good teaching during this targeted event was not limited to just Allison. The evidentials and contextualization cues in this excerpt highlight Colleen’s tensions among the goals of the university coursework on social justice, her own background as a white female, and sharing her beliefs with her peers. The phrase “I think” can be interpreted as either a hedge or an assertion depending on the context of the discourse. In this one turn at talk, Colleen used “I think” nine times to assert her way through her narrative. This is particularly captured in line 52 when Colleen finishes her narrative by saying “sometimes I think it’s better to just focus on the positive” in what I claim was a “cutesy-voice”. That is, by focusing on the positive, smiling, and talking in a certain tone, her words encode her beliefs about the traits of a “good” teacher. I also interpret this narrative as Colleen choosing to embody a particular identity in front of her peers of being a kind and thoughtful teacher.

Colleen also made use of a number of adverbial clauses throughout her speech, which represent contrasting ideologies about ELA teaching. For example, in line 41, her use of “though” separates the possibility of *The Freedom Writer’s Diary* as perpetuating a message of the white savior introduced by Allison in line 7. Colleen’s rejection of this attempt at problematizing issues of race and text choice in the classroom further shows her understanding of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective to be one in which teachers make curricular and instructional decisions that do not incite conflict, but instead work to maintain cultural norms. Further, Colleen seemed to downplay the idea that a practical tool such as text choice could work to either disrupt or reinforce some of the
conceptual tools such as oppression that the PSTs learned about from their university MCE courses. Colleen only mildly addressed what these cultural norms might be, as evidenced in lines 44-45, as she quietly stated them to be “you know.” Instead, she seems to value making pedagogical decisions around the teaching of literature with “positive messages” and based on ideas that are more than just “a very small aspect of” the text. This is in contrast to being “nit-picky” about books, as she claimed “we’re”/”you’re” used to doing in college in lines 46-47. Colleen’s agentic voice is captured at the end of the narrative as she utilized an additional adverbial clause. In line 51, in a speed faster than her normal speech, Colleen initiated and established her claim with “but I do know”, showing how through engaging in dialogic talk, she created a more firmly held identity of herself as a teacher capable of making sound instructional decisions and as a contributing member of the social group.

As PSTs further engaged in dialogic talk about the subject, the tensions inherent in learning to teach ELA from a variety of settings became more apparent. The PSTs continued to voice different ideas and concerns about whether there could be appropriate ways to teach The Freedom Writer’s Diary, such as using a book and movie comparison while also meeting national ELA standards. Misty, a white female B.S.Ed. PST in her 40s, then pushed the group’s thinking even further when she challenges them with another question.
**Transcript 4.3**

*Would a black woman have made a difference*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Misty</td>
<td>You know yeah she {teacher in <em>The Freedom Writer’s Diary</em>} was a white woman but HOWEVER I mean…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>Would a black woman have made a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;I mean if she came in and did the same thing&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td>You know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td>The overall MESSAGE is more powerful than the race of the teacher I think</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Misty’s question to the group (“Would a black woman have made a difference?”) demonstrates the dialogic nature of the conversation, which was not guided by any one person or setting’s values and allowed for conflicts to exist as they worked to negotiate meaning together (Nystrand, 1997). While Misty’s heavy emphasis on the words “however” and “message” in her counter-questioning hint at how Misty might answer her own question, even before she ultimately did, the existence of this question in the conversation is significant. While this conversation indicates the tensions that existed within the group and across teacher education settings about issues of racial, sexual, and other inequalities in texts and in other conceptual and practical tools, the PSTs were still able to openly discuss tough topics together, just as they may (or may not) eventually do with their students. The tensions across settings and amongst participants, paired with the safe space established within this group, allowed for productive tensions to exist, that is, those where PST learning was fostered through the discussion of “socially contextualized intellectual accommodations” around text choices (Smagorinsky et al., 2004, p. 22).

After this question, the conversation continued with the PSTs discussing an activity from one of their courses in which they critiqued movies such as the 1995
teaching classic, Dangerous Minds. Allison commented, “you would think that that would be like such a great movie to show”, until they selected scenes that reinforced the need for a white savior in urban communities. The conversation again came to a point when Allison defends her initial stance that she should not teach The Freedom Writer’s Diary, or texts with a similar message, in her class.

**Transcript 4.4**

*I’m just playing devil’s advocate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>And I think that was the whole point of “Look at all these movies that portray this white savior…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
<td>And there’s really no-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know it’s just it’s just interesting I guess sorry I didn’t mean like {nervous laugh as she says I didn’t mean like}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Misty</td>
<td>MY question is..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td>do KIDS… at certain age levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;are their minds&gt; &gt;and I’m just- I’m just playing devil’s advocate&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>&gt;yeah that’s FINE&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Misty</td>
<td>You know what I mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>OH YEAH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Misty</td>
<td>I’m not saying this is the right way…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This final example illustrates an exchange where Misty continued to challenge Allison’s attempts to align herself with the goals and expectations of her teacher education program, that is, narratives of teachers as white saviors ought to be avoided. Misty’s challenge draws on Allison’s comments made in previous portions of the transcript and in the reported speech in line 116 with, “Look at all these movies that portray the white savior.” In this instance of reported speech Allison revoiced her belief that learning to teach is transformative and enlightening, propelled by activities and discussions that she had in some of the classes that she referenced in previous lines. By
continuing to remind her peers of lessons from the courses that they all took using her instructors’ reported speech (“Look at all these movies” and “Never show this in your class”), she enacts a social identity for her peers that mirrors the role these instructors played in her journey of learning to teach – one in which they problematized social and cultural norms surrounding issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and beyond.

The belief that Allison referenced and helped to create, one in which teaching ELA from a cultural perspective is rooted in raising and exploring social justice issues, is juxtaposed by another belief about teaching, which Misty captured in this excerpt. Her use of and emphasis on the word “kids” in line 120 expresses the idea that the conceptual tools valued in the university courses are in many ways invalid or impractical for teaching “kids” today. As Misty questioned the relevance of considering students’ lives and abilities when making pedagogical decisions, this builds on the argument that Colleen began to make in Transcript 4.2 when she refers to the “nit-picky” practices of the university. In this way, Misty and Colleen push back on the conceptual tools valued by the university about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective. Specifically, their discourse works to position conceptual tools related to oppression and power as “nit-picky” or too advanced for the minds of “kids.” This transcript suggests that PSTs like Allison and Misty appropriated the conceptual tools from their university coursework into their beliefs about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective in very different ways.

The cultural ideologies underpinning the PSTs’ discourse were made visible through repairs evident in this interaction as both Allison and Misty used evidentials, clauses, and pronouns to make appeals to each other as their audience. The evidentials used by Allison show her belief in the reliability and validity of her claim, thus impacting
her social identity within the group. In line 118 in particular, Allison interrupted her own point to apologize to the group and say “I don’t know it’s just it’s just interesting I guess sorry I didn’t mean like” as she nervously laughed in front of her peers. This strong hedging in a variety of linguistic forms within just one message unit captures an episode in which Allison reverts back to resisting the social identity of one who contributes to the conversation of problematizing the roles and responsibilities of being a teacher. Repairs were seen in the clauses and pronouns that Allison and Misty used as they appealed to each other and their other peers who were present, but not verbally contributing at the time. For example, Misty’s use of “and” in line 121 to distinguish her question from her claim that she is “just playing devil’s advocate” showed contrast between her perception of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective, and the expectations of her peers about how to operate as a teacher, and as a member of this peer group. In this regard then, her social identity was at stake, made evident through the numerous repairs she made in the remainder of this interaction, as in lines 123 (“You know what I mean”) and 125 (“I’m not saying this is the right way”). Also at stake is Allison’s social identity, and not wanting to appear too opinionated, she responded with emphatic and immediate claims of “yeah that’s fine” and “oh yeah” in lines 122 and 124. Allison and Misty’s language use in the co-construction of this narrative about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective reflects their social identities as they actively tried to avoid positioning or being positioned by each other in ways that may seem undesirable to them or their peers.

Discussion. My analysis of this event demonstrates PSTs caught between navigating the different expectations for and interpretations of learning how to teach ELA as defined by individual PSTs, their collective group, and the various contexts (university
and school). This culture of conflicting and opposing views regarding what it means to be a “good” teacher was constituted by and reflected in their language. On the surface level, the PSTs negotiated whether or not it is appropriate to teach *The Freedom Writers Diary*, led by Allison who continued to argue against it. Yet on another level, they problematized “how language, race, education, and power operate in their world” (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 93) and what their roles and responsibilities were in engaging their future students in these conversations. During the targeted conversation, the PSTs shared narratives, recalled university course concepts, and challenged each other regarding their textual and pedagogical decisions and ultimately, their role as teachers of students in urban classrooms. They were helping their peer, Allison, decide what was important to her, while also constructing their own teaching philosophies in the process. This telling case, replete with repairs made by the various PSTs, helps to make visible the underlying ideologies of various learning settings regarding what it means to teach ELA from a cultural perspective.

**Cursive Handwriting and Values in ELA Planning**

While the first interaction was a telling case highlighted to reveal underlying cultural ideologies about learning to make text choices and to teach reading across settings, the transcript below is a representative case. In this regard, it highlights an example of interactions that PSTs engaged in throughout the year in which they negotiated ideas about teaching, explored the tensions between teaching ELA across settings, and worked to co-construct knowledge together. The discussions around cultural perspectives in teaching (even if they did not explicitly use this term) and the tensions about ELA teaching within and across settings are how the cultural processes are made
visible in this representative case and others like it. The dialogic nature of the conversation, as multiple people contributed to the building of knowledge, are how the social processes are made visible in this representative case and others like it. These underlying cultural and social processes that this interaction represents help to define the socialization process of learning to teach ELA.

Conversations with peers where the influence of the curriculum (from courses and mentoring) about teaching from a cultural perspective were apparent throughout the school year, impacting the PSTs’ evolving philosophies about teaching and their appropriation of these ideas into their discourse and practices. The second interaction came from year two of the study and occurred in January of spring semester, just at the start of student teaching. Carmen, one of the case study PSTs introduced in Chapter Three, initiated the conversation by sharing frustrations over a writing assignment that her mentor teacher, Mr. Truman, used in their class that required students to write an essay about Frederick Douglass in cursive handwriting. The cursive handwriting was ultimately the controversial aspect of the assignment for Carmen, her students, and some of the other PSTs.

Transcript 4.5

*This horrible paper handwritten cursive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>So right now he’s finishing up..this horrible paper handwritten. cursive. about Frederick Douglass that they’re doing {smiles} but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>I hope they didn’t have to learn cursive anymore (xx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>No they don’t- none of them know how to write it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>He spent a DAY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Transcript 4.5 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cory</th>
<th>Carmen</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Seems like an awful waste of time</td>
<td>[He spent a DAY] teaching them cursive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>[I mean ugh] {looks at two other peers to get agreement}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>And they have to write this paper in the best cursive possible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Blue or black ink.</td>
<td>No white out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No cross outs.</td>
<td>So kids’ll like..they get halfway through the paper {makes writing gesture}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>[Make a mistake]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>[N:o way]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>And then have to start over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>That’s such a waste of time {slight laugh}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>And he- OBVIOUSLY ALL of the kids agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>They’re like “why are we doing this”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>“This is stupid”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>“No one writes in cursive anymore”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>And he’s like “Ms. {O’Grady} learned how to write in cursive”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>And I was like “[uhh I’]” {laughs}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>[I don’t remember doing that] {shakes head no}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>And then he’s like &gt;&gt;research shows that people that write in cursive are smart:::er”&lt;&lt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>I was like “that’s correlation not causation”&lt;&lt; {laughs}. um</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>He he..yesterday they were almost done-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>It’s due tomorrow because it’s the end of the grading period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>Yesterday he asked me “are you gonna have kids do this when “you’re a teacher” I was like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>{high pitch} “Well..I don’t know..”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>{high pitch} “Just cuz like it’s a really tough skill to learn and none of these”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>“Not all of the kids have learned it so like you have to teach them which is a challenge and then like”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>“I don’t know that I see a place for it in my classroom {moves hands in a juggling/balancing way} just cuz like they don’t use a lot of-”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>“Like handwriting’s just not a thing anymore”..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of evaluation to index people and contexts permeates this interaction, thus contributing to the PSTs’ evolving teacher identities and beliefs about teaching ELA
specifically. Carmen began by describing the cursive handwriting assignment as “this horrible paper” in line 1. It appears that she was going to be finished with the narrative through her use of the word “but,” paired with the contextualization cues of lowering her speech and trailing off. However, Carmen was propelled to continue her narrative once Cory responded to it, preventing the topic from being dropped by the other participants in the group. She was encouraged in her beliefs through Cory’s use of “an awful waste of time” in line 5, prompting Carmen to deliver the narrative in a more ardent tone with a more attentive and concurring audience in mind, as seen in lines 8-11 with Carmen’s terse descriptive phrases outlining the details of the assignment. The evaluative indexicals used throughout this event worked to “characterize and evaluate narrated characters and narrating participants” (Wortham & Reyes, 2015, p. 51), particularly Mr. Truman and Carmen. The degree of explicit or implicit evaluation evident in PSTs’ word choice varied, but served to position Carmen in stark contrast from the ideologies and actions of her mentor.

Another key feature of this interaction was the use of reported speech by Carmen to voice the characters in this narrated event. In a high-pitched tone, replicating the pitch that she likely used in the actual conversation with her mentor, Carmen used direct reported speech in lines 29-30 to show how she responded to her mentor’s question about her intentions of using a similar assignment in her future classroom. Her pitch highlights the nerves that she likely felt as she hinted to her mentor that she did not necessarily agree with the premise of the assignment. Also indicating this was that her first response to her mentor was “well I don’t know”, even though it was apparent from the rest of the narrative that she shared with the group that she did in fact know if she would use the
assignment or not. Voicing inevitably involves evaluation and thus, leads to social action, shown as Carmen continued to be affirmed in her belief throughout the narrative that “handwriting’s just not a thing anymore”.

Reported speech was also used by Carmen in this event to perform a particular identity for her audience, even if the speech was not actually accurate. For example, lines 29-32 indicate responses that she actually gave to her mentor, as her word choice (“I don’t know” in lines 29 and 32) and contextualization cues (high pitch and juggling hand gestures) indicate the tension that she felt while saying these things. However, there were also moments in which Carmen indicated that the things she was saying were her exact speech to Mr. Truman. However, based on her cues and what I know about Carmen, she likely did not say these exact things. In particular, in line 25 Carmen remarked that “that’s correlation not causation,” and in line 33, she states “like handwriting’s just not a thing anymore”. While Carmen may have been thinking these things in the actual conversation with Mr. Truman, based on the emphatic way that she stated them compared to how she stated other reported speech, I do not believe that she said them. Additionally, she was performing a narrative that by the end she felt more confident in because the verbal and nonverbal feedback given to her by her peers indicated that they agreed with her. Noting these instances of speech where the PSTs worked to perform particular social identities is important for understanding how PSTs appropriated concepts about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective into their discourse while interacting with people across settings.

The conversation continued as Carrie, another PST with a concentration in ELA, commented that cursive handwriting is a writing milestone in their district’s curriculum
guide, but that she and her mentor teacher are ignoring it. Carmen continued to be fueled by this, eventually loudly stating that cursive is “obsolete” in perhaps the most firm tone that she had yet used. As I had been encouraging the PSTs to consider the message sent to students as a result of their instructional choices, I did the same in this conversation, which is where the conversation then picks up.

**Transcript 4.6**

*Power*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>So what do you think that says about that assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think that says um about what he values about uh..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>🔫 Writing and language and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>POWER {laughs. Carmen does too}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cory served as a leader in the group in that he was generally not embarrassed to share his ideas and confusions, as is sometimes the case for PSTs. He also often saw and made the link for others between course concepts and the realities of what was occurring in their classrooms. In this example then, Cory clearly made the connection to an idea from a MCE course that a teacher could exert power over students, thereby serving as an oppressor, even if not intentionally (Flynn, 2012; Freire, 1968). While my question to the PSTs was not intended with this exact answer in mind, I did want the PSTs to explore their concepts about teaching ELA laden within their instructional choices (i.e., there is one right answer to all questions, reading literature to find the hidden meaning, a structural approach to writing as the right format, etc.). In doing so, my questioning functioned as a form of distributed scaffolding in which I served as the “designer of activity settings for preservice teacher candidates, through which the students
construct[ed] their own conceptions of teaching culturally diverse populations” based on the various influences of which they were a part (Smagorinsky, Clayton, & Johnson, 2015, p. 71). So rather than leading them to one revolutionary understanding about their roles as teachers, my question in this example and throughout other transcripts, provided PSTs the opportunity to explore issues and consider their experiences from a variety of contexts.

This example of the handwriting assignment and Cory’s reaction to it is not to argue whether or not Carmen’s mentor teacher intended to or did exert power over his students through his instructional activities. It is to show how Cory was impacted by concepts from courses and conversations with his peers and me about making curricular and instructional choices that demonstrate to students the value of their literacies and experiences, rather than trying to erase them. Interactions over time and across spaces impacted the ways in which Cory appropriated these ideas into his discourse. Additionally, Cory was aware of the power that he inherently had as a white male and as a teacher in the classroom, so he made decisions during his student teaching in aims of also giving students a voice and a presence in the room. Cory’s immediate and emphatic response of “power” to my question about values shows how these ideas permeated his thinking across situations and events, ultimately impacting his teaching. His pedagogical decisions, as intending to align with this concept, will be explored in Chapter Five.

The conversation continued as Carmen made connections between Mr. Truman’s decisions and her own seventh grade teacher’s actions, as she recalled them. This narrative continued the flow of conversation that had been established so far in that it was laden with evaluation of other teachers’ decisions and served to distinguish these PSTs
from those who might make pedagogical decisions opposite to the ideals that they had hoped to achieve of being progressive, relevant teachers for their students. At this point, Carrie entered the conversation again and worked to focus on students and the conceptual tool of relevancy that might guide teachers’ decisions.

**Transcript 4.7**

*Like there’s like a huge disconnect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>It sounds to me like he thinks cursive is really relevant and they don’t think it’s relevant at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>Like there’s a like huge disconnect between what he thinks they need and what they think they ^need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;Like I know our kids&lt; really want to write their signatures in cursive and &gt;some really want to WRITE in cursive&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Where it would be relevant to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cuz that’s like something they ^desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td>But the way he’s making them do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td>Even if they really wanted to learn cursive it’s not an environment where they can..express that they want to learn cursive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>cuz everyone else is hating the assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;You know what I ^mean&lt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carrie propelled the discussion into a more action-oriented one by defining the problem in lines 58 and 60 in more general concepts than the specific context of the writing assignment in Mr. Truman’s class. In line 62 she comments, “Where it would be relevant to them” and puts in play the concept of “relevant content” as she considers the differences between what teachers think students need compared to what students think they need. Fostering student engagement was a major goal of the case study PSTs and their mentor teachers. They worked to achieve this through practical tools like selecting relevant texts (defined differently across participants and settings), choosing writing
assignments to meet students’ needs and interests, and assessing students in interactive ways (i.e., personal whiteboards, to be explored later). Carrie’s appropriation of this concept into her discourse highlighted the issue and, similar to Cory’s previous move, worked to link course ideas and the everyday experiences of the PSTs in their placements.

Not ready to give up her turn, Carrie furthered her argument by quickly drawing on an example from her field placement. In lines 61 and 63, she explained that if students desire or want to complete the class assignments or expectations, then that makes it relevant for them, just as it is for some of her students who want to learn to write their signatures in cursive. Carrie juxtaposed this by adding in an evaluative clause as she described the way Carmen’s mentor teacher was “making them do it” in line 64. This use of the word “making” further supported her notion of relevant content by suggesting that a teacher might not have to make students do work that they are inclined to do or are interested in already. In doing so, Carrie positioned herself with what was becoming more of the group by showing that they were both together in their beliefs and separate from those of Carmen’s mentor teacher.

**Discussion.** My analysis of this event demonstrates how PSTs made visible the cultural processes of learning to teach ELA as they negotiated ideas about teaching, explored the tensions between teaching ELA across settings, and worked to co-construct knowledge together. The content of the interaction and the ways in which multiple people contributed to the building of knowledge reflected in their language highlight how the cultural and social processes were made visible in this representative case and others like it. Just as in the first targeted conversation from year one of the study, in this interaction
the PSTs shared narratives from across settings and recalled university course concepts. In this way, they worked to challenge each other regarding their conceptions of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective, particularly in defining culturally relevant teaching and understanding the role of power in this concept. They substantiated their peer’s (Carmen’s) frustrations, while also furthering their own and the group’s constructions of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective in the process.

**Explicitly Teaching a Cultural Perspective**

Tensions within and across settings regarding teaching ELA from a cultural perspective and how that might actually be achieved in the classroom was a consistent theme for both groups of PSTs across the two years. The next transcript also serves as a representative case of interactions where PSTs explored the tensions across settings about bridging conceptual and practical ideas about teaching ELA and worked to co-construct knowledge together. Their discussions around cultural perspectives in teaching and the tensions that they encounter while attempting to do so are how the cultural and social processes were made visible in this representative case and similar discussions that they had throughout the year.

The excerpt from this interaction occurred during the same group mentoring session as the previous interaction. I had distributed a sample lesson plan that I brought for the PSTs to analyze so that they could explore the values inherent in the curricular and instructional decisions that teachers make. The lesson plan was for 7th grade ELA and was one of my previous student teacher’s plans. I asked the PSTs read it over for a few minutes to understand what the student teacher was trying to achieve. Then to start our discussion of the lesson plan, I told PSTs that the purpose of looking at the lesson was not...
that it was good or bad, but that “if this lesson were representative of all of this teacher’s lessons, then what assumptions might we be able to make about her thoughts about teaching, learning, students’ lives, writing, and reading?” (Group Mentoring – 1/13/16). While, at first, the PSTs were hesitant to critique the plan or make claims about what the teacher might value, represented by discourse like “I like how she did such and such”, with further prompting and discussion, the PSTs started to see how tasks, strategies, and assignments can signal certain epistemologies about teaching and learning ELA. The sample transcript highlights one such question from me aimed at getting the PSTs to explore how the teacher’s questioning could be changed to meet the goals of teaching, in this case, literature, from a cultural perspective.

Transcript 4.8

If you could be a little more explicit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Can we add in some more questions or change the questions in some ways to get them {students} thinking about this like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>We talked about how we like that the exit ticket question ^right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s a little bit extended response..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>But if they read these…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>How can we teach them in a way that gets them to care a little bit more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you see what ^I mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>I feel like she’s like..trying to get them like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;I mean I don’t know for sure&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>but she’s like trying to get them to see similarities between like this republic and the U.S. government and she’s trying to get them to think critically about THAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>BUT I don’t know that she’s being explicit about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>And that may not be her objective BUT..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel like that’s a really cool thing-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Like kids grow up and they like say the pledge every day and learn like 4th of July and Founding Fathers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
In this excerpt, I asked the PSTs to consider how questioning could be used as a practical tool to foster a cultural perspective in teaching ELA. Specifically, in line 5 I ask how the questioning as a tool might be modified to teach students “in a way that gets them to care a little bit more”, suggesting here that in a cultural approach to ELA, students are more invested in the topics being explored in their classes, perhaps through making connections to current social and political issues. Although initially hesitant to make claims about the teacher’s plans through her quick use of “I mean I don’t know for sure” in line 8, Carmen ultimately appropriated what I was hinting at about the issues that students might care about in her response. As the focal text of the lesson plan was a dystopian novel where a republic is in charge, Carmen built on what the student teacher might have intended in her plans and worked to further define some of the tenets of teaching from a cultural perspective. Through the examples that she stated in lines 13 and 14 where children learn about people and events in U.S. history in school and are socialized into thinking that “they’re the best”, she worked to contrast them with her next line, which was to say that “as you get older you learn that that’s not always the case”. Through this discourse, Carmen showed that for her (which she quickly but clearly delineated her positioning with an emphatic ME in line 15), one of the goals of teaching
is to guide students to problematize cultural norms and standardized ways of knowing and doing.

Also of significance towards how Carmen worked to define a teaching ELA from a cultural perspective (even if she did not use this term), was that in teaching from this perspective, she envisioned students exhibiting a shift “that kids would be like WOAH” in response to the revolutionary, but explicit ideas from the teacher. The idea that it is the teacher who possesses the ability to expose students to un-problematized ideas, rather than working to construct them together, is suggestive of the influence that Carmen perhaps hoped to have over her students. Additionally, the notion that students may have already questioned or experienced the social problems or radical moments of awareness was not apparent in Carmen’s discourse. This moment is significant in that it showed how Carmen appropriated this conceptual tool from previous mentoring sessions and course concepts into her discourse and how it contributed to her evolving expectations for what she might hope to achieve in her teaching.

Although not shown here, Mary, another PST with a concentration in math and science, reified Carmen’s idea as the conversation continued with her claim that the teacher’s proposed instructional moves were not explicit enough and that she was just “hinting at a lot of things” (Group Mentoring – 1/13/16). Carrie, the PST previously mentioned, then moved the conversation into a more problem-solving mode as she suggested that the teacher use her opener as a place in the lesson to be creative. She proposed that the teacher might have students engage in a simulation where they would have to force allegiance to something and then problematize and discuss how that felt. The ways in which Carmen, Mary, and Carrie critiqued how another teacher achieved
teaching ELA from a cultural perspective through her practical tool use is suggestive of one form of appropriation (Grossman, et al., 1999) of conceptual tools, as they were able to apply ideas about a conceptual tool from the university to a new situation, the sample lesson plan.

**Discussion.** This conversation serves to show how the PSTs continually constructed ideas about what it means to teach from a cultural perspective, what they understood their students to come to their classrooms knowing, and, in Carmen’s case, her preference for making this a significant part of her teaching. It also shows how the PSTs worked to bridge conceptual understandings with the practical decisions that they are faced with making in their lesson plans, and their teaching (i.e., the need to be explicit, the instructional possibilities of an opener, etc.). The next interaction builds on this idea of appropriating goals of teaching from a cultural perspective into actual teaching practices, and the challenges in doing so.

**A Cultural Perspective in Class Discussion: Avoiding Conflict**

The final event was also a representative case from year two of the study, which occurred during a group mentoring sessions about one-third of the way through PSTs’ student teaching. In this transcript, PSTs appropriated into their discourse ideas about how a cultural perspective could be used as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching ELA. In particular, PSTs focused their discourse around the use of class discussion as a practical tool for delving into pertinent social issues that can sometimes be difficult topics for teachers and student to candidly discuss. As Cory reflected on what he perceived to be a successful lesson, he described to his peers that “it was cool because it was the first time that we had a really open discussion about like a heavier topic, so it was cool to see
them actually— they handled it pretty well. I was really impressed” (Group Mentoring – 2/9/16). Prompting Cory to elaborate on how to teach “heavier topic[s]” and facilitate discussion, I urged him to articulate how he did these things to make the activity successful. His notion of an effective conversation about tough topics seemed to be shaped by students controlling their emotions, which is where the conversation picked up next.

**Transcript 4.9**

*I wasn’t sure what to expect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>Yeah I just well I wasn’t sure what to expect because we haven’t done open discussions like that really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>So I like tried to get them to lead it a little bit and.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>They did some, it was still mostly me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>But I just I just- they seemed really engaged in it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>To see how excited they were about it was really cool for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>And that they were able to talk about these things openly maturely without getting offended about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Like one girl said “well one stereotype is that white girls wear their hair in a bun and go to Starbucks” and so{Cory and others laugh}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>She did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>But like nobody FREAKED out about it it was awesome {laughs} so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>And then another class, a kid was like well “black people like fried chicken”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>So it was like talking about the difference between saying “that’s RACIST”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>And saying like “well the only way we can eliminate these things is to recognize that they’re ^real”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>So it was really- ^it was cool…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cory was pleased with this lesson, even referring back to it towards the end of the semester citing it as the one that he was most proud of. One reason for this was seen in line 15 when he said that he was pleased that “nobody freaked out” when stereotypes
about people representing the populations of students in his class were explicitly named and that the controversial issues seemed to pass without, well, much controversy. Like many new (and even veteran) teachers, Cory hoped to steer clear of having to mediate between students and in doing so, he avoided the tensions that can be a part of meaningful learning about multicultural issues. And so for Cory, he was able to avoid conflict, while also still teaching a lesson rooted in culturally relevant pedagogy – a win-win. His reflections on this lesson as successful in terms of using class discussion, but eschewing conflict and hurt feelings, proved to be indicative of future lessons that he eventually did and did not enact later on in his unit, to be explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

The conversation progressed as I attempted to provide a space for the narratives of other PSTs who had also attempted to engage their students in lessons rooted in teaching about social justice.

**Transcript 4.10**

*Openly discussing if you will real real issues*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Anyone else had any- have done anything LIKE THAT where you felt like you were sort of openly discussing..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Real. [real issues]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>[I like] I kind of tried to do that-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>We’::re we’::re. trying to do like the Constitution now and it is very difficult to be like relevant in the present day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>With ^that {slight laugh}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>S:O I tried to start out like our conversation with “what do you want what do you want from ↓our government”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>“What do you want them to do for you”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Transcript 4.10 cont.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>And it started off well and a lot of kids were throwing out like awesome things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>And some stuff that kids didn’t really- that not every kid agreed with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Like one kid was like “we should have guns for everyone we should be able to protect ourselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>And I was like {rolls eyes, high pitch voice} (^\text{ok::ay that’s an idea}) {laughs}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>UM {some others laugh}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>And I just wrote it up there and half the kids were like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>“UH NO WE SHOULDN’T” um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>But I was like- I like tried to like {juggles hands}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>See about facilitating the back and forth about why we CAN’T have all of these things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>You know not everybody agr:ees with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Um it’s like expensive to have free health care &gt;and free education and a job for everyone and all of these things&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Even though they’re good ideas and a lot of us support them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>But it just like- it turned into a fight {slight laugh}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>The kids were arguing with each other and I sort of lost control of the th:ing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Like I would l::ove I would have loved to have-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Like I feel like it started off so well cuz they were really into what we were saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Like “Oh yeah that’s a really good idea”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Or “Oh that’s a terrible idea”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>“We shouldn’t do that”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>But then (\downarrow)it just kind of fell apart and I wasn’t sure how to regain them after that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this excerpt Carmen makes visible her ideologies about teaching from a cultural perspective through her discourse and contextualization cues throughout her narrative. For example, in line 33 she reacted to a student’s claim that everyone should have guns with a visible roll of her eyes and high-pitch and drawn-out emphasis on the word “okay”. While she seemed to suggest that she presented a neutral front for her
students while teaching the lesson, her views were apparent while she was narrating the event for her peers. Carmen seemingly wanted to engage her students in discussions centered around problematizing social and political issues, using the question “what do you want from our government?” to initiate them. However, she said that she “lost control” (line 43) and that it “fell apart” (line 50) because students began arguing with each other beyond what she seemed to have been anticipating. This hope of maintaining control and avoiding significant conflict in class discussions seemed to have inhibited the effectiveness of Carmen’s lesson and her thoughts about engaging students in future discussions around tough, controversial, or real-life topics.

The conversation continued after Carmen trailed off, seemingly feeling deflated, with Cory and Jake, another PST with a math and science concentration, proceeded to offer practical tools that Carmen could use in her teaching to help her out since “the scaffolding is really important” (Group Mentoring – 2/9/16). They offered tools such as using sentence starters to frame students’ arguments, explicitly teaching “debate phrases of how you can respectfully disagree”, and breaking the lesson up over two days to have a writing day and an oral argument day to ensure that students’ oral arguments are well thought out and on topic.

**Discussion.** These two excerpts where Cory and Carmen each described a class discussion that they facilitated with their students highlight how they appropriated a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching ELA. Their contrasting experiences with doing so was impacted by the ways in which they approached building relationships with students, to be explored in further detail in Chapter Five. However, these transcripts highlight how both PSTs had similar hopes for engaging students in
important discussions, a tool that they appropriated from their coursework. It also suggests the importance of the mentoring sessions as spaces for PSTs to help each other problem-solve and remediate issues that PSTs like Carmen experienced while attempting bridge conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective.

**Mentoring Sessions as a Space for Reflection and Analysis of Teaching ELA within a Cultural Perspective**

In this section, I analyzed four excerpts from mentoring sessions to show how the tensions that PSTs experienced as they conceptualized and appropriated ideas of a cultural perspective in ELA teaching were evident in the language that they used. These interactions also serve to showcase the conceptual and practical tools that PSTs appropriated into their language from various settings, which are outlined in Table 4.1 in the following section. By highlighting both telling and representative cases of interactions that PSTs engaged in, I hoped to explicate the cultural and social processes inherent in these interactions and others like them throughout the data set. I also hoped to make clear that I did not “cherry pick” a couple fruitful discussions claiming that they either a) prove that clear learning has occurred for the PSTs, impacting all future actions, or b) were indicative of all other conversations that PSTs had throughout the year. Neither of these statements were the case. First, as outlined in my review of the literature, learning to teach from a cultural perspective is a process of appropriation over time, with many moments of progress and regressions; it is not necessarily linear (Gere et al., 2009). Secondly, there were many conversations that PSTs had throughout the year in which they discussed other issues beyond negotiating what it means to teach ELA from a cultural perspective. For example, as there were PSTs of varying content areas in the
group, sometimes conversation shifted to ideas specific to certain content areas and class and time management issues.

These interactions during the mentoring sessions work to problematize the notion of instructional scaffolding, which assumes the instructor or mentor has all of the knowledge and an understanding of where PSTs should be headed. Instead, these interactions represent learning that is designed through what Smagorinsky and his colleagues (Smagorinsky et al., 2015) term distributed scaffolding, in which the teacher, which in this case is me as the university supervisor, creates an environment and activities designed to get PSTs discussing teaching ELA with a cultural perspective, without providing them one clear answer of how to do so. While considering the role of the supervisor in creating environments and activities for learning, it is also important to recognize the participants as co-constructors of knowledge. This focus on Halliday’s (1978) interpersonal metafunction of discourse, the social actions that speakers accomplish, helps to uncover how PSTs “establish relationships with others, how they position themselves interactionally, perform social actions, and evaluate both others and the social world” (Wortham & Reyes, 2015). The interactions featured in this chapter suggest the significance of the group mentoring sessions in providing a space for PSTs to connect theory and practice. As they referenced the voices and ideologies of the people and settings around them in the mentoring sessions, it helped to create “productive tensions” (Smagorinsky et al., 2004) or “wobble moments” (Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005) for the PSTs. These tensions or moments are instances in which they have to make contextualized decisions by taking into account the various and often conflicting goals, tools, and settings available to them. With the support of their peers and me as
their university supervisor, PSTs were able to advance their thinking about conceptual tools and their roles as ELA teachers and also consider how to achieve these goals through the practical decisions that they were faced with in their own classrooms.

**Summary of Conceptual and Practical Tools Across Settings**

In this chapter I have presented the conceptual and practical tools that PSTs were exposed to across three learning settings: their coursework, field placement sites, and group mentoring sessions. The interactions from the mentoring sessions also serve to show how the PSTs appropriated into their discourse some of the tools valued across settings. A summary of the conceptual and practical tools from these settings is outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Tools for Teaching ELA with a Cultural Perspective Across Settings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>University Coursework</th>
<th>Field Placement Sites</th>
<th>Mentoring Sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural perspective</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit thinking</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing multiple perspectives</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective/emotional student development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with students</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 4.1 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical Tools</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small group work</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming techniques</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a stand</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary terminology</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text choices</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table suggests, the conceptual and practical tools valued across all three settings were not always consistent. Understandably so, the most commonalities existed between the university coursework and the mentoring sessions. As I designed, led, and participated in the mentoring sessions, I was a representative of the university. While the tools that I discussed in interactions with the PSTs were my decision, because of my experience with the MCE program, I knew what was valued and tried to align my mentoring with these values in many ways. Conversely, there were some tools that were generally only discussed in the field placement settings, like the CCSS, vocabulary, and literary terminology, which show evidence of the influence of standardized curriculums and testing in urban schools. The tools that were consistently discussed across all three settings were student engagement, affective student development, relationships with students, argumentation, and text choices. In the next chapter, I will trace the ways in which the three case study PSTs appropriated these tools into their teaching practices during student teaching.
Chapter 5: Pre-Service Teachers’ Appropriation of Tools for a Cultural Perspective

Understanding how and when PSTs appropriated conceptual and practical tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective into their actual teaching practices is the cornerstone of this research study. Without examining the PSTs’ implementation of ideas, analyzing the interactions from Chapter Four would be fruitless. There is a plethora of research in teacher education that calls for work that follows PSTs into the field, invites the perspectives of mentor teachers and supervisors, and considers PSTs’ learning longitudinally (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). This study aims to answer that call in that I continued to observe and mentor three PSTs during their student teaching to study each PST’s appropriation of teaching tools, especially in light of my understanding of MCE program goals, my understanding the PSTs’ backgrounds, and our mentoring sessions during the previous semester.

This chapter will focus on how what the PSTs said impacted what they did. I will address the third research question: How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’ understandings of a cultural perspective? To answer these questions, I relied on data from interviews and post-classroom observation debriefings with the PSTs and mentor teachers, field notes taken during classroom
observations, and instructional materials (weekly lesson plans and written reflections) created by the PSTs. I will profile each of the case study PST’s experiences, actions, and influences with particular attention on an instructional unit that each PST developed, on the conceptual and practical tools that they relied on, and on their attribution of these tools from their various learning settings. By profiling the experiences of these three PSTs across time and from a broader perspective (as opposed to the fine-grained discourse analysis of the second part of Chapter Four), I aim to “zoom out” and show the relationships between PSTs’ discourse and the larger context of learning to teach from various settings (Rogers, 2011).

The instructional unit for each case study PST is evidence for the shaping influence of interactions with mentor teachers, with their students, with one another during the mentoring sessions and with me as their university supervisor. Recall that I am especially interested in how they appropriated and enacted tools for teaching ELA within a cultural perspective. Of course, their instructional units are also reflections or refractions (Volosinov, 1929) of the conceptual and practical tools that were valued across settings, as evident in key events with others and the attribution that they provided for their ideas. This analysis aims to highlight how texts (PSTs’ units, lesson plans) and teaching practices reflect (reproduce) or refract (modify) other previous texts and the contexts of their production and use. A qualitative data network (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) representing how the PSTs made pedagogical decisions that reflected and refracted the values and tools of their various learning settings is provided below.
As captured in the figure, PSTs’ understandings and uses of conceptual and practical tools were evident in and influenced by speech events that they participated in with others across settings. The bidirectional arrow between the tools and the learning settings helps to show this interactive effect (Miles et al., 2014): that is, that by interacting with others across settings, PSTs’ tool choices are affected, and also that their tool choices are reflected in the language that they use with others (Bloome et al., 2005). The sources for these tools, the learning settings (PSTs’ coursework, field experiences, and mentoring sessions), were largely the focus of Chapter Four. The center three circles for conceptual and practical tools and instructional unit highlight how PSTs’ understanding of conceptual tools impacted their practical tool choices, which were
evident in the pedagogical decisions that they made during their instructional units. The PSTs’ conceptual tools also directly impacted their instructional units in that for some of them, it was the underlying principles related to the tools that guided the framework of the unit, but these conceptual tools were not necessarily evident in their practical tool choices, hence, the large arrow passing over the practical tools. Additionally, the bidirectional arrow between the conceptual and the practical tools shows how some of the PSTs took up practical tools in their teaching first, likely because they were activities that they read about or were modeled for them and wanted to reproduce. Then through this tool use, it shaped conceptual tools about teaching or their use of it revealed conceptual understanding that they did not initially know they had or how to articulate. This network helps to explicate the various influences on the PSTs’ instructional units and will be further referenced with examples later in the chapter.

Recall that the integration of conceptual and practical tools is necessary to deepen knowledge of how to teach. That is, abstractions are of little value unless the PST can connect a concept (cultural relevance) with a practical action (asking students to discuss an issue from their neighborhood). An interplay between formal conceptual understanding of principles (from university course work and formal study) and practical knowledge obtained through experience in classrooms (student teaching) enables PSTs to consider instructional plans and related issues beyond their current experience through envisioning what is possible. When an instructional principle is well developed and deeply understood, PSTs are able to anticipate future actions when abstract concepts and practical understandings merge and get tested within the realities of classroom life. As will become clear in the following three profiles, an ability to predict students’ responses
to texts, to activities, and to new ideas is a significant challenge, especially if the PST’s background and teaching contexts are not well integrated with the demands of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective.

**Allison: Finding Space for Social Justice**

As described in Chapter Three, Allison was a deeply reflective teacher candidate who was strongly influenced by the goals of her teacher education program. She hoped to engage her students in activities aimed at problematizing issues in their local communities and global worlds, a goal that revealed her understanding of teaching from a cultural perspective. To frame this work, Allison relied on a number of conceptual and practical tools to guide her thinking and to practically achieve the work in her teaching. Some of the conceptual tools, to be discussed further in this section, included valuing multiple perspectives and providing freedom to students, while some of the practical tools included making personal connections to texts, vocabulary development, station activities, and text choices. I will first describe Allison’s central instructional unit on *The Freedom Writers Diary*, consider some of the conceptual tools that were important to her, and examine how she used practical tools to appropriate ideas about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective into her unit, which were reflections and refractions of Allison’s relationships with and interactions with others.

**An Instructional Unit on The Freedom Writers Diary**

The central unit that Allison planned and taught throughout her student teaching experience in an eighth grade classroom in an urban middle school focused on *The Freedom Writers Diary* by Erin Gruwell (1999). This memoir is about one high school English class and their teacher, Ms. Gruwell, and their experiences learning and changing
together as they read and wrote about the Holocaust. Allison chose this novel with the encouragement of her mentor for three reasons: (1) the school had a class set of the novel available for her to use, (2) her mentor teacher requested that she teach a nonfiction novel that semester, and (3) Ms. Rees had taught the novel in a previous school year and recommended it as a high-interest book for middle school students. An analysis of a mentoring session about the use of this text was featured in Chapter Four and a more in-depth analysis of Allison’s choice to teach this memoir is described below. The instructional unit lasted about twelve weeks (although there were many testing and snow day interruptions), with the final project for the novel occurring during Allison’s last week of student teaching.

Allison explained her main objective for the instructional unit: “It would be an accomplishment for me if students were able to say the theme and what the characters in the book took from it. But I don’t know if that’s low expectations or I don’t know” (Observation Debriefing – 2/12/15). Since state test preparation was also a large part of her mentor teacher’s and field placement’s concerns, Allison also used this unit to help students with the skills of identifying the meaning of unknown vocabulary words and writing objective summaries (Allison’s term) that would likely mirror the skills students would need to know for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Test (PARCC). It is important to note that when I initially asked Allison about her goals for the unit, she responded by asking “standard wise or what I want [students] to take from the book?”, suggesting that she viewed the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as separate from the life lessons and social justice issues that she also wanted to teach (Observation Debriefing – 2/12/15). Rather than seeing the CCSS as working in
service of teaching about cultural relevance, Allison viewed meeting the standards as separate goals, although mentoring sessions proved to be significant in helping her to merge these goals over the course of her unit. As such, distinct from CCSS skills and concepts, Allison also planned for the unit to be one in which students could work to problematize issues from the text that they may also have witnessed in their own lives such as gang violence, racial inequities, and poverty. During a meeting about Allison’s lesson planning, we discussed the goals for her unit by considering the skills that she was trying to teach and also the big overarching ideas about the world that were not necessarily represented in the standards. She pointed out that she wanted to teach this novel to teach “complex topics that are tough” like “dedicating yourself to change and changing yourself…self-reliance…[and] war. It doesn’t have to mean countries fighting. It can be like as it is described in the book” (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15).

The various goals of meeting CCSS standards and teaching in ways that were culturally relevant were reflected in the pedagogical decisions that Allison made throughout the twelve-week unit. An instructional chain (VanDerHeide & Newell, 2013) outlining the main teaching and learning activities each day of this unit is listed below. As is captured in the chain, Allison blended conceptual tools valued by the university (valuing multiple perspectives through social justice teaching) and practical tools valued by her field placement site (writing objective summaries) throughout the unit. A more detailed description of her pedagogical decisions will be addressed as reflections or refractions of the tools valued in the settings around Allison in the following sections.
Table 5.1. Allison’s *The Freedom Writers Diary* instructional chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Watch movie trailer of <em>FW</em>, make predictions about themes of book and genre of book. Discuss nonfiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>Read <em>FW</em>, answer comprehension and questions about its tone and mood. Take a Stand: statements about heroes, changes, and violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Quote analysis about generalizing people based on group's actions. Completed vocab GO to write the definitions of 10 terms in <em>FW</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>Read <em>FW</em>. Answer questions about the students, their perceptions of Ms. G, and some themes so far – war, violence, race, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Read <em>FW</em>, answer questions about development of Ms. G. Jigsaw to get summary of <em>FW</em>. Write summary of and connections to one character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Journal about missing parents, connections to text using citations and details. Apply and evaluate vocab in text compared to found definitions. Read <em>FW</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>Watch videos of Rodney King and Ferguson riots, compare RK pictures and Ferg Instagram and Twitter feeds. Summarize main idea and connection to <em>FW</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Write about a quote from <em>FW</em> that they connect with. Find meaning of vocab words using context clues; do jigsaw with them. Read <em>FW</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>Write sentences with vocab, Read <em>FW</em>, answer questions about Ms. G’s tone, the parallels between today’s events, and power of reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>Write summary of <em>FW</em>. Stations: Pair quote w/ diary entry, draw illustration of diary entry, do vocab GO, write five tweets from character’s perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>2/2: Create PSA about topic to show relevance of <em>FW</em> to today. Evaluate model PSA, interpret research about topic, brainstorm with group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>GO of setting and theme in <em>FW</em>. Stations with facts about incarceration, gang activity, and graduation rates in Columbus. Writing to connect <em>FW</em> to this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Finish group PSA on posters with relevant textual features and <em>FW</em> quotes tied to the EQ: How relevant is <em>FW</em> to your community today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Present PSA posters to class using speaking and listening skills. Peers evaluate using rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>Present PSA posters to class using speaking and listening skills. Peers evaluate using rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>Review themes of war, change, and the power in education. Read <em>FW</em>. Interpret title. Analyze “Moment” (poem in <em>FW</em>) and connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>2/12: Analyze “Moment” (poem in <em>FW</em>) and connect to Ms. G's goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>Read <em>FW</em>. Stop and write for two minutes about themes, character development, predictions, and thoughts about the chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>Read <em>FW</em>. Stop and write about connections to themes and characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Take a Stand then stations about: relating to different people, change is easy, hard work accompanies success. Extended writing re: character’s change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 5.1 cont

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3/2: Read FW, answer questions about self-worth and questioning authority. Write an objective summary.</th>
<th>3/3: Read FW, pose questions about characters, answer questions about character development and change in the story</th>
<th>3/4: Read FW. Discuss a double standard and how it is evident in FW and in their lives. Analyze cartoon – connection to FW’re: self-worth and questioning auth.</th>
<th>3/5: Identify overall message (self-reliance/self-worth) of chapter, how it developed, and relation to character change. Identify five main points of chap.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/6: Read FW, discuss ideas of living in fear and loss of innocence.</td>
<td>3/9: Discuss attributes of a hero, Read FW. Stop and write about inferences in text.</td>
<td>3/10: Read FW. Take a Stand: adversity, perseverance, ability to be what you want to be.</td>
<td>3/11: Read FW, answer questions about change, family, and misogyny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12: Stations: Poem analysis, letter to Ms. G with description of a hero and connect to themes, vocab from Ch. 6, analysis of song lyrics and connection to FW themes</td>
<td>3/13: Graffiti wall – Ss respond to four quotes that represent themes in the text. Then gallery walk to view peers’ responses.</td>
<td>3/16: Read FW, make predictions, and answer questions about power and idols.</td>
<td>3/17: Read FW, answer questions about change throughout FW, comic relief, and “silence ensures history repeats itself”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.1. Allison’s The Freedom Writers Diary instructional chain*

Made evident in the instructional chain and the analysis that follows, Allison was exposed to conceptual and practical tools from various settings and appropriated many of
these into her teaching. A table outlining the tools that Allison learned about and whether or not these were observed in her teaching is below.

Table 5.2

*Tools for Teaching ELA from a Cultural Perspective: Allison*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>University Coursework</th>
<th>Field Placement Sites</th>
<th>Mentoring Sessions</th>
<th>Observed in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual Tools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural perspective</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit thinking</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing multiple perspectives</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective/emotional student development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships with students</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Tools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Station activities</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming techniques</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a stand</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary terminology</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conceptual Tools: Valuing Multiple Perspectives and Positioning Students with Autonomy and Agency

**Valuing multiple perspectives.** From the first time I met Allison, she seemed to assume a curious, reflective, and critical stance towards education and her role as a teacher. Evident in interviews and mentoring discussions throughout the year, were expressions of hope to bring in multiple perspectives into her teaching in nontraditional, transformative-minded ways. She articulated in interviews that she enjoyed hearing about others’ experiences and when asked about what a great English teacher does, she immediately replied that it is “someone who encourages students to think about things from different angles” (Interview – 11/20/14). Based on conversations with Allison, it was apparent that she saw part of her role as a teacher as discussing with students some of the ideas that were so transformative and “eye opening” for her in her own university schooling. In particular, Allison seemed to use and define the conceptual tool of valuing multiple perspectives through explicit attempts to use texts and raise discussions rooted in antiracist pedagogies (Borsheim-Black, 2015) in aims of having students question social issues and cultural norms.

Allison and Ms. Rees seemed to have different opinions regarding approaches to the teaching of literature and the role of interpretation and multiple perspectives from the beginning of Allison’s teaching placement. In a unit based around the novel *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson (2011), which Ms. Rees led, Allison noted the emphasis on the memorization of literary terminology, such as figurative language.

I didn’t realize that we were going to be so heavy on figurative language. Maybe we’re just following the standards. There could have been so many better topics
and themes to discuss. Maybe I’m just not an English guru, but I think the
messages are so much more important than the similes or metaphors (Observation

Allison’s desire to focus on the messages through discussion, rather than “meaningless
packets” of worksheets, was reinforced by me during this conversation and during future
conversations around novel selections and unit planning as well.

This dynamic, that is, “the integration of the personal self with the professional
self, and the ‘taking on’ of a culturally scripted, often narrowly defined, professional role
while maintaining individuality” (Alsup, 2006, p. 4) was one that Allison balanced
throughout the entire year. During mentoring conversations I tried to foster Allison’s
appropriation of these ideas by encouraging her to consider “what students are going to
learn about themselves, the world, yes the text, which is important, but bigger issues too”
(Observation Debriefing – 11/11/14). Demonstrating student achievement on high-stakes
testing was a major part of Ms. Rees’s teaching evaluation and a school-wide goal for the
under-performing Eastwood Middle School. These outside pressures, which Allison was
not directly accountable for, may have contributed to the strong emphasis on test
preparation that was evident in Ms. Rees’s teaching, and also contributed to Allison’s
reflection and refraction of many of Ms. Rees’s teaching philosophies and moves. For
example, in the first two weeks of Allison’s unit, she utilized many activities aimed at
having students connect with the text and share their perspectives, such as journal
prompts to allow students to empathize or share experiences about parents not being
present in students’ lives. She also use the activity take a stand numerous times
throughout the unit where students responded to statements about controversial themes in
the text. These activities were one way in which Allison took up ideas from the university program in aims of teaching in engaging and culturally relevant ways. However, also included in these same lessons, were activities that Allison employed as reflections of the goals of Ms. Rees and her field placement site. Allison had students answer comprehension questions about the text and use textual citations in their journal prompts, both skills that would be assessed on the end of year PARCC test. In this regard, Allison’s lessons framed by the tool of valuing multiple perspectives were refractions, or modifications of the varying goals of the school as an institution. I knew from previous studies (e.g., Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015; Johnson et al., 2003) that PSTs often take up the tools of the space around them with more influence or power. Accordingly, I was expecting Allison to adopt tools that reflected one context or another, as opposed to working to meet the expectations of both settings.

Guiding Allison’s beliefs about teaching was the conceptual tool of valuing multiple perspectives rooted in issues of social justice, a goal that she did not perceive Ms. Rees having for her own teaching. Allison also believed that Ms. Rees worked against encouraging discussion about controversial topics in her classroom and tried to disrupt conversations when they went in this direction during Allison’s teaching. In a conversation with Allison about this, she remarked,

Sometimes if I am trying to have a conversation about social justice issues, like yesterday we were talking about double standards in the book. ‘What does that mean and how have you experienced a double standard?’ We were talking about gender equality. I don’t want to brain-wash them and change their views, but I was saying ‘why is it okay for a male to date many people, but when a girl does,
she gets called a hoe?’ The students brought that up; it was interesting. But then my mentor stepped in and said, ‘Sometimes I use being a woman to my advantage. Guys should open.’ She’s just very traditional I think (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15).

This narrative captures the ways in which Allison felt that she and her mentor regard cultural norms differently. Rather than creating a classroom where these norms are questioned and interrogated, Ms. Rees seemed to monitor the conversation by giving the “right” answer and stifling students’ opinions. Previous studies have documented how teachers interested in “teaching outside the box but inside the standards” often encounter tensions between their personal beliefs and the agendas of other stakeholders, like mentor teachers and field placement sites (Fecho et al., 2016). As Allison navigated these tensions, she made many pedagogical decisions that reflected the values of culturally relevant pedagogy from her MCE program and refracted what Allison believed to be Ms. Rees’s standardized, traditional values.

Similar to the frustrations Allison felt during her discussion with students on gender equality, she reiterated the tensions between her and Ms. Rees’s conceptual values after a lesson on racial inequalities. On January 22, Allison taught a lesson on understanding racial tensions in The Freedom Writers Diary through examining the riots following the cases surrounding Rodney King and Michael Brown. Allison described Ms. Rees interjecting during Allison’s lesson to say that Michael Brown “was in the wrong” (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15). Allison told me that she wanted students to explore ideas, rather than presenting only one side, and that she felt this interfered with the social justice aims of her lesson and the effect it had on her students. She described how
the students got offended. They were like ‘he got shot!’ I was trying to balance it, like ‘everyone can have their own beliefs regardless if he was in the wrong.’
Because like Rodney King, he was being chased by the police, but then his ribs were- like he was brutally beaten up! So it’s that kind of stuff where just we [Allison and Ms. Rees] won’t see eye to eye (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15).
A further analysis of the pedagogical tools used and values inherent in this particular lesson is in a future section. Addressing it here served to show the contrasting ways in which Allison and Ms. Rees valued multiple perspectives in their teaching.

**Positioning students with autonomy and agency.** In addition to bringing in multiple perspectives, it was also important to Allison that she positioned her students as contributors in the classroom and that she valued a student-centered approach to teaching. Allison was critical of her own K-12 education and of the “old school” district where she was placed for her student teaching, which to her meant maintaining a clear distinction where the teachers are always right and have much to impress upon their unknowing students (Interview – 11/20/14). Before officially beginning student teaching, she said, I think it is just the way that I was taught and the way education is, everything is assigned. The teacher makes the decisions. I try to provide freedom and choice.

We talk about it, but I don’t know exactly if I’m doing it (Interview – 12/17/14).
A part of her expressed beliefs about teaching, she maintained her hopes of positioning students in ways and making instructional choices to show that she valued their contributions in the classroom. These asset-based philosophies toward student contributions (Paris, 2012) were woven throughout her conversations with me, her stated goals for how she wanted to interact with students, and the instructional choices that she
made. Evident in “we talk about it,” this conceptual tool was a reflection of ideas put forth by the MCE program and me during interactions with her.

Allison also wanted to make it evident in her teaching that she believed “students have a lot to contribute” and therefore attempted to create activities and class structures to position them as so (Interview – 11/20/14). From the second day of the unit, she incorporated activities such as Take a Stand, where students are asked to verbally respond to a series of controversial statements about pertinent issues to *The Freedom Writers Diary*, such as heroes, change, violence, and authority (Allison LP, 1/13/15). Allison also utilized Take a Stand to garner students’ opinions on 2/25/15 and 3/10/15 and consistently asked students to respond to quotes from the texts, write about characters that they connected to, and consider their own personal heroes and adversities throughout *The Freedom Writers Diary* unit. However, consistent with the often conflicting negotiations teachers must consider with the teaching of literature (Appleman, 2015b) Allison both created opportunities for students to connect with the text, but did not necessarily translate this to conversations around the “meaning” of *The Freedom Writers Diary* or its textual elements. For example, comprehension questions and discussion prompts about *The Freedom Writers Diary* were evident throughout that did not leave much up for interpretation; in other words, Allison had a clear answer in mind about her desired answer from students. In one discussion after an observation, I challenged Allison about this issue as it was evident in her questioning. The students were analyzing a poem used in *The Freedom Writers Diary*, and Allison kept asking them “What is it saying?” (Field Notes – 3/12/15). I said to Allison,
Correct me if I’m wrong, this was your goal: You wanted them to connect the text to their lives, but then you said in the activity and verbally many times ‘what is it saying?’ Which is fine, but it is a pretty high stakes, tough question. To have students read it once and then state the meaning, as if there is one meaning that everyone who is a good reader knows. And that’s a little intimidating, especially for struggling readers. So be open to different answers, which I think you are, but structure your questions a little differently, so instead of ‘What is it saying?’, which implies that all of us who are good readers are getting, what else could you say? (Observation Debriefing – 3/12/15).

I encouraged Allison to find ways to blend the personal connections with textual support and to consider what types of questions can generate multiple answers, and what types cannot. Allison said at the beginning of the year that she perceived a good English teachers to be “not so rigid as what is right or wrong, because I view that as more math, science. ELA is open for interpretation” (Interview – 11/20/14). Throughout our discussion about Allison’s questioning of students about the meaning of the poem in The Freedom Writers Diary, she came to realize “It’s funny, now talking through it, I know that I do it, but it’s not intentional at all” (Observation Debriefing – 3/12/15). These struggles about balancing students’ personal connections to texts with textual interpretations more aligned with a text-based approach to literature, are not particular to new teachers, nor are they particular with a cultural approach to teaching and learning. But they came through in Allison’s lesson planning and implementation and were likely influenced by high-stakes testing, which was such a big factor at Eastwood Middle School where Allison taught, where reaching a singular answer was valued.

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Later in the second semester towards the end of her student teaching, Allison communicated some frustrations and progress with fulfilling the goals of positioning students with agency as a guiding framework in her instruction and relationships with students. She reflected,

I like to give students freedom. This has been a big lesson for me, especially with my 5th period class, my tough one. I had to step back and question why I was so frustrated. I tried to lecture and say like ‘You guys aren’t able’ and the things they hear all the time and it didn’t work for me. It took me over a weekend. I was so angry on a Friday, and then I realized that I needed to focus on what they’re doing right for once. And I feel that it has turned my teaching around. It’s made it more fun. So I feel like if you give them that expectation that they can handle it, then they’ll strive to meet that (Observation Debriefing – 3/12/15).

As evident in Allison’s comments, throughout the year she tried different strategies, and through this, tried on slightly different teaching identities that reflected and refracted the values of those around her. Through the lens of understanding teacher change, this focus on positioning students as resources and expanding notions of what counts as student knowledge mirrors research that suggests this is a fruitful path for fostering teacher growth (Ball, 2009).

The conceptual tools of valuing multiple perspectives and literacies drawing on ideas of freedom and choice were consistent throughout the year for Allison, as evident in our post-observation debriefings. Her reference to these conceptual tools reveal that Allison’s notions of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective meant that it was her responsibility to design lessons where students engaged with texts highlighting
underrepresented or various perspectives and to have students question the cultural norms presented in these texts or through the juxtapositions with societal conditions. Additionally, she recognized students’ abilities, developmental needs, and contributions that they could make in the classroom and tried to make room for this in her teaching. This asset-based perspective of students (Ball, 2009; Kirkland, 2010; Paris, 2012) aligns with how developing relationships with students was presented in her university courses. Allison used these conceptual tools to guide her instruction during her student teaching and ultimately achieved her goals using these tools in various ways.

**Practical Tools: Text Choices, Making Connections, Station Activities, and Basic Skills**

**Text choices.** Allison utilized practical tools throughout her student teaching, and particularly in her unit on *The Freedom Writers Diary*, that both reflected and refracted the goals and values of those around her. One key event that impacted the text choices that Allison made in her teaching was the discussion about whether it is appropriate or not to teach texts like *The Freedom Writers Diary*, as discussed in Chapter Four. While during the conversation, which took place in November, Allison maintained that using *The Freedom Writers Diary* in her class would perpetuate negative cultural norms, Allison ultimately used the text in her teaching less than two months later. Allison’s decision to use *The Freedom Writers Diary* for the nonfiction unit that Ms. Rees requested that she teach during her student teaching was perhaps one of the most significant pedagogical decisions that she made in response to the tensions between the expectations of those around her, particularly the influence of Ms. Rees. Although she wanted to teach *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood up for Education and Changed the*
World (2014) “because it discusses a range of relevant topics and addresses misconceptions that people have today about life in the Middle East” and even ordered a class set of the books to use for the unit from the various libraries within the local library system, Ms. Rees told her as it got closer to the unit date that “the students did not seem engaged with the topic” and that Allison should teach another book instead. As such, Allison chose to teach The Freedom Writers Diary, despite the reported speech from her professors that she had drawn on to make her argument a month earlier, to meet the expectations of her mentor teacher. This situation represents counter stories that could not reside together for Allison, resulting in one setting “winning” over the other.

**Making personal connections.** Allison’s lesson plans and teaching practices reflected her goals of sharing multiple perspectives and having the voices of her students heard in her classroom in varying ways. As she wanted her students to think about local and global issues from both a personal and informed perspective, this was represented in her teaching by creating activities that provided students with opportunities to make connections with the text. Allison tied the themes of discrimination from the novel into her teaching from the beginning of the unit and throughout. For example, on day three of the unit, students wrote about a quote from the book by exploring its meaning and significance to themes in the book and issues in their own lives, an activity that continued to be commonly used by Allison. The quote from *The Freedom Writers Diary* and subsequent discussion on this particular day was: “Don’t let the actions of a few determine the way you feel about an entire group. Remember, not all Germans were Nazis.” Activities such as this were used to set the groundwork for Allison’s future
pedagogical decisions around showing students the relevance of discrimination, violence, and change as presented in *The Freedom Writers Diary* to their own lives.

The following week Allison went more in depth with her goals of teaching in the transformative, “eye opening” way that she found to be so significant in the MCE teacher education program. On January 22, 2015, almost six months after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO by a white police officer, an event prompting national protests and a renewed focus on racial tensions in the U.S. (The New York Times, 2015), Allison connected these events to issues in students’ lives and in *The Freedom Writers Diary*. She began the lesson by showing two videos – one about the Rodney King riots in 1992 in Los Angeles and one about the riots in Ferguson following the shooting of Michael Brown. Students then read articles and photographs from the Rodney King riots and examined the Ferguson Twitter feed and Instagram #Ferguson pictures. They used these texts, which varied in form and perspective, to compare and contrast the two events, including the deep roots of racism that prompted them and how people have responded to them. Finally, Allison had students summarize the central focus of the texts that they evaluated that day and connect them to what they are learning in *The Freedom Writers Diary* in writing. Throughout this lesson, Allison hoped that students recognized that “it is 2015 and the same issues exist today. This relates to *The Freedom Writers Diary* through the description of the struggles that students face due to their race” (Allison LP, 1/22/15).

As a final example of how Allison utilized the practical tool of making personal connections to bring in multiple perspectives in her classroom and foster students’ ability to question issues in the world around them, she worked with students to problematize
issues in their community and our world through a public service announcement (PSA) group project. In this series of lessons across five days (1/30/15-2/5/15), which Allison prepared and recorded to be submitted for her Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), she asked students to create a PSA about an issue specific to our local community such as incarceration, gang activity, and graduation rates to help answer the essential question: “How relevant is The Freedom Writers Diary to your community today?” (Allison LP, 1/30/15). In these lessons, students chose and researched their topic, evaluated model PSAs, created group posters with relevant textual features and The Freedom Writers Diary quotes, and presented them to their peers. Allison was proud of these lessons, as evident in her decision to submit them for edTPA and in conversations with me about achieving her goals of cultural relevancy. Lessons such as this one represent modifications that Allison made in her teaching to meet her goals of valuing multiple perspectives and positioning students with agency. While she was working within the confines of her mentor teacher’s expectations, as evident in her ultimate use of The Freedom Writers Diary, she also learned to operate within the system by blending both person and academic expectations (Fecho et al., 2016). When Allison used practical tools like making connections to meet the needs of her conceptual tools, it resulted in lessons that were more robust, in that her activities were clearly aligned with her instructional goals.

**Station activities and graffiti wall.** Allison also tried to give students freedom and choice in different ways through other practical tools like station activities and graffiti walls that she employed to engage students with the content. She did not seem to like the “old school”, “rigid” ways of her mentor’s approach towards instruction and
instead preferred to provide students more autonomy by positioning them as capable individuals. For example, when trying out station activities, Allison did not give students time restrictions or special instructions about when and how to move to different stations, as would be a typical routine in middle level classrooms. Instead, students worked independently and moved about when they were ready. Student choice was also apparent in many of the assignments in Allison’s teaching, from the quotes students responded to in exit tickets, to the types of projects they completed at the end of their unit. Allison fulfilled her goals of hearing perspectives, sharing voices, and providing freedom in varying degrees, but with consistent attention through her unit on *The Freedom Writers Diary* and in her student teaching experience.

Perhaps one reason that Allison relied on practical tools for teaching, like the graffiti wall that she adopted from her methods course to engage students, was because it seemed that Ms. Rees also valued and took up practical tools in similar ways – that is, to engage students and to reach students who “don’t have the ethics, the morals, the drive to want to do well in school [which] makes it difficult to prepare them when they come into not wanting to do it” (Interview – 4/20/16). As such, Ms. Rees adopted practical tools to meet these concerns. This was evident in my interview with Ms. Rees, who expressed that she was excited to learn about the activity of the found poem, which her students also loved, that a student teacher had adopted from the university a few years prior to Allison being in her class. When asked about key understandings that she believed student teachers should leave knowing about ELA, she further responded by expressing that PSTs need to understand the value of “repetition…to reteach and keep bringing it up”
(Interview – 4/20/16), rather than enduring understandings central to teaching reading or writing, for example.

**Basic skills.** The impact of the tensions between the university’s emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and the field placement’s emphasis on showing improvement in students’ standardized test scores, was actualized through Allison and Ms. Rees’s discourse and in Allison’s teaching practices. The tensions between priorities across settings continued to impact Allison’s conceptual understanding about how valuing multiple perspectives is achieved in teaching, as evident in her decisions to teach or assess basic skills like vocabulary, figurative language, or other tangible concepts in which there is typically one answer, leaving little up for interpretation. In one such Jeopardy review game of key concepts in *Speak*, Allison asked students to identify examples of figurative language from the novel and where various vocabulary words were located in the text as key tenets of the novel to be reviewed with students. This pedagogical move made towards the first half of the year seems to be a reflection of Ms. Rees’s values about teaching ELA. As Ms. Rees stated in an interview about what is most important in teaching ELA, “repetition” of “basic skills” was evident in the types of topics that Allison chose to review in the unit around *Speak*.

To understand more about the conceptual tools guiding Allison’s pedagogical decisions, she and I discussed what she values about the teaching of literature in a debriefing conference after the Jeopardy review game lesson. I said,

This is sort of the nature of Jeopardy, but they were all one right answer type of questions. What do you want them to remember from the book? This is something that you will learn to negotiate as a teacher of literature. When you pick novel
next year in your classroom, think about exactly why you’ve chosen it and what you want students to get out of it. I wouldn’t be so concerned with what part in the book the word *interrogate* was used, as an example from your lesson today (Observation Debriefing – 11/11/14).

In my continuous effort to get her to think about the larger issues and significance of literature, Allison was also balancing Ms. Rees’s expectations, which was for students to end novel units with a clear comprehension of the novel, including the identification of character development, theme, and key vocabulary. In this speech event with me, Allison participated in discourse where she engaged ideas from various people across spaces representing a range of ideologies, helping to form her professional teacher identity (Alsup, 2006). This debriefing with Allison led her to incorporate future activities aimed at making connections with texts and (trying) to value multiple interpretations.

Allison’s *The Freedom Writers Diary* unit seemed to be an amalgam of her preferences – lessons with a clear social justice orientation, with her mentor’s preferences – learning objectives tied to the mastery of a distinct set of skills that students would likely have to demonstrate on the end of year test. For example, at six points throughout *The Freedom Writers Diary* unit, Allison had students write an objective summary of the main idea of the text that they were reading, a skill that she said Ms. Rees would like to see students work on to prepare for the test. Additionally, identifying the meaning of unknown words through using context clues was woven throughout the unit, as was creating graphic organizers for vocabulary words from *The Freedom Writers Diary*. As these are skills that students have to demonstrate as a part of the CCSS and to show achievement on the tests, Allison was able to process these tensions and use the varying
skills and teaching ideologies to enhance her planning and teaching. As such, in some regards, the tensions proved to be productive (Smagorinsky et al., 2004) for Allison’s growth as a teacher and emerging teacher identity.

**Summary of Allison’s Tools, Goals and Attribution**

Allison’s beliefs about and appropriation of a cultural perspective in her teaching was influenced by the differences in priorities between the main settings from which she was learning to teach: the university and her field placement school, Eastwood Middle. In conversations with Allison about her goals and her mentor teacher’s responses to these goals, she revealed tensions that she felt in meeting the expectations set by herself, which were reflections of university goals, and her perceptions of her mentor’s expectations. She stated that her field placement experience made her “scared [her] head is gettin narrowed” (Observation Debriefing – 11/11/14), a strong statement highlighting the sharp contrast between placements and the ways in which Allison privileged university tools for being culturally relevant and considerate of students’ lives and perspectives.

Conversations with her mentor teacher, Ms. Rees, confirmed some differences in beliefs about how the two of them approached the teaching of ELA and how they conceptualized student success. Allison’s responses to her field placement “not meshing with our program or what [she’s] learning or how [she] want[s] to be” (Interview – 12/17/14) resulted in what proved to be productive tensions (Smagorinsky at al., 2004) for her. In this regard, Allison had to navigate sometimes competing and conflicting expectations by engaging in discourse with others in which she engaged ideas from various people across spaces representing a range of ideologies, helping to form her professional teacher identity (Alsup, 2006).
Throughout the school year, Allison remained constant in her belief that her and Ms. Rees were inherently different in how they approached teaching with a cultural perspective, whether it was in their relationships with students, the teaching of literature, or social justice in the classroom. These three areas most prominently made apparent the differences in cultural perspectives towards teaching between Allison and Ms. Rees. With regards to forming relationships with students and creating a classroom environment where students have freedom, Allison felt that she differed from Ms. Rees’s controlling approach. Allison expressed that this contrast made it hard for the kids because we’re not consistent at all. How we act and discipline is totally different. I think that’s why classroom management is hard for me in here.

I don’t like to yell but that’s what they’re used to (Interview – 12/17/14).

As the year went on and Allison took over more teaching, she felt that their different approaches towards instruction grew more apparent. Some family responsibilities often kept Ms. Rees out of school and left Allison with a substitute teacher in the room, to which Allison expressed “I feel like I’m different when she’s not there, which makes me happy” (Informal Meeting – 3/4/15).

In considering Allison’s attribution of the instructional tools that she used to achieve her teaching goals, she relied heavily on her apprenticeship of observation from university courses and the approval of her supervisor (me), and professors with regards to her lesson plans. As previously discussed, Allison often referenced the “eye opening” courses that were a part of the MCE program and the formation of her teaching philosophy rooted in social justice because of these courses. She was excited about the applicability of using course resources, such as the graffiti wall activity where she had
students respond to thematic quotes on 3/13/15 during her *The Freedom Writers Diary* unit, an idea that she got from her ELA methods class. Allison often referenced this ELA methods class, perhaps because the relationship that she established with the professor of the course felt comfortable to her and was more aligned with the relationship that she had hoped to have with Ms. Rees. She said, “it wasn’t a teacher-student relationship with us and her [ELA methods professor]; it was more of a teacher to teacher. Like an experienced teacher helping the new teachers. So I liked that dynamic” (Interview – 12/17/14). Similarly, I think Allison felt comfortable with me and appreciated the blend of practical strategies that we created together in mentoring sessions and my encouragement of her cultural relevant ideologies towards teaching (Interview – 12/17/14). This opportunity to integrate conceptual and practical tools during post-observation debriefings was critical towards Allison’s success in appropriating a blend of these tools in her teaching. This differed from the interactions that she had with her mentor teacher, to which Allison said “She doesn’t guide me, but she’ll just say something like, ‘Do a lesson on theme today.’ And I have to guess what she’s looking for” (Interview – 11/20/14). As the relationships that new teachers form with mentors and colleagues can be instrumental in their appropriation of tools and concepts (e.g., Newell & Connors, 2011), Allison’s experiences with making pedagogical decisions that reflected the goals of some, while refracted the goals of others, is not surprising.

**Cory: Cultural Relevance Distinct from the CCSS**

As discussed in Chapter Three, Cory was a hard working and reflective teacher candidate who was strongly influenced by ideas from the teacher education program as he declared and worked to problematize his inherent privilege as a white, middle-class
male. He was eager to learn from all of his teachers and mentors and genuinely felt lucky to have been part of the MCE program and to have been placed at Riverside Middle School paired with his mentor teacher, Ms. Willow, who he was in awe of. He hoped to engage his students in lessons rooted in discussion and serve as a positive role model for his students, particularly those who may not have had a strong male figure in their lives. To frame his teaching goals, Cory relied on a number of conceptual and practical tools to guide his thinking and practically achieve the work in his teaching. Some of the conceptual tools, to be discussed further in this section, included fostering student engagement, fighting stereotypes, building positive relationships with students, and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The prominent practical tools that he used included varying text choices, student discussion, and personal whiteboards. In this section I will first briefly describe Cory’s central instructional unit, then describe how he used various tools to enact teaching from a cultural perspective into his unit centered around the theme of a *Trip Around the World*.

**An Instructional Unit for a *Trip Around the World***

Cory’s main unit that he developed and taught during his student teaching was one that he titled a “Trip Around the World.” When initially asked during an interview in December about his instructional plans for student teaching, he replied, “I haven’t gotten that far with the process outside of knowing that I need to fit in an argumentative piece and we’re reading *The Clay Marble*” (Interview – 12/11/15). However, upon reading *The Clay Marble* over winter break, the book Ms. Willow suggested that he use for the unit, Cory found that he did not like the book and instead decided to create his own unit using a range of poems, short stories, dramas, and illustrations representing countries all over
the world. In doing so, he aimed to expose students to texts from around the world to fight stereotypes and single stories about people while also teaching literary elements such as mood, tone, figurative language, and poetry terminology. This unit lasted about seven weeks, with the final project being a “passport”, a collection of text analysis tasks that students completed along the way using texts from around the world due at the end.

Cory created the grand plan for his Trip Around the World unit with the help of his mentor teacher, although they both mentioned that it was his idea and that Ms. Willow had never done a unit like this before. She was supportive of Cory trying something new and encouraged him not to teach *The Clay Marble*, once he decided that he did not enjoy the text. When I asked Cory about his goals for the unit, his efforts to engage students were evident, as was his understanding of the enormity of planning the unit from scratch, when he replied “keep it together, keep them invested in it, don’t lose them” (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16). These themes will be discussed further in the following sections. An instructional chain (VanDerHeide & Newell, 2013) outlining the main teaching and learning activities each day of this unit is listed below. As documented in the chain, the conceptual tools that Cory valued from his university coursework primarily existed as conceptions for his teaching in that they were only evident in the main instructional activities during three lessons: two at the beginning and the last day of the unit. They were also achieved through one exit ticket (ET) on March 10 and in the text choices that he made throughout the unit. The remainder of the unit served to teach literary concepts and terminology such as elements of poetry, mood, and tone, which were privileged by his field placement setting. This is explored in further detail throughout the analysis of Cory’s tool use.
Table 5.3. Cory’s *Trip Around the World* instructional chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Ss read Nacirema and answer questions about text structure and author’s purpose. ET: Similarities between your culture and Nacirema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Figurative language pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>Watch <em>Danger of a Single Story</em> Ss write questions about it to guide discussion. T &amp; Ss ask – what if Nacirema was our single story? Passports intro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>Read <em>Grandfather’s Journey</em> by Allen Say, Ss write theme on white boards, discussion and reflection of “home”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>Figurative language notes and examples from <em>Grandfather’s Journey</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>Figurative language stations – identifying examples in texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Ss write two short free verse poems about things important to them with figurative language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Ss write two short free verse poems about things important to them with figurative language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>Poetry notes and analyzing of own poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>Read <em>Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night</em> (Great Britain) and color code poem for symbolism, imagery, repetition, and rhyme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>Complete handout to identify type of poem, repetition, figurative language, imagery, symbolism for poem – either <em>Invictus</em> (GB) or <em>The Idea</em> (S. Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>Complete handout to identify type of poem, repetition, figurative language, imagery, symbolism for poem – either <em>Invictus</em> (GB) or <em>The Idea</em> (S. Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>Ss find commonalities between poems, identify main idea and theme, &amp; predict where they come from – both are about conflict. Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>Ss watch <em>Willy Wonka</em> Horror Trailer and track their mood and then do a gallery walk to view four paintings and do the same. Discuss author moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Ss identify elements of song lyrics, answer on whiteboards. They predict instruments, pace, beat of song and who might sing it, and T plays song for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>Ss watch video about apartheid and read a story from South Africa. They examine scene from story and how the mood is set by word choice, style, dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/29</td>
<td>Read excerpt from <em>The Clay Marble</em> and identify mood, symbolism, and potential colors/images for an illustration for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>Ss draw their illustration in groups portraying mood through explicit techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Ss present their picture to class while peers’ interpret the artwork for mood and identify the techniques used to portray mood in art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>Notes and whiteboard questions about elements of plays. Distinguishing between prediction and inference. Predict in <em>Adventures of the Speckled Band</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
### Table 5.3 cont

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3/3: Notes and whiteboard questions about elements of plays. Distinguishing between prediction and inference. Predict in <em>Adventures of the Speckled Band</em></th>
<th>3/7: Finish Act 1 and chart facts, clues, and possible suspects in text to help them make predictions and identify inferences being made by characters in text</th>
<th>3/8: Discussion about predictions vs. inferences, Ss take notes, reflection on past predictions of the text, and make new ones about Act 2</th>
<th>3/9: Ss make an informed prediction about text based on picture. Notes about myths. Whiteboard activity to identify concepts in text for review.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/10: Post-test on figurative language and mood. Ss create chain of causes and effects. ET: If stereotypes are the cause, what’s effect? Explain the danger.</td>
<td>3/11: Discussion of effect of stereotypes and their causes. Ss identify cause and effect relationships in a text and how text would change if one cause was eliminated</td>
<td>3/14: Ss make list of elements of a myth, read myth as a class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16: Four corners class discussion - Ss state opinions from T statements about learning about other cultures and putting an end to stereotypes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.3. Cory’s *Trip Around the World* instructional chain*

Made evident in the instructional chain and the analysis that follows, Cory was exposed to conceptual and practical tools from various settings and appropriated many of these into his teaching. A table outlining the tools that Cory learned about and whether or not these were observed in his teaching is below. As the table indicates, Cory appropriated much of the tools that were privileged in his field placement site and
somewhat appropriated (noted by a “/”) tools that were valued by the university and discussed during mentoring sessions.

Table 5.4

*Tools for Teaching ELA from a Cultural Perspective: Cory*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>University Coursework</th>
<th>Field Placement Sites</th>
<th>Mentoring Sessions</th>
<th>Observed in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual Tools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural perspective</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit thinking</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting stereotypes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective/emotional student</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with students</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Tools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student discussion</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming techniques</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal whiteboards</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text choices</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary terminology</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptual Tools: Student Engagement, Fighting Stereotypes, Relationships with Students, and the Common Core State Standards

Grounded in the interactions with others and influenced by the goals of the varying settings from which he was learning to teach, Cory relied on four conceptual tools to guide his lesson planning and teaching: student engagement, fighting stereotypes, relationships with students, and the CCSS. The first three principles and frameworks were entwined in that Cory often used more than one in a given lesson or activity to meet his instructional goals and they also often worked in conjunction with one another in that one tool could not be in place without another’s presence. Similar to Allison’s mentor teacher’s request to teach the CCSS, these were an additional tool that seemed to exist as a separate consideration or guide for Cory as he was planning and teaching, and thus, will be addressed separately. However, unlike Allison, Cory did not move towards blending goals of the CCSS with his other conceptual tools for teaching; they existed as one or the other in his pedagogical decisions.

Student engagement, fighting stereotypes, relationships with students. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, Cory was strongly influenced by the goals of the MCE program. He expressed in numerous interviews that course ideas about interrogating one’s own identity and privilege was initially uncomfortable, but that because of these discussions, he could no longer interpret nearly any social situation in the same way as he used to. As Cory was a PST in the second year of the study, I worked to engage him in the mentoring curriculum that I designed around using ethnographic methods to foster a cultural perspective in teaching. The activities and discussions that we had were focused on building off of the theoretical concepts that were addressed in their
MCE courses and bridging the divide between theory and application to the real life scenarios and tensions that they were experiencing in their field placements. As such, evidence of Cory’s understanding of his coursework was seen in discussions in the mentoring group surrounding issues of privilege and power. With his peers and me, Cory worked to construct his understanding of these concepts over time, drawing on examples from his own experiences teaching and on discourse used by others. Cory’s appropriation of conceptual tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective existed primarily in his discourse and actions related to forming relationships with students and in smaller ways in his pedagogical decisions. Evidence of his appropriation of conceptual tools into his discourse was shown in Chapter Four and is also highlighted in the following two examples.

During the first group mentoring session of the school year, I introduced myself to the PSTs by describing the different worlds (Rex & Schiller, 2009) that I was bringing into my teaching and mentoring that school year. By then considering their own worlds, I hoped to show PSTs that “the values, beliefs, assumptions, and dispositions we have discursively taken on speak through us when we open our mouths. Our words stand in for and represent our worlds” (Rex & Schiller, 2009, p. 28). I wanted them to understand how their histories inherently shaped how they might perceive their students, schools, and communities in which they were serving. The impact of Cory’s initial MCE courses were apparent in his explanation of the worlds that he was carrying with him. He explained:

So obviously I’m a white male so I’m like the poster boy of privilege as I’ve recently learned [laughed; others laughed too]. So um yeah uh I was born and raised in [small Ohio city] in like a really wealthy suburban public school. There
wasn’t a lot of diversity and I realize I’m lacking culture. I’m open to learning and trying new things, but I haven’t traveled much really outside of the U.S. So I don’t have a lot of multicultural experience (Group Mentoring – 9/10/15).

Cory’s claim that he was “lacking culture” by explaining that he was from a town without much diversity and had not traveled much was likely representative of how he saw himself as being different from his students. Riverside Middle School was diverse racially, linguistically, socioeconomically, and religiously. Of the 59% of the students representing races other than white, including a high Somali population, students spoke many languages other than English and followed religions like Islam (reportcard.education.ohio.gov). So in conversations with Cory throughout the year about lesson planning, he often said that he wanted students to feel included and be represented in the classroom. Recognizing how he was so different from his students and understanding the vast experiences and worlds that they carry with them into school ultimately impacted some of the pedagogical decisions that he made in his teaching.

Another event that impacted how Cory appropriated conceptual tools occurred during a group mentoring session about a month into the school year. As a part of the mentoring curriculum, we focused on the power of discourse, particularly in fostering relationships with students and understanding the impact of word choice on student understanding. Taken from the handout that I created for this session, we discussed how “classroom life is built up overtime by the conversations that take place between teacher

4 I chose the term Somali to be more inclusive to account for the students who may be document American citizens, as well as undocumented refugees, since I do not know the citizen status of the students.
and students and between students and students” (Frank, 1999, p. 48). To prepare for the session, I asked the PSTs to

- Observe a teacher-student(s) interaction for 5-10 minutes.
- Write down as much of the conversation as you can, separated by speaker. This is a record of a conversation – not an analysis, reflection, or judgment.
- Choose about 1 minute of your transcription record that stands out to you for whatever reason.
- Email me a copy of this 1 minute exchange by Tuesday night (Document Collection).

The PSTs collected conversations that they observed in their field placements, so the group spent the following session discussing the transcripts. Cory was drawn to one of the conversations that another PST submitted and spoke for him and another PST when he brought it to the attention of the group. He said that the teacher

doesn’t like attack the student, but is pointing out behavior that needs to change, but she doesn’t just point out the bad behavior, she’s also like “I really like some things you do like when you offer to help clean up, when you do the acting parts for Shakespeare, you’re my shining star.” So the kid’s not just being torn down, like she’s also reinforcing the positive too (Group Mentoring – 10/1/15).

In noting the positive interaction between this teacher and student, Cory affirmed and contributed further to his ideas about the types of relationships that he hoped to establish with his own students. He appreciated how the teacher did not tear down the student, which juxtaposed a different narrative that Cory shared with me in an interview about the football coaches that he had in high school, who he wanted to counter in his own teaching. He believed that he “need[ed] to be more positive than negative, no screaming
or talking down to people. That doesn’t get respect” (Interview – 1/12/15). These events impacted Cory’s future decisions during student teaching in that he privileged forming positive relationships with students.

Cory also appropriated these conceptual tools into his pedagogical decisions, but had less of an influence on his teaching than the CCSS ultimately proved to have. He began his Trip Around the World unit by reading Body Ritual Among the Nacirema, an essay by Horace Miner that satirizes American life. Two days later, students watched the TED Talk, “Danger of a Single Story”, and then wrote questions about stereotypes and had a subsequent discussion around these questions. Cory linked ideas about stereotypes in Body Ritual Among the Nacirema and “Danger of a Single Story,” which he felt was “a good hook” into the unit, by

letting them get all their stereotypes out there and then watching the single story and be like “Oh wait, that’s kind of what I just did.” And then saying “well what’s a way to combat these stereotypes? Through actually learning about these cultures. And a great way to learn about them, these other cultures, is through their literature” (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16).

In this lesson, students appeared to be engaged and interested. While observing the lesson, I heard students say “WHAT? NOOOOO” when Cory turned off the video after showing a clip (Field Notes – 2/5/16). Students engaged with the ideas in the video and, with the guidance of Cory, bridged ideas between the video and the Nacirema text that they had read two days earlier. This lesson was the first one that Cory planned and taught related to social justice issues, and also, according to Cory and Ms. Willow, largely the first lesson during that school year that students had discussed issues like this in this
language arts class. As such, it was replete with moments of deficit-oriented thinking and also moments of raw vulnerability by both the students and Cory. While Cory told the students “so it’s dangerous to read a single story and think it’s the truth”, a student remarked just shortly after Cory said that that “America needs to open our eyes. In Nigeria they are poor and have to work for their food, but in America, we’re rich” (Field Notes – 2/5/16). Students continued to share stories and the moment passed without interrogation or questioning by Cory or the other students. In our conversation after the lesson, we discussed this exchange and I urged Cory to consider how he “could disrupt this thinking in the moment” to “show him how this single story [could] be problematic” (Field Notes – 2/5/16). However, because Cory was excited that students were eagerly responding and participating, he regretted that he did not jump in. His lack of response to this student also suggests that Cory was unsure in the moment of how to respond. Maintaining control and having the answers seems to be important to PSTs, based on my observations throughout this study, so avoiding a potentially difficult or indeterminate conversation is not surprising.

Cory continued to appropriate culturally relevant pedagogy into his discourse as evident in his decision to do his Capstone action research project, a required culmination of the M.Ed. program, on culturally relevant pedagogy. When I asked why he chose this topic for his Capstone, it seems that he worked backwards; he designed the Trip Around the World unit first and then “so [he] thought through ‘why am I really doing this and how might it help with engagement?’ Hopefully making everyone feel more involved and more relevant” (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16). As previously mentioned, Cory’s goals for the unit involved exposing students to texts from around the world in aims of
fighting stereotypes and single stories about people. When I questioned him about whether or not the texts would be written by someone from the country or about the country in relation to his goals of disrupting stereotypes, he said

Ideally by someone from there, because even we will be using this one story and creating a single story about the country. We’ve been talking about finding some that are blatantly stereotypical and asking what they see too, if there is something off there. The conversation of ‘What does it mean to have a book written about a culture by someone who isn’t from that culture?’ I don’t want it to fall flat (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16).

Cory recognized the irony and need to be careful in his own unit, as he described how “even we will be using this one story and creating a single story about the country.” Still, his plans for the unit and openness towards having conversations with 6th graders about these topics is significant in showing his understanding of the need for a cultural perspective in his teaching. He wanted to continue this thread throughout his unit and show students “how we’ve defeated stereotypes by learning about them. So asking ‘what are some new things that we’ve learned about the cultures now?’” Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16).

**Common Core State Standards.** Also undergirding most of Cory’s lessons, was the CCSS – a conceptual tool that guided much of Cory’s pedagogical decisions during his student teaching. Aligning lessons to the CCSS was important to Ms. Willow, and therefore, became important to Cory. Student performance on high stakes tests was very much a part of this class and school, as evident in various conversations with Cory and Ms. Willow. As such, when Cory was explaining his rationale for the start of the unit, he
said, “I know one of the standards has to do with bias” (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16), as if all aspects of lesson planning and implementation must relate to the CCSS. However, what Cory failed to see during this particular lesson and throughout the remainder of his student teaching, was how the CCSS could be used in service of other instructional goals, particularly those related to culturally relevant teaching. In other words, rather than seeing how culturally relevant teaching could occur through also grounding lessons in CCSS concepts, Cory saw the goals as separate, a distinction that did not become blurred through more experience in student teaching, as it had for Allison.

During mentoring sessions, I tried to show Cory how this could be achieved. For example, during the “Danger of a Single Story” lesson, Cory explained to students that the stereotypes perpetuated about people were “all because of their words” (Field Notes – 2/5/16). I urged Cory to consider building on the idea of the power of words to serve as “a critical link in considering how a lot of ELA standards can address these issues, particularly since you and your mentor have mentioned how keeping the standards in mind will be important for you” (Field Notes – 2/5/16). However, as Cory continued to plan to the unit, he did not appropriate these ideas into his teaching, as lessons seemed to either meet the needs of the CCSS or meet cultural relevancy expectations. Evidence of this is seen in Cory’s instructional chain, as he started and ended the unit with lessons designed to engage students in discussions around issues of social justice (2/3, 2/5, and 3/16), but the meat of the unit was designed to teach clear, tangible concepts, and thus, Cory’s interpretations of the goals of the CCSS. Other scholars have documented this tendency of PSTs to choose
the side of the ‘practical’ or of the mentor teacher over their university education, and therefore sometimes sacrificed theories or ideologies associated with the university in order to become a functioning member of the teaching community. The power of practicing teachers who are dealing with discipline, management, and bureaucratic overload of teaching in America’s public schools prevails, because preservice teachers are in awe of the mentors’ ability to manage a very difficult job (Alsup, 2006, p. 42).

Cory’s progress in conceptualizing a cultural perspective and engagement in his teaching continued as he reflected on what he was able to achieve in the unit. In his final evaluation and observation debriefing with Ms. Willow and me, Cory described his strength as “creating engaging lessons, but to a fault because sometimes it can be unproductive work for me” Observation Debriefing – 4/12/16).

**Practical Tools: Student Discussion, Personal Whiteboards, and Text Choices**

**Student discussion.** Getting students engaged with the content through the creation of relevant lessons that incorporated discussion and multimodal learning was important to Cory from the start of the year. His conceptions of engagement were often based in using cool or fun activities as a vehicle for engagement without necessarily thinking about the content or purpose of them. For example, after one of Cory’s first lessons during the first semester where he taught students about utilizing transition words to improve their writing, he remarked “It felt like a dull lesson to me just because of how quiet they were. I would have liked to do a think-pair-share” (Observation Debriefing – 11/10/15). This reaction to his lesson suggests that he believes student interaction is important for ensuring exciting, not “dull” lessons. However, his lack of attention to how
student interaction would actually improve their *learning* and why a think-pair-share would be best for achieving this learning shows that his conceptual understanding is a little unclear for Cory. Instead he focused on one pedagogical tool, the *think-pair-share*, which he likely learned in one of his university courses, to foster student discussion to make his lesson more engaging. Incorporating student discussion into his lessons continued to serve as a means for achieving his conceptual tool of fostering student engagement in his teaching during his Trip Around the World unit, which is suggestive of a superficial means of appropriation of this tool (Grossman et al., 1999). While the practical tool (student discussion) was linked to a conceptual tool (student engagement), it assumed that just because students were talking, they were engaged and learning.

Cory’s goals for using other practical tools centered in discussion to engage students continued to come across in conversations with him about his plans for during student teaching. He expressed interest in addressing the current refugee crisis with his students through a debate, even though it may be considered a controversial and sensitive topic for many of his diverse, Muslim students. Still, he said “I just want to give them the chance to show me what they can do, it might fall on its face. Maybe they can’t handle it, but I want to at least give them the chance to” (Interview – 12/11/15). Cory continued to focus on singular activities linked to ensuring engagement and cultural relevancy for his students. This focus on practical tools was a reflection of some of tools presented during microteaches in his ELA methods course, as discussed in Chapter Four.

**Personal whiteboards.** Another practical tool that Cory relied on during student teaching was personal whiteboards. Cory adopted the use of this tool to align with his conceptual tool of student engagement after hearing about the resource available at his
school. He viewed them as a means for making the concepts and skills that he believed were necessary for him to teach from the CCSS engaging. In a reflection on one lesson where he utilized them, he commented,

> I knew that symbolism was a difficult concept for them from when we looked at an example in the notes the day before, so I was concerned with losing them. The strength of the lesson came through the use of whiteboards for students to respond to my questions. By using whiteboards, I ensured that all students were staying engaged in the lesson and it allowed me to take a quick survey of what concepts I needed to spend more time on” (Written Reflection – 2/20/16).

His reflections on the tool suggest that, like student discussion, he appropriated it into his teaching to meet his goals for student engagement. Fostering student engagement was central to Cory’s beliefs about teaching in culturally relevant ways. This notion of culturally relevant pedagogy was aligned more with the field placement site, than with how it was presented in his university coursework.

**Text choices.** Evidence of the conceptual tools of student engagement, fighting stereotypes, and relationships with students that Cory valued was somewhat evident in his pedagogical decisions via the text choices that he used to guide his instructional unit. Cory planned on incorporating texts representing (depicting stories from and written by authors from) a variety of countries in aims of making the content relevant for his diverse students, hence their “Trip Around the World” documented in the creation of “passports.” Incorporating a wide variety of text choices guided his conception of the unit. As seen in the instructional chain in Figure 5.3, this was achieved to a lesser degree than he might
have initially imagined. A review of his lesson plans and observations from his teaching show that Cory included texts from Great Britain, South Africa, and Iraq.

**Summary of Cory’s Tools, Goals and Attribution**

The conceptual and practical tools that Cory relied on during student teaching were largely influenced by the goals of the settings around him, mainly the university and his field placement, Riverside Middle School. He attributed his tool use to these two settings in conversations with me throughout the year. For example, during his Trip Around the World unit, he explained that he first saw the “Danger of a Single Story” TED talk in his Equity and Diversity class in the MCE program, where they wrote “our own single story (stereotypes people have held against us) and an interview with a classmate about their story. I guess in a way I kind of adapted and expanded upon that” (Email Conversation – 7/12/16). As Ms. Willow had never seen or used the video before, this is an example of the influence of the university coursework on Cory’s pedagogical decisions. However, as evident in the majority of lessons during the instructional unit that emphasized the teaching of literary terminology, or the “basic skills” that Ms. Willow and the other mentors referenced in their interviews, he also strongly appropriated tools from his field placement site. Cory’s relationship with Ms. Willow and respect for her approach to teaching likely impacted this appropriation. As Cory described during an interview, he admired Ms. Willow’s ability to be “super energetic”, which he believed to be “so important for keeping kids engaged.” He contrasted Ms. Willow’s approach to “the teacher from *Ferris Bueller* who’s just talking in monotone, and the difference that that can make to get the kids excited” (Interview – 12/11/15). It was clear that Cory valued Ms. Willow’s pedagogical and student-centered approaches to teaching, which
impacted his appropriation of tools and conceptions of his own beliefs about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective.

The lessons within his central instructional unit were ultimately either primarily designed around his goals of defeating stereotypes through learning about other cultures, or a reflection of the goals of his field placement site, which were primarily around teaching concepts from the CCSS. They seemed to exist as an either-or. During a post-observation debriefing about Cory’s “Danger of a Single Story” lesson, he attributed his decision to creating and teaching the lesson to feedback that I had given him on lesson plans: “Yeah sometimes you’ve left notes about getting the students to leave class still questioning things, so that’s where I was going with that, and today I think they still were too” (Observation Debriefing – 2/5/16). This suggests that Cory valued the conceptual and practical tools that the others around him did, but struggled with blending the contrasting values that existed across his settings for learning. This tension was evident in Cory’s reflections on the unit on the final day. During the four corners activity that he designed to have students reflect on their own stereotypes and how they had been changed because of the unit, he remarked that “I would have liked them to be more in depth, rather than ‘I learned a lot from reading’” (Observation Debriefing – 3/16/16). His disappointment about students’ learning, and therefore his success with achieving his conceptual goals that he had for the unit, was a result of juggling the various expectations that people had for his teaching. He commented that

I still wish I was able to set aside more time for discussion. And I know that was in your notes a lot – like “don’t lose focus of your central issue or umbrella that all of this falls under.” I was just having a hard time hitting everything that we
need to hit. Discussion isn’t a quick activity, even though the times we did them they seemed to be really good, but it’s hard. That was disappointing” (Observation Debriefing – 3/16/16).

While mentoring sessions centered around teaching ELA from a cultural perspective were woven through Cory’s experience in the program, these interactions did not help Cory with managing the demands across settings. He reflected many of Ms. Willow’s and the university’s conceptual and practical tools in his teaching, but, perhaps because of his strong relationship with his various teacher educators, he was not able to merge these goals. Cory’s experiences suggest the continued need for mentoring to serve as a space where PSTs can consider the ideologies of those around them and work to understand how the one set of tools and beliefs can be used in service of another’s.

Carmen: Omitting the Students in Culturally Relevant Teaching

As discussed in Chapter Three, Carmen had a student teaching experience with some successes and also some times of definite frustration regarding the relationships that she had with her students and her ability to teach in ways that fulfilled her goals. Pressures from having to plan for two content areas (language arts and social studies), prepare materials for the edTPA (Education Teacher Performance Assessment), conduct and complete an action research project for her M.Ed. Capstone course, and meet the varying needs of her mentor teacher and students contributed to her high level of stress throughout the year. Some of these factors were particular to Carmen (i.e., planning for and teaching two content areas), while other expectations existed across all PSTs (i.e. completing the edTPA portfolio). In many ways these stressors impacted the classroom environment during Carmen’s student teaching and the ways in which she ultimately
achieved teaching ELA from cultural perspective as she had hoped. Carmen relied on a number of conceptual tools to guide her thinking and planning in ELA, which included making content culturally relevant and approaching argumentation as a central framework in the classroom for doing and thinking. She also valued a number of practical tools to achieve this work in her teaching, some of which were connected to her stated conceptual tools, and some of which were less related. These included gallery walks, class discussion, and teaching writing structures. Because of Carmen’s struggles with establishing a positive classroom environment, building positive relationships with students became a goal for her once she saw that she had not and that it was affecting her teaching, even though she did not necessarily actively work to achieve this from the start.

In this section I will first describe Carmen’s central instructional unit on Night by Elie Wiesel (1982), then describe some of the conceptual tools that were important to her and examine how she used practical tools to appropriate ideas about teaching ELA from a cultural perspective into her unit, which were reflections and refractions of Carmen’s relationships with and interactions with others.

**An Instructional Unit on Night**

The central instructional unit that Carmen planned and taught during her student teaching surrounded the memoir Night, by Elie Wiesel (1982). The unit lasted about eight weeks, including the culminating assessment, which was an argumentative essay about the relevancy of the themes and ideas in Night to life today. During a meeting with Carmen and Mr. Truman at the end of autumn semester, Mr. Truman pushed Carmen to think about what she wanted to do with the novel. The use of this central text was the expectation of Mr. Truman and the district’s curriculum guide, but the lessons and
standards to be taught with the novel were the choice of Carmen. As such, Carmen responded with:

Well I am totally thinking about tying it into Mr. Trump’s push for how they like want to track Muslims ^now. Cuz I think that that’s a really interesting current event to bring into it. And sort of highlight why it’s super important to ^NOT do that [laughs] (Semester 1 Evaluation – 12/7/15).

From the onset, Carmen’s ideas about teaching with a cultural perspective were woven through her instructional goals. As evident in this statement and in the analysis of conceptual tools to come, to Carmen, teaching ELA from a cultural perspective meant making content culturally relevant, which was bringing political and social issues into the classroom for students to explore and problematize together. As the campaign for the 2016 presidential election was ongoing during Carmen’s student teaching experience, this was a prominent, contested issue that she hoped to use as material during her teaching.

Also of importance for Carmen’s unit on Night were her goals for a more balanced presence of the various strands of ELA instruction than she felt had been a part of the classroom when Mr. Truman was teaching. Although she had learned quite a lot about teaching writing from her ELA methods class, she felt that this was not privileged in her field placement. So during her student teaching, she said that she wanted “to try to balance it more” and “to do more writing rather than just answer questions about the chapter” (Interview – 12/10/15). Pressures of state testing impacted how ELA had been taught so far in the year, and were likely reflected in the comprehension questions that Carmen referenced with regards to teaching literature. Carmen noted these demands and also wanted to work around them “to get some creative writing in there even though
standardized testing emphasizes informational reading and writing” (Interview – 12/10/15). Carmen’s goals of making connections to political and social issues that connected to the discrimination, resilience, and indoctrination present in *Night* and incorporating writing in a variety of forms were both accomplished and abandoned in her actual teaching practices. In the following sections, I will explain how her conceptual and practical tools reflected and refracted the learning settings around her and impacted her identity and agency as a teacher during student teaching. An instructional chain (VanDerHeide & Newell, 2013) outlining the main teaching and learning activities each day of this unit is listed below. As the chain highlights, Carmen’s pedagogical decisions throughout much of the unit reflected the practical tools that her mentor teacher valued such as teaching vocabulary and literary terminology, like theme, mood, and foreshadowing. Considering the relevance of *Night* to the world today was also a part of the unit, but to a lesser extent than Carmen had envisioned it being in her plans for the unit.
### Table 5.5. Carmen’s *Night* instructional chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21: Background of Holocaust; read about Hitler, examine WWII propaganda. ET: Would you have voted for Hitler if you were a German?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>1/22: Interpret statements as theme or main idea of <em>Night</em>. Read quotes from <em>Night</em> to predict four main themes. ET: Why are we reading this knowing themes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>1/24: Vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet, and read <em>Night.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>1/25: Interprete statements as the theme or/main idea of <em>Night</em>. Read quotes from <em>Night</em> to predict four main themes. ET: Why are we reading this knowing themes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>1/26: Vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet, and read <em>Night.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>2/1: Hot Seat - Ss write and ask questions of Elie Wiesel, who T is playing the role of, about relationships, religion, emotions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>2/2: Vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet, and read <em>Night.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>2/3: Read Ch.2 of <em>Night</em>, select passages that support the tone of the chapter. Perform/orally read passages to partner using appropriate tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>2/4: Identify mood and tone of song playing. Lecture on dramatic irony and foreshadowing. Ss make predictions about what happens to <em>Night</em> characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>2/5: Rewrite Ch. 2 from given character’s perspective using foreshadowing, dramatic irony, and appropriate tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>2/6: Write predictions about changes in Elie’s faith. Read <em>Night.</em> Answer comprehension questions and assess faith prediction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>2/7: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>2/8: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>2/9: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<td>2/10</td>
<td>2/10: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>2/11: Quick write about hope. Read <em>Night.</em> Graffiti wall to chart Ss’ reactions to the insistence on staying hopeful and making friends. Present posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>2/12: Quick write on why Jews didn’t resist or revolt. Read <em>Night.</em> Write poem that explores how given theme developed in text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>2/13: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>2/14: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>2/15: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<td>2/16</td>
<td>2/16: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>2/17: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>2/18: Read <em>Night</em> and respond to comprehension questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>2/19: Read <em>Night.</em> Quick write on what event stood out most to Ss and why Elie was so affected by the hanging he witnessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>2/20: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>2/21: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>2/23: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<td>2/25</td>
<td>2/25: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>2/26: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>2/27: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>2/28: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/29</td>
<td>2/29: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<td>3/1</td>
<td>3/1: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<td>3/3</td>
<td>3/3: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>3/4: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 5.5 cont.

| 2/25: Read *Night*. Ss create a discussion question and put it on Graffiti wall for discussion | 2/29: Read *Night* and discuss questions about relationships, straying from faith, inhumane actions, and relevancy of *Night* today | 3/2: Vocab review game, vocab quiz, then work on next vocab packet. | 3/3: Ss evaluate own guilt for not acting in given hypothetical situations. Watch *Terrible Things* video, discuss standing up to evil with groups. |
| 3/10: Research articles to get information to support arguments. Sources should be current and credible and represent argument & counter | 3/11: Research articles to get information to support arguments. Sources should be current and credible and represent argument & counter | 3/14: Instruction on plagiarism, in-text citations, and bibliographies. Ss create their own. | 3/15 – 3/18: Write essays in class. Due 3/18. |

*Table 5.5. Carmen’s Night instructional chain*

Made evident in the instructional chain and the analysis that follows, Carmen was exposed to conceptual and practical tools from various settings and appropriated many of these into his teaching. A table outlining the tools that Carmen learned about and whether or not these were observed in her teaching is below. As the table indicates, Carmen appropriated the tools that were privileged in her field placement site and ones valued by the university and discussed during mentoring sessions throughout her unit, although some to a lesser degree than others (“/”).
Table 5.6

Tools for Teaching ELA from a Cultural Perspective: Carmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>University Coursework</th>
<th>Field Placement Sites</th>
<th>Mentoring Sessions</th>
<th>Observed in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
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<td>Oppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficit thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Privilege</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affective/emotional student development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships with students</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student discussion</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brainstorming techniques</td>
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<td>Argumentation</td>
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<td>Literary terminology</td>
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Conceptual Tools: Making Content Culturally Relevant and Argumentation

Making content culturally relevant. A central conceptual tool that guided much of the ways that Carmen thought about her role as a teacher, as evident in her discourse, was making pedagogical choices in which the content was made culturally relevant. Based on how Carmen described her goals for instruction and how she positioned herself
as a group member working to help other PSTs problem solve in their own teaching, it seems that Carmen considered culturally relevant to mean making students aware of political and social injustices and issues in the world beyond the walls of the classroom and creating connections between those and the content area instruction. For example, in both her ELA and social studies lessons, she raised issues about immigration, equality, and human rights. As previously mentioned in the description of the Night unit, Carmen had clear beliefs about the current immigration crisis and political status in our country and approached the unit with a certain political agenda because of this. In lesson plan feedback and during conversations throughout her unit, I pushed Carmen “to find ways to make the content relevant, not just because I say you should care about this” to encourage her to keep finding the connections between the Night unit and students’ lives and to ensure that her teaching was more of a construction of knowledge and exploration of ideas with students, rather than preaching at them (Observation Debriefing – 3/8/16). Carmen responded that she’s “trying not to go in biased, but if they bring up Donald Trump, [she’s] not going to say no” (Observation Debriefing – 3/8/16). Her hopes of imparting this knowledge onto students remained constant throughout her student teaching and impacted her success with it as well.

An issue that was directly tied to Carmen’s success with teaching from a cultural perspective was how she conceived of and established relationships with students throughout the year. Building positive relationships with students was a central tenet of the MCE program in that it encouraged the PSTs to learn students’ interests and strive to take approach of “the guide on the side instead of the sage on the stage” in pedagogical decision-making, as Cory described in Chapter Three. Additionally, using ethnographic
methods for understanding students’ multifaceted and cultural lives was a key component of the mentoring curriculum that I guided the PSTs through and was also a part of Mr. Truman’s approach to mentoring, as he often asked her to “watch a kid [and] take anecdotal notes” (Interview – 4/25/16). Particularly in terms of making connections between students’ lives and the content, Mr. Truman offered that PSTs should engage in activities such as “writ[ing] down the side conversations going on. This is a sub culture. What are they talking about? You can then pull it into your lesson” (Interview – 4/25/16). His emphasis on students’ cultural lives was a significant part of his own teaching approach and his mentoring approaches with Carmen.

Despite this, Carmen’s discourse in the first half of the year alluded to a lack of understanding of students’ lives and possible barriers for reaching this understanding. During the autumn semester evaluation meeting, Mr. Truman and I pushed Carmen to reflect on her awareness of the cultural differences amongst students and herself and consideration of these differences in the classroom.

Eileen: Anything about the last one [row on university evaluation form]?

Teaching students who have different home lives than you

Carmen: For the most part it hasn’t been bad, but I don’t know if I am still ignorant to it. I am aware that there are students who don’t have the ideal home life, but I am not totally sure how much effect it has on what we do in the classroom. Maybe 1st period is the one where we have most students like that?

Mr. Truman: What do you mean like that?

Carmen: That come from a difficult home life or a neighborhood that doesn’t place a strong value on education (Evaluation Meeting – 12/7/15)
It appeared that Carmen did not perceive students’ home lives as being pertinent to what they bring to the classroom. In other words, Carmen’s notions of culturally relevant teaching meant her notions of worldly cultures, not the cultural lives of her students. Perhaps some of her lack of consideration for students’ experiences and knowledge was due to hesitations that she had about forming relationships with them to learn about their lives. She said, “Coming from more of a secure, predominantly white suburb, I don’t know how seriously they take me. I know I need to be assertive and put myself out there, but I also don’t want to step on students’ toes” (Evaluation Meeting – 12/7/15). She went on to remark that a few students in particular “kind of scare me a little bit and I don’t know why” (Evaluation Meeting – 12/7/15). Rather than building a bridge between her and her students, Carmen’s hesitation towards getting to know them and disregard for their outside lives worked to create a wedge that impacted the remainder of Carmen’s student teaching experience.

While Carmen maintained in her discourse that the conceptual tool of making content culturally relevant was important to her, there was also often a lack of appropriation of this tool in her practical tool use, at least to the extent that she might have hoped. This lack of appropriation by Carmen was intended, as evident in her discourse, but at times rejected because she felt that she did not have the classroom management to fulfill her lessons as she had hoped. In this regard, Carmen’s appropriation of the conceptual underpinnings of a tool, but not necessarily its pedagogical applications, may actually reflect a more advanced degree of appropriation of a tool, as outlined by Grossman and her colleagues (1999). Carmen was able to articulate the theoretical basis that informs this conceptual tool, critique lesson plans
where this tool was not evident, and offer suggestions for how the tool could be present, as described in Example Four in Chapter Four where she argued the teacher needed to be more explicit with her understated goals. While Carmen wanted a culturally relevant framework to guide most of her pedagogical decisions, she did not build the positive relationships with students necessary to achieve this work. In other words, while Carmen wanted to teach in socially just ways, she did not initially see the need to establish social relationships as inherent to this success, an issue that other scholars have documented regarding earning student trust as a transitory teacher in high needs schools (Smagorinsky, 2017).

Numerous examples of this lack of appropriation into Carmen’s teaching practices existed throughout her teaching. For instance, during an observation debriefing during the second week of Carmen’s unit on *Night*, I asked her about her plans for the unit, to which she again explained that she was going to make connections from the Holocaust to issues of immigration and discrimination today. To achieve this work, I suggested a practical tool to help scaffold this discussion with students to provide an entrance into the topic: “Did you ever read the book *Terrible Things*? It’s a picture book and they’ve now made parodies of it with Trump’s targeting of different groups” (Observation Debriefing – 1/29/16). I showed Carmen a Youtube video of a reading of the text, to which she seemed enthusiastic about incorporating into her teaching. However, in examining Carmen’s lesson plans and talking with her about them, her nerves about engaging students in class discussions after multiple unsuccessful attempts prevented her from enacting her plans as she had wanted. The reading of *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*, by Eve Bunting (1989), and a subsequent class discussion about speaking out against
discrimination that it raises was in Carmen’s proposed lesson plans on February 17, then February 22, and finally enacted on March 3 after she spoke with her students about their behavior and she felt that she had a better grasp on managing interactive activities.

Other examples of Carmen’s hesitance to make content relevant were evident in her discourse as she described shutting down class discussions where she “lost control”, as described in Chapter Four. This level of appropriation, even if not always evident in Carmen’s pedagogical decisions due to her lack of confidence with classroom management, show the possibility that she may “make use of [this conceptual tool] in new contexts and for solving new problems” in future teaching practices (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 17). This further supports the notion that to truly understand a teacher’s understanding and use of conceptual tools like making content culturally relevant, researchers need to follow them over time, as new teachers’ uptake of tools tends to be a constant blending of successes and setbacks (Anderson & Stillman, 2013).

Perhaps one reason that Carmen exhibited varying levels of success with the appropriation of culturally relevant pedagogy in her teaching practices was that she seemed to go in with the goal of exposing students to injustices in the world around them, suggestive of a transmission model of teaching. However, as described here, Carmen began to realize that her students, through their own experiences and histories, were more aware of these global issues and understood them at a personal level.

**Carmen:** They’re just like so much more aware of things than I thought. Like 8th graders in other like areas might not be ^aware of

**Eileen:** Like what? Can you think of anything?
**Carmen:** Like they’re so aware of like the social inequalities because they’ve experienced it. So if I were to like pose a question to 8th graders in a like more suburban school about…‘Is everyone like truly equal?’ And immediately [Carmen’s students said] ‘no because this this this and this’, whereas 8th graders in a suburban school would be like ‘well maybe’. So it would be teasing that out a little more.

**Eileen:** Did that make it easier or harder do you feel like? Their knowledge of social inequities

**Carmen:** Um it made it harder because I wasn’t sure what to talk about then cuz I was ‘oh they know this already, okay awesome’. But then it was also easier because it became my way in (Interview – 4/26/16).

As such, her hopes of exposing students to problems in our world without first considering what they might already know about the topic, achieved through establishing relationships with students, was not as successful as she might have hoped. In this way, Carmen’s experiences represented a form of identity conflict in which PSTs problematize the professional aspects of teaching like their roles as progressive educators, but do not necessarily problematize their own selves and how their personal experiences and relationships are a part of teaching (Alsup, 2006). Without navigating both the personal and professional tensions inherent within teaching, Alsup argues that PSTs do not achieve a clear and productive professional identity, in the ways that they might have had they sufficiently interrogated both selves. Carmen’s initial inability to view herself as contributing to the classroom culture as she avoided building the types of relationships
with students encouraged by her learning settings, was central in her patchy fulfillment of this conceptual tool.

**Argumentation.** A second conceptual tool that was important to Carmen was argumentation as a way of thinking and doing in the classroom. Carmen recognized that her students had opinions about a variety of topics and wanted to provide a space for them to vocalize these opinions through the pedagogical decisions that she made. As with the previous conceptual tool described, at times this tool existed as a framework to guide her hopes and expectations for instruction, but was not necessarily evident in her practices. In other instances, she linked this tool with the practical tools that she incorporated into the *Night* unit, helping to ensure a deeper appropriation of the conceptual tool and therefore, understanding of its connections to a cultural perspective in teaching.

Carmen understood argumentation as a means for problematizing some of the social justice issues that she wanted her students to explore in the classroom, particularly because she saw it as inherent towards understanding adolescence. As was congruent with her mentor teacher’s philosophy about the importance of establishing relationships with students and recognizing their “sub culture” and “cultural differences”, Mr. Truman consistently encouraged Carmen to consider what she knew about her students as individuals and also collectively as adolescents. During one fall observation before student teaching officially began, Carmen taught a lesson in which she provided a number of controversial statements about the characters and themes in a text that they had been reading and asked students to move to different sides of the room to show if they represented the “opposition” or the “affirmative”. Some of the statements included:
“Violet is a better girlfriend than Gloria” and “You would get involved if you suspected a friend was getting abused.” She did not offer time for students to explain their answers or reside in the middle of either side. They were to choose a definitive side and then she moved on to the next statement. In the debriefing session, Mr. Truman and I encouraged Carmen to consider providing students time to explain and explore their answers. She agreed that with the following class she would “give them the 30 seconds to talk because they love to talk” (Observation Debriefing – 11/9/15). However, she also had hesitations about providing students the space to do this because it would lead to a loss of control of the class. She remarked,

**Carmen**: I foresee problems with collaboration and teamwork because they’re argumentative

**Mr. Truman**: Why do you think they’re argumentative?

**Carmen**: They’re intelligent, but I don’t know if they get a lot of opportunities in school to vocalize their opinions. It’s more about here’s what you need to know, now go learn it

**Mr. Truman**: What do you know about the nature of 8th graders?

**Carmen**: They’re argumentative and talkative. If we were to do this topic again, we might have problems (Observation Debriefing – 11/9/15).

This knowledge of students, but hesitation to structure activities that would tap into students’ gravitation towards arguing, represents a largely superficial appropriation of the tool of argumentation (Grossman, et al., 1999). As Carmen stated in this interaction, her hesitation was in part due to feeling incompetent with managing students’ behaviors. However, as Carmen tried to model this after an activity that she learned about in one of
her MCE foundations courses, I also believe that her superficial appropriation was the result of a lack of understanding of argumentation as a social practice and the dialogic processes involved in developing this way of thinking (Newell, Bloome, & Hirvela, 2015), which will continue to be explored below.

As Mr. Truman and I worked with Carmen over the year, we continued to guide her to see how argumentation might be a tool for her to learn more about her students by making pedagogical decisions that fostered their natural tendencies to state opinions. In line with this goal, our mentoring also served to help Carmen view argumentation as a way of achieving the cultural relevancy that served as a conceptual tool guiding her beliefs about teaching. One such example of the feedback that I engaged Carmen in (of many throughout this unit) was in regards to her March 4th lesson, in which she introduced the final project for her Night unit, an argumentative essay about the relevancy of the themes and topics in Night to the world today. I commented that,

One thing for you consider discussing with students is the purpose and audience of this particular piece of writing. Who is their audience? How will this impact their writing? Students may be a lot more interested if the audience is someone in addition to just you, as their teacher. Could you consider ways for this work to have a broader audience? The whole school somewhere? Community members? Who would care about what students have to say about this? Maybe let them help you brainstorm! (LP#8 due 2/27/16).

In asking questions about the audience and purpose of the essay, I wanted Carmen to see that argumentation can be a way of engaging with the world through communicating with others and gaining understanding (Moje, Giroux, & Muehling, 2017). Instead, as her
assignment and rubric reflected, it was used more as a structure (Newell et al., 2015) with the superficial hope that by having an argumentative essay in her instructional unit, it met students’ needs and interests for arguing.

Further evidence of Carmen’s conflicting notions of argumentation was in the ways that she conferenced with students about their writing. During a post-observation debriefing, Mr. Truman and I questioned Carmen about her goals for the argumentative essay and how those came across in interactions with students. I initiated the conversation by bringing up something that I noticed during Carmen’s teaching that day.

Eileen: An interaction that stood out to me was with the two girls up front and the one wanted to put “maybe” down about the relevancy of Night. Talk me through why you had them choose yes or no.

Carmen: Well this is the argumentative essay where you choose a side and argue for it, but it’s important for them to have both sides so that they can evaluate each one. So they can choose which one is stronger or more relatable to them.

In line with how Carmen had previously used argumentation in her teaching in lessons previously described, it appears that she again interpreted argumentation as choosing one side of an issue. Interestingly, Carmen had previously explained that “most of [their] discussions have been about how its relevant, which is a gimme” (Observation Debriefing – 3/8/16). Since much of her instructional unit had been geared towards presenting this side and then her essay asked that students argue a singular side, Carmen’s use of argumentation as a tool for think and engaging with others again seems lost in the pedagogical decisions that she actually made in her teaching.
The conversation continued with Mr. Truman asking questions to get Carmen to problematize the nature of argumentation.

**Mr. Truman:** Is not making a choice a choice?

**Carmen:** You wanted them to choose a side!

**Mr. Truman:** Yeah initially I said to choose a side because the kids see this as black and white

**Carmen:** Well how can they write an argumentative essay and say maybe?

Carmen’s hopes of using argumentation to meet her students’ interests and tendencies fell flat as she did not exactly leave room for argumentation as a social practice (Newell et al., 2015) to occur. Instead, she worked to meet the expectations of Mr. Truman, which as evident in this interaction, varied throughout the year. Moreover, this conversation continued with Carmen repeatedly stating that it was her interpretation Mr. Truman wanted students to pick a side and him responding with “don’t get defensive” (Observation Debriefing – 4/13/16). While the two had a generally positive relationship throughout the year, as is consistent with learning to teach, Carmen had to negotiate the power differentials in her relationships with others, impacting the pedagogical decisions that she made in the classroom (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015; Newell & Connors, 2011). I also believe that Carmen had students choose a side as another means of controlling what had been otherwise difficult for her to control: class discussion. Rather than having students “digging through the complexity” and making the argument that it is not a black and white issue, as I suggested to her during the conversation, she pigeon-holed their
decision-making process and prevented classroom situations from arising where she may lose control.

Practical Tool: Student Discussions Around Literature

One practical tool that Carmen utilized to varying degrees in her teaching was student discussions around literature in aims of practically achieving the work of her conceptual tool, making content culturally relevant. As student collaboration was a tool valued in the MCE program, Carmen and other PSTs were eager to utilize it in their student teaching placements. Mr. Truman explained the difficulties that Carmen had in her use of this tool. “She wanted to have free flowing class conversations, but the students don’t know how. Kids talk over each other, they don’t know how to paraphrase. So we had to model it for them. She got frustrated” (Interview – 4/25/16). Modeling discussion expectations was also feedback that I provided to Carmen regarding her questioning. For example, on February 25, she did a class discussion guided by questions that students wrote about the text. I encouraged Carmen to consider how to consider giving students some guidance to the questions that you are expecting them to create based on chapter 6.

Do you envision that they will create questions that truly foster discussion? Have they practiced writing these before? Consider providing some examples that relate to your goals for the novel...For example, remind them of their final assessment for the novel and suggest that they formulate questions that might help them and their classmates consider connections and problems with the issues presented in the novel and issues today. (LP#7 due 2/20/16).

The feedback regarding modeling and returning to her overall unit goals when utilizing
different practical tools was consistent from Mr. Truman and me throughout her instructional unit. While she attempted to incorporate this feedback at times, her own issues with developing relationships with students and her inability to plan ahead and think bigger picture because of her stress levels proved to this to be a challenge for her.

As managing whole-class discussion was difficult for Carmen, she employed different practical tools as a way of incorporating discussion in a smaller group format. For example, like Allison, she used gallery walks and graffiti walls throughout her instructional unit to guide students to consider different literary elements like theme in the text. She used these tools four different times throughout the unit as a way of having students chart quotes and examples from the text as evidence and as a visual for other students to then see and learn from. While sometimes students walked around and responding to others’ writing with post-its, for example, Carmen often did not have the students use the evidence beyond the activity for that day’s lesson. For example, rather than using these tools as a means for compiling evidence and referring back to it for their argumentative essay, Carmen approached the essay by having student choose their thesis upfront. She explained, “first they decided if it was relevant or not and then chose two reasons why, which would be their supporting paragraphs, and then a third paragraph is the counter argument” (Observation Debriefing – 3/8/16). So although she used class discussion by way of graffiti walls and gallery walks as a guide for brainstorming during the unit, she then made a contrasting decision once it came time to preparing students for their argumentative essay. Although she made this decision to help her, it also created challenges for students. She said, “I think they’re challenged by the process of writing and not being allowed to write until they have their thesis statement and evidence in
order. So that when they write it will just be putting their ideas into sentences”
(Observation Debriefing – 3/8/16).

**Summary of Carmen’s Tools, Goals, and Attribution**

Carmen’s student teaching experience represents a disjuncture between her conceptual goal for teaching in culturally relevant ways and the ways in which she understood this to be achieved. Her tendency to leave students out of her conception of culturally relevant pedagogy suggests that she did not fully understand the concept. While she was able to define it, explain how it was presented in her university coursework, and identity ways in which other teachers could achieve this (seen in one interaction in Chapter Four), she was not able to fully appropriate the concept into her own teaching. She hoped to impart on her students an understanding of global social and political issues via a transmission approach to teaching, rather considering how students could bring knowledge and engage in acts of interpretation together with Carmen. She positioned them as information *receivers*, rather than creators, where they take up and embody ideas for their own purposes. Instead, Carmen seemed to position the conceptual tools as “knowledge out of context,” rather than using ideas within the context of the students’ lives (Applebee, 1996). Despite Carmen’s strong hopes for teaching in culturally relevant ways, because she interpreted the conceptual tools as being decontextualized from students’ lives, she did not have the success that she had hoped to have in doing so.

**Conclusions**

Allison, Cory, and Carmen were exposed to similar conceptual and practical tools across their varying learning settings. From the university, conceptual tools of cultural
relevant pedagogy, dismantling deficit thinking, and power were privileged, while in the field placement sites, conceptual tools of the CCSS building relationships with students and practical tools like teaching basic skills were valued. Allison, Cory, and Carmen all hoped to engage students by creating boundary-pushing, relevant, and exciting lesson plans during their instructional units. Each of them seemed to conceptualize the culturally relevant teaching slightly differently and also had varying levels of support with fulfilling this in their field placement sites. For example, they all faced challenges with addressing tough, sensitive, or controversial topics in the classroom, but in different ways. Allison was eager to teach in transformative ways, just as the MCE program has been for her, but her mentor teacher’s traditional approaches towards teaching ELA contradicted this in many ways. Cory had to negotiate teaching CCSS concepts versus teaching in ways that helped students to challenge and problematize ideas in their world. As such, his pedagogical decisions reflected one or the other, and his lessons rooted in social justice were taught as isolated activities and with a time crunch, so he was not able to teach with much depth. Like Allison, Carmen was also eager to teach in ways that pushed boundaries, but because she conceived her role as imparting this knowledge onto students without forming social relationships with them, her expectations for teaching rooted in social justice were not completely achieved.

Consistent across their experiences was the opportunity for mentoring sessions to serve as spaces for PSTs to consider the tools and tensions across their learning settings and integrate conceptual and practical tools, as is necessary for deepening their knowledge of learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective. In some ways the mentoring sessions helped to serve this purpose, but there also remained opportunities to
do more. While the three PSTs made progress to some degree, they have a lot of learning to do yet. They probably were not provided enough of the practical tools to go along with the theory to enact a cultural perspective in ELA teaching in a productive way. This was particularly apparent for Cory, but also for others to some degree. The mentoring sessions continue to provide an opportunity for connecting theory with practice with the support of mentors and peers to help PSTs make the contextualized decisions that impact them in their teaching.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

This work followed the experiences of two groups of PSTs over the course of one school year to understand how they learned to teach ELA from a cultural perspective within the varying contexts inherent to pre-service teacher education. It considered how the goals and motivations of mentor teachers, one university supervisor, and a university program dedicated to urban education impacted PSTs’ appropriation of ideas about teaching from a cultural perspective in their discourse, in their pedagogical decisions, and in their instructional conversations during their student teaching. I entered this long-term study with the perspective that teacher learning occurs through interactions with others across events (Bloome et al., 2005; Wortham & Reyes, 2015) and through opportunities to consider and merge conceptual and practical tools for teaching (Smagorinsky, 2013). As such, I aimed to integrate two overlapping theories of teacher learning: (1) the line of inquiry established by Smagorinsky (Grossman et al., 1999; Smagorinsky, 2013; Smagorinsky, et al., 2004) concerning the concept-driven developmental trajectories of beginning teachers, starting with their experiences during teacher education, and extending into their first jobs; and (2) a long-standing theory of how interactions provide opportunities for learning in social contexts. As such, I had to consider how social interactions impacted PSTs’ appropriation of tools and ideas and how these interactions were also reflections and refractions of values across settings. For instance, one finding of the study was the influence of the current national and local educational climate on the
perspectives of the mentor teachers, and thereby the actions of the PSTs to varying degrees. Rooted in ethnographic methods, this work sought to understand the perspectives and experiences of PSTs and teacher educators working to teach ELA to their diverse students in standardized times.

The design of this study was significant towards achieving this work and contributing to a need in English teacher education. Research has often relied primarily on PSTs’ self-reported claims of learning through their written or oral discourse (Anderson & Stillman, 2013) and ignored the voices of mentor teachers and supervisors (Clift & Brady, 2005) in understanding how PSTs learn. By including these perspectives, following PSTs into their student teaching, and framing this with a discourse analytic methodology, I was able to better understand the challenges, tensions, and pulls from varying directions that the PSTs encountered in their journeys of learning to teach (Alsup, 2006). In doing so, I found that PSTs often made pedagogical decisions that conflicted with their own goals and understandings as stated in their discourse, or with the goals of those around them. I also located places where PSTs needed support with blending theoretical and practical tools for teaching ELA with a cultural perspective, the type of support that can perhaps occur only as PSTs are in the trenches of working with students and trying to meet the demands associated with student teaching. Without engaging in discourse with peers and mentors about their teaching practices, PSTs may not have negotiated understanding and as such, their ideas could (and inevitably, sometimes did) go unchallenged. This “in-between ground, the place of becoming, the space of ambiguity and reflection” (Alsup, 2006, p. 9) was what I worked to achieve in discourse with PSTs, as it provided opportunities for growth and productive learning.
I began this research curious about what PSTs experienced as they appropriated a cultural perspective from their teacher education program into their teaching of ELA to diverse students. I considered this issue through mentoring sessions, or interactions, between PSTs and their peers and mentors, as outlined primarily in Chapter Four. I also considered it through their actions in the classroom, as evident in observations and recordings of them and in their lesson plans, as outlined primarily in Chapter Five. In the next section I return to my three central research questions to summarize my findings.

**Review of Research Questions and Findings**

To understand the settings from which PSTs were learning to teach ELA and adopt a cultural perspective in their teaching, I asked the questions, *What were the principal settings in which the PSTs’ ELA instruction occurred? What overriding beliefs about culture shaped their learning to teach ELA within these settings, and what conceptual and practical tools fostered learning to teach ELA from a cultural perspective?* I asked the PSTs about their courses during interviews, examined course syllabi, observed some MCE class sessions, and interviewed the mentor teachers to understand what was important to them with regards to teaching ELA and learning how to teach generally to help me answer these questions. In doing so, I was able to understand the values of the varying settings, made evident in their conceptual and practical tool use, where the PSTs’ instruction occurred.

With regards to ELA instruction, I found that while the PSTs only had one ELA methods course (as opposed to the secondary English program, which has one for reading and one for writing), it was a central setting from which they learned practical tools for the teaching of ELA, particularly writing instruction. For instance, Allison, Cory, and
Carmen all appropriated tools such as graffiti walls, take a stand, and pass the shot into 
their lessons to help students brainstorm and express opinions about texts collaboratively 
that they learned about through doing microteaches in ELA methods. On the other hand, 
while the field placement sites were a central setting from which PSTs learned about 
teaching ELA, the tools that were valued were different than those in their courses and 
the means through which they learned about them differed too. Fundamental in all three 
middle schools was the importance of the CCSS as a conceptual tool guiding what the 
teachers taught. This was achieved through teaching basic skills and terminology like 
figurative language, writing sentences, and vocabulary that were important to Ms. Rees, 
Ms. Willow, and Mr. Truman, respectively. Additionally, apparent from the perspectives 
of the PSTs and the mentor teachers, the mentor teachers all tended to focus their 
mentoring and feedback to PSTs around general teaching concerns like time management 
and classroom management, rather than the teaching of ELA specifically. As Carmen 
stated her mentor, “never had a problem with how [her] lessons were structured. It was 
all management” (Interview – 4/26/16), to which Ms. Willow confirmed that she 
“leave[s] it to [large Midwestern university] to do the content stuff” (Interview – 
4/22/16).

The PSTs formed beliefs about culture that were influenced by the university and 
school settings, which shaped their learning about ELA teaching. One belief that was 
fairly consistent across the three case study PSTs and their mentor teachers was the need 
to cater instruction to the needs of adolescents, including their natural tendencies to 
express opinions, value choice, and learn from each other through talk. For instance, 
Allison was concerned about “giv[ing] students freedom” (Observation Debriefing –
3/12/15), Cory wanted to be “the guide on the side instead of the sage on the stage” (Interview – 10/23/15), and Carmen viewed students as “argumentative and talkative” (Observation Debriefing – 11/9/15). To practically achieve ELA teaching to meet these beliefs about the nature of middle school students, tools were encouraged such as collaborative learning activities like class discussion and station activities. Another belief about culture that was reinforced for the PSTs was the need to bring issues from students’ lives into the walls of the classroom to make learning relevant to them. This was particularly encouraged from the university program, but also by the mentor teachers, but in different ways. For example, Ms. Willow maintained that “if you aren’t incorporating some other discipline with some real life, you’re missing a golden opportunity” and Mr. Truman encouraged Carmen’s idea to make connections between Night and the ban on Muslim immigrants because “that’s your hook, that’s where [students’] energy is” (Observation Debriefing – 3/8/15). Ms. Rees differed in that she did not necessarily maintain as progressive of a stance in terms of bringing social and political issues into the classroom, but she did value text choices as a way of getting students to “relate” to the content area (Interview – 4/20/16). Allison, Cory, and Carmen were all eager to bring in issues from the real world from the onset, as evidenced by Carmen who maintained that “this is a time when they are more aware of the world around them. It’s important to get them to think critically about it and not just accept it as it is presented to them” (Interview – 12/10/15). The practical tools that were encouraged and valued across settings to help with this included higher order questioning from the university and making relevant and engaging text choices.
My second research question asked, *Within these settings, how did interactions influence the PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective as a principal pedagogical tool for teaching reading and writing?* Central to this question was the interactions that occurred during mentoring sessions, which took place both individually and as a group. It was during individual mentoring sessions with PSTs that the PST and I could co-construct knowledge and problem-solve specific to the context and needs of the PST (Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015). For example, while Carmen aimed to include written and oral argumentation into her teaching as a cultural tool to tap into students’ interests and give them space to express themselves, we problematized her pedagogical decisions, like the essay prompt, “debate” structure, and conferences with students, to consider the extent to which she was actually providing space for fostering and hearing various opinions. We worked through the purpose of argumentation across mentoring sessions and how it could be scaffolded for students to help them explore complex ideas, but still maintain some organization. For some, bridging the divide between understanding and application (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Newell & Connors, 2011) proved to be more difficult in terms of fostering PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective. While my feedback to Cory throughout his Trip Around the World unit remained centered on merging the goals of CCSS with his goals of teaching in culturally relevant ways, these two remained fairly distinct throughout the unit. Perhaps for PSTs like Cory, more time should be spent during interactions on mapping out unit and lesson plans regarding how to merge ideas. Or perhaps the pull of the CCSS as a conceptual tool was greater than the conceptual tool of cultural relevancy, thus impacting his appropriation despite interactions grounded in blending goals.
Interactions also served to foster PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective with regards to the teaching of ELA through group mentoring sessions and the mentoring curriculum that I created for these sessions. As PSTs posed issues to the group that they were experiencing or as I posed them for PSTs to think through, they engaged in dialogic, reflective practices where they considered the varying ideologies of their learning settings and the realities of what they were experiencing in the field. In doing so, PSTs’ “equilibrium of their belief system[s]—what counts for them as good teaching and how best to work with diverse groups of adolescents—is put into sway” (Fecho et al., 2016, p. 5), helping teachers to interrogate and (re)consider their practices and beliefs about teaching. For example, the conversation that Allison initiated about using texts that reinforce negative stereotypes created an opportunity for various PSTs to voice their evolving opinions and share the practices of those whom they were learning from. By naming the tensions that existed across personal and professional ideologies, they become productive tensions (Smagorinsky et al., 2004) in that the PSTs’ feelings of agency were reinforced as their teaching identities evolved. In this regard, interactions between PSTs and mentors served as sites for the appropriation of tools for teaching ELA from a cultural perspective, as conversations with people of different perspectives and backgrounds aimed around problem-solving helped PSTs to reflect (adopt) or refract (modify or reject) tools for their purposes in their own teaching.

Pivotal to the scholarly contributions of this study, the third question asked, *How did PSTs learn to teach ELA within a cultural perspective in the contexts of ELA classrooms during instructional conversations and post-observation debriefing sessions? What do the instructional conversations and instructional activities reveal about PSTs’*
understandings of a cultural perspective? Interactions amongst PSTs and between their mentors were a cornerstone of this research study in terms of my conceptualizations of how PSTs learn and how learning is made evident in language. I found that interactions were particularly useful for some PSTs like Allison and Carmen, as there were clear links between conversations that occurred in mentoring sessions and the pedagogical decisions that they made in their classrooms. For instance, during an individual mentoring session with Allison towards the beginning of the school year, I pushed back on her tendency to ask questions with only one right answer with regards to the teaching of literature and the interpretation of texts. In doing so, we also explored her goals for how she wanted to position students in her classroom and how her instructional decisions could either reflect or refract those goals. In her planning and instruction throughout the rest of the year, it was apparent that Allison continued to strongly consider this conceptual tool and make choices to reflect that. Carmen’ pedagogical decisions were reflections of many practical tools offered by other PSTs and me during group mentoring sessions. She was frequently seen taking notes during the sessions, particularly after she had requested help with maintaining her goal of problematizing social and political issues through student discussion, while managing the classroom environment. Practical tools that other PSTs suggested, including gallery walks, using chart paper for brainstorming, and writing before vocalizing opinions, all appeared in future lesson plans of Carmen’s. While Cory was an active participant in mentoring sessions and frequently shared stories and teaching ideas with Carmen and others, there was not as clear of a connection between interactions and his ultimate pedagogical decisions. This likely stemmed from the very positive relationship that he had with his mentor teacher where Cory felt satisfied and even lucky
with what he was learning and being exposed to in his placement.

The pedagogical decisions that the PSTs made revealed their varying understandings of their roles as educators and what it means to teach ELA from a cultural perspective. Carmen viewed her role as a teacher as one who exposes students to global, critical understandings that she gained through some of her life experiences and that were replicative of the interactions that she had with peers and professors at the university. This perspective on teaching as focusing on what she has to do for her students and what she wants them to understand when they leave her class was represented in her final reflections of her own teaching where she said that the texts that were used in her student teaching classroom, which she did not have control over, did not provide the ideas and perspectives that she hopes students get in her future classroom.

Students weren’t exposed to a lot of stuff. I don’t know. [Cory’s] Around the World thing was mind blowing to me. Because I feel like I- that’s like such a great idea. And I would love to do that in my classroom because it not only like gets like me out of my comfort zone looking at other texts from around the world, but like students as well, especially if I do end up in a predominantly white suburb like it’ll be really good I think for them to get that exposure (Interview – 4/26/16).

For Carmen, this notion of a cultural perspective in teaching somewhat conflicted with another conceptual tool that she said was important to her, which was capitalizing on students’ argumentative practices and allowing them to voice opinions. So while she wanted to position students as having a voice, she also had a clear agenda for what she wanted students to know and perceived herself as having that knowledge to impart on students who might not know it.
Allison and Cory viewed their roles somewhat differently in that they placed a greater focus on their students – both in forming relationships with them and creating instruction to meet their interests, needs, and histories. These goals were evident in the pedagogical decisions that they made, such as the presence of choice in their lessons, and also in the ways that they talked about their goals for teaching and their appreciation for the diversity of the students in their classes. Made apparent in interactions throughout the year and in a final reflective interview at the end of the year, Allison and Cory believed that they had a positive student teaching experience and were proud of what they had accomplished instructionally and relationally with their students. While Carmen was relieved at the end of student teaching and proud of the progress that she had made, student teaching was in many ways a more difficult journey for her. This suggests the importance of building positive relationships with students, particularly as teachers work to teach from a social justice or culturally relevant orientation, as these three PSTs set out to do.

**Contributions and Implications**

This study hoped to contribute understanding around four problems in English teacher education research. As discussed in Chapter One, they were: (1) the lack of understanding of how PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective in teacher education might shape their learning to teach in culturally diverse schools, (2) the tensions across teacher education settings such as the university classroom and the school, (3) the vagaries of the role of the university supervisor in supporting PSTs’ learning to teach in complex and often conflicting sociocultural contexts, and (4) the challenges of teaching English language arts within a context of high-stakes testing and under-resourced urban
schools. In this section, I will highlight some of the contributions (theoretical, methodological, and/or pedagogical) and implications of this work with regards to these four areas in English teacher education.

**Appropriation of a cultural perspective shaping teaching.** The MCE program at the university where this research was conducted is distinguished in that its commitment to urban education was truly woven throughout numerous courses and field placement experiences, as opposed to leaving issues of cultural relevancy to be handled only in the required diversity class. In turn, PSTs appropriated a cultural perspective in the teacher education program, particularly in their discourse. One theme repeatedly expressed by the PSTs across the two years of data collection is the extent to which they enjoyed and appreciated the MCE program and their beliefs about their own growth and change. As Cory stated, “I love the program. I wasn’t sure coming in how to feel about it. It’s a little overwhelming, but I already feel that I’ve changed so much these few months. It’s been really beneficial so far” (Interview – 10/23/15). While these expressions of growth do not necessarily account for what PSTs enacted in the classroom, it is one form of appropriation to consider.

To consider the how PSTs’ learning impacted their teaching in culturally diverse schools, Allison, Cory, and Carmen’s experiences show that while what they learned in the teacher education program impacted their pedagogical decisions during student teaching, is was also a slow process of social appropriation over time. There were moments, activities, and lessons that represented lapses, regressions, and leaps forward. Through interactions with others ethnographically across time and space, PSTs had opportunities to engage with people and ideologies to foster their own understanding and
evolving beliefs about social justice and equity in our world and in their classrooms. The data from this study show PSTs struggling with these issues in their discourse and in their teaching. As such, this study made theoretical contributions to the field regarding how PSTs appropriated a cultural perspective in teaching. While there is not an established list of practices that teachers do to make teaching culturally relevant, as outlined in Chapter Two, there are principles and ways of thinking that can serve as frameworks for achieving culturally relevant teaching in the classroom (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1995). But understanding the processes through which PSTs appropriate learning into their teaching has been largely underdeveloped (Gere et al., 2009) or rooted in cognitive approaches towards understanding PST learning (e.g., Johnson et al., 2003) that are less focused on how interactions between people impact learning. This research study offers initial understanding into how a theory of PST learning unfolded for three case study PSTs.

While this work attempted to understand PSTs’ appropriation over time, one year was still not sufficient. In conversations with the some of the PSTs since the conclusion of the study, they said that they are still committed to this work and are continuing to try out new ideas in their new teaching placements, the sites of their first teaching positions. The field would benefit from longitudinal work spanning more time and space than this study covered. As the now first and second year teachers are interacting with new students and colleagues and experiencing different pulls as they navigate the expectations of administrators and assume more accountability for the testing data of their students, the field needs more work on understanding how their teaching from a cultural perspective is impacted.
**Tensions across teacher education settings.** With regards to understanding the tensions across teacher education settings, in many ways, this research study supported what has already been widely established within the field. Tensions exist across settings. The field placement sites and mentor teachers tend to be more concerned with meeting the practical demands of teaching, like aligning lessons to the CCSS and ensuring that students can recall key literary terminology, while much of the interactions and time spent at the university tend to be more focused on the theoretical aspects of teaching. And the PSTs tend to be caught navigating the demands of these various worlds. However, by employing a microethnographic perspective (Bloome et al., 2005) in this study, it worked to add complexity to these often assumed binaries in teacher education. Seeking the perspectives of the mentor teachers cannot be underestimated as a methodological contribution of this study and in future pedagogical work aimed at fostering PSTs’ appropriation of a cultural perspective in ELA teaching. While teachers like Ms. Willow and Mr. Truman understood the realities of meeting the demands of standardization in ELA teaching, they also understood the value of building positive relationships with students and establishing a climate of respect and appreciation for diversity in the classroom. By reminding their PSTs of these values about what they deemed to be most important in teaching throughout their many interactions during the year, in a way they served as sounding boards for the PSTs during overwhelming times of lesson planning, grading, and fulfilling university obligations. The mentor teachers had been through the hoops of meeting new teacher demands before and carried with them ways to make instruction relevant for their students; they had the “wisdom of practice” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). While the mentor teachers’ notions of teaching ELA from a cultural
perspective may not have been exactly aligned with the university’s, and were not always as progressive as PSTs like Allison and Carmen might have hoped, they were present. By interacting with them throughout the year, these conceptualizations materialized in their discourse and practical tools that they valued in the classroom. Helping the PSTs to see this and learn from their mentors in these ways is the focus of the next section.

**Vagaries of the role of the university supervisor.** Research on the role of discourse in the mentoring practices of university supervisors has been limited because it is typically a transitory role and while supervisors may have significant teaching experience and expertise in their particular content area, many do not see themselves as teacher educators (Zeichner, 2010). As such, little is known about what university supervisors should do and how they might do it. Being a university supervisor during the two years of the study and currently for a third year as I write this dissertation, a pedagogical implication of this work is the importance of co-constructing learning with the PSTs and reminding them of the context-specific nature of teaching (Katz & Isik-Ercan, 2015). Through our interactions and the mentoring curriculum that I created, I gave them opportunities to move to critical consciousness, but I also worked to ensure that they had the agency to rely on what they were hearing across spaces and to process the goals of other people. This form of distributed scaffolding (Smagorinsky et al., 2015) provided PSTs with resources to negotiate meaning on their own without imposing an agenda onto them of what to think, value, or do.

At the culmination of the second year of the study, PSTs also seemed to grasp that this was my role – that there was no right way, no single way to teach ELA from a cultural perspective and that I was there to ask questions and offer various perspectives,
but not to tell them what to do. During the final group mentoring session of the year, the PSTs gave me a pair of sunglasses that they had made for their cohort, which they felt represented the theme for the year in terms of the feedback that they received from me and their other teacher educators, which was “it depends.”

Figure 6.1. It depends

As frustrating as it was for them to hear at times that there was not one right way of teaching something, since it depended so much on the students, text, instructional unit, school, etc., I am proud that they left the program with this message. By engaging PSTs in important conversations where they explore the ideologies of others and themselves, supervisors can provide them opportunities for reflecting on their evolving notions of what teaching ELA from a cultural perspective means to them and their students.

For teacher education programs preparing PSTs to teach from a cultural perspective, there is much to be learned from how the mentoring sessions were approached in this study and the ways in which PSTs did or did not appropriate tools into their teaching. First, to help PSTs develop as thinkers, rather than replicators of pedagogical approaches without considering the conceptual base undergirding them,
teacher educators should model their own thinking and ask PSTs to consider their students and various approaches to achieve any one goal. Instead of portraying to PSTs that there is one right answer or best way to achieve something, teacher educators can engage them in discussions that help PSTs marry their conceptual thinking with their practical decisions. Additionally, based on what was observed in the case study PSTs’ teaching in this study, *typically* tools that were discussed in multiple contexts had a greater chance of being taken up by the PSTs. As such, teacher education programs can work to open conversation and build bridges between the various educators who are a part of the program and impacting PSTs’ learning. While the same goals do not need to exist across settings, if the various people across settings know about the differing goals, there are more people to help the PSTs to consider the goals and ultimately bring them together, rather than existing as an either-or, as they did for Cory.

**Challenges of teaching ELA in an accountability era in urban schools.** The experiences of Allison, Cory, and Carmen and their paths of lesson planning, teaching, and forming relationships with their students and mentors highlight the challenges of teaching ELA from a cultural perspective within the context of high-stakes testing and under-resourced urban schools. They worked to blend goals of culturally relevant pedagogy with meeting expectations for teaching ELA in ways so that their students would be prepared for the standardized assessment at the end of the year. Pedagogically speaking, their struggles beg the question, Is social justice best served by placing PSTs in diverse schools where the testing pressures are so extreme and standardized? Does it undercut the original purpose of providing PSTs the space and conditions where they have to create instruction that meets students’ needs? The “testing trap” documenting
how ELA state assessments heavily influence what and how ELA gets taught (Hillocks, 2002) was evident in the PSTs’ experiences in this study. Allison seemed to find more of a balance between teaching ELA while also teaching exploring social justice issues with students, or in other words, using social justice issues and texts in service of meeting CCSS expectations. Other PSTs, like Cory, found it harder to blend the two and was therefore left somewhat disappointed at the end of his primary instructional unit in his ability to teach social justice issues.

The challenges that the PSTs experienced in teaching ELA under the standardized demands in the urban middle schools where they were placed suggests numerous pedagogical implications at the university level. While I do not think it is best to remove the PSTs from diverse, urban teaching placements, as these are indicative of potential future teaching job sites that the PSTs may want or get in the future, I do think that teacher education programs, particularly content area pedagogical courses like ELA methods, should place a higher emphasis on working within the realities of the educational system that the PSTs will ultimately enter. In a longitudinal study of predominantly urban schools’ ELA performance on state tests, Langer (2001) found that the schools that consistently performed higher found ways to teach both basic reading and writing skills and also the levels of thinking and reasoning that students need as they “read” and interpret messages across disciplines and situations. This “high literacy” was evident in the ways in which teachers prepared students for tests, created learning goals, structured their instruction, made connections between conceptual understandings, and more. Teacher education programs can create pedagogical opportunities in a more sophisticated way to expose PSTs to some of the pedagogical decisions that they will
have to navigate in the future as they work within the realities of schooling. By presenting ELA teaching not as an either-or, or a one-or-the-other, teacher educators can work with PSTs to think through, for example, how to prepare their students for state tests while also maintaining a social justice orientation towards teaching practices.

A Continuum

During the two years of this dissertation study, I worked with, learned from, and built relationships with 19 PSTs who were learning to teach middle school while simultaneously doing the work of teaching middle school students. I learned their frustrations, experienced their joys, witnessed their tears, and shared in their stories. In their discourse I heard them construct ideas and push back on ways of thinking that suggested that their students would not be interested in or able to engage in the work of problematizing, challenging, and questioning texts and messages in ELA that denote “high literacy” ways of thinking (Langer, 2001). I also heard them create beliefs and ideas about what it means to be a “good” ELA teacher. Based on interactions with them and subsequent observations of their teaching I saw juxtapositions between what they said and what they did as they negotiated their goals for teaching to meet the needs of their students and the expectations of those around them. From a cultural and interactional perspective, I learned how discourse and its use and context impacted learning, thereby also influencing PSTs’ feelings of agency and their evolving teacher identities. During interactions with PSTs, we considered the place for issues of social justice in the teaching of ELA: do they lie in the curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, or as a separate thing altogether? The different PSTs and mentor teachers seemed to have different answers to this, and what they said did not always
reflect what they did. While the work of creating teacher learning is not easy in the
current educational climate, nor is it linear, I am reminded that it is “a continuum, rather
than a finite event” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). This study has helped to illuminate what is
possible in teacher education research by seeking the perspectives of the many people,
spaces, and ideologies impacting how PSTs learn to teach ELA from a cultural
perspective.
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Appendix A: Mentoring Curriculum

MCE Mentoring Curriculum 2015-16

The following is a proposed outline of the mentoring curriculum across both semesters (Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016). It refers to the topics of the group mentoring sessions that will take place as a part of the university supervisory duties. There will be 10 sessions in the autumn and 6 sessions in the spring, per program requirements. Explanations of these proposed activities are below the chart, labeled by the session number(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session(s)</th>
<th>Session Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investigating Worlds, Being Positioned (Rex &amp; Schiller, 2009, p. 29, p. 34)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Observation of Neighborhoods Surrounding the Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Observation of Classroom Cultural Patterns (Frank, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ethnographic Interviews of Mentor Teachers (Frank, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Student Case Studies – Evidence of Identity (Rex &amp; Schiller, 2009, p. 23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis of Others’ Classroom Interactions (data from MN &amp; others)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Assumptions about Students (Rex &amp; Schiller, 2009, p. 15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Circulation of Power (Rex &amp; Schiller, 2009, p. 43-44)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Intents vs. Reality of Curricular Goals (Rex &amp; Schiller, 2009, p. 80)</td>
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1. In this session, we will complete an activity offered by Rex and Schiller (2009) in which the pre-service teachers brainstorm a list of the various worlds of which they are a part that influence who they are. Possible worlds that may impact them include specifics related to family, class, race, religion, political stance, health, education, etc. We will discuss how these impact their beliefs about students and teaching and how they might intersect, align, or clash with their students’ worlds. Additionally, we will consider how these can lead teachers, or those in positions of authority, to assume or position others who possess different worlds.

2. Pre-service teachers will conduct observations of the neighborhoods around the schools in which they are placed. They will record the types of businesses and available resources for students and families surrounding the school and then we will discuss the social and economic factors associated with this and the implications that it has for teaching (Frank, p. 26). This will serve as a segue for future discussions about the
different worlds that they and their students carry and how they impact the
interdiscursivity that is inherent in classrooms (Rex & Schiller, 2009, p. 28).

3-4. Prior to and during the weeks of these sessions, the pre-service teachers will
conduct observations of the cultural patterns that exist in their classroom, which will be
gleaned through ethnographic note-taking. They will capture conversations between the
mentor teacher and the students and record patterns of action and discourse that they
observe. I will address and model how to take ethnographic field notes in the mentoring
group sessions, and provide guidance for what to observe, such as explicit or implicit
rules for appropriate actions and events (Frank, 1999, p. 53). “By understanding that
classroom life is built up over time by the conversations that take place between teacher
and students and between students and students (Green, 1983; Lin, 1993)”, pre-service
teachers can get “tuned in to the language of the classroom” (Frank, 1999, p. 48). The
underlying assumption for observing and noting patterns that exist in their particular
classroom is because “If teachers, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and teacher
educators know how to use the tools of ethnography to discover these implicit patterns,
they can talk to their students about how to live and work in their classrooms, how to gain
access in particular classrooms, how to act and talk appropriately in order to be included
in the classroom community” (Frank, 1999, p. 50).

5. Prior to this session, the pre-service teachers will conduct ethnographic
interviews of their mentor teachers in aims of helping them with the transition of thinking
like a student to thinking like a teacher. As their mentor teacher “thinks aloud” and
explains some of her decision-making processes, the pre-service teachers may better
understand what it is like to be a member of the teaching profession, a culture of its own. 

The underlying assumption for conducting these ethnographic interviews is that a teacher’s pedagogical decisions typically reflect his or her teaching philosophies. Since this is often implicit, it is important for pre-service teachers, who are experiencing incredible growth and development, to hear experienced teachers discuss these decisions so that they understand there is much thinking behind every move. Pre-service teachers should approach the interview for the purpose of learning about their teacher’s actions - not for the purpose of explaining or justifying what they see or how they are perceiving it (Frank, 1999, p. 28), which will be discussed in our group mentoring sessions.

6-7. Prior to and during the weeks of these sessions, the pre-service teachers will observe and collect data about one case study student of their choice over time and across settings (e.g. different types of class settings, lunch). The purpose of this activity is to show pre-service teachers the importance of gathering data from multiple sources, including recognizing students’ various assets and strengths, before making instructional decisions and judgments about them (Frank, 1999). Through discussions, I will model and push pre-service teachers to reframe the constructed stories (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 37) that they tell about their case study students and experiences for the purposes of considering them from alternate viewpoints and thus, withholding judgment before attempting to understand the whole picture.

8-10. Throughout these sessions, I will provide excerpts of discourse from teachers that I have observed (and have IRB approval to use for teaching purposes) for the pre-service teachers to analyze. For instance, we will look at video clips where
language reveals the assumptions that the teacher and students have about each other and illustrates how power is exerted and exchanged between interlocutors. Additionally, we will examine tasks and lessons for the purpose of considering the messages that a curriculum communicates about what the teacher values in learning and what it values about the students’ culture (Florio-Ruane, 2001). In doing so, pre-service teachers will learn and practice discourse analysis methods to consider the choices that were made and their impact on teaching and learning. By first analyzing the others’ teaching instead of themselves, I hope that it reinforces the idea of withholding judgement about the teacher and students based on one excerpt, as this has been taught in previous aspects of the mentoring curriculum. In these three sessions, the tentative topics for discourse analysis will be to examine: the assumptions made about students, the circulation of power between interlocutors, and the teachers’ instructional intents and the values inherent within these decisions. Using discourse analysis can also be for the purpose of considering what could or should have been done in a given situation, which can often be threatening for teachers. Therefore, by analyzing and refraining from jumping to conclusions about others’ teaching first, I hope that it allows them to be more comfortable to analyze their own teaching in the second semester.

11. This session will be the first one of the second semester, which is also the start of their official student teaching experience. As such, we will go over the expectations for student teaching, as provided by the Middle Childhood Education program. We will also review some of the key takeaways from the first semester and make goals for how to
incorporate these ideas into their student teaching to help them create positive relationships for successful teaching and learning to take place in their second semester.

12-15. The majority of the group mentoring sessions during the spring semester will involve the application of the ethnographic and discourse analysis methods to their own teaching practices that they learned during the autumn semester. They will use video recordings of their teaching (as required by the Middle Childhood Education program) and other documents (e.g. their lesson plans, student work samples) to consider and reflect on the discursive choices that they make. The tentative topics for these discussions include examining: the questions that they ask students, the assumptions they make about students, the circulation of power between interlocutors, and their instructional intents and the values inherent within these decisions. They will engage in similar types of analyses as in sessions 8-10 in the autumn semester, but this time, with examples from their own teaching.

16. As high-stakes standardized testing and its implications on teaching and learning in urban schools often comes up in conversations with pre-service teachers, I will use this session to discuss how they can use the tests to reposition their students and themselves in positions of power, since this is an area where they typically feel powerless (Rex & Schiller, 2009). This session may also occur throughout the previous five sessions, since there will be a large emphasis on state test preparation during this time. The extent to which we will focus on it during group mentoring sessions will depend on time available and pre-service teachers’ needs.
Appendix B: University Evaluation Form

Included in this file: Forms for use during one field experience, prior to student teaching
Rubric and assignments may not be shared without permission.

Field Experience Forms

- Unit Level Assessment: Field Experience Pedagogy Evaluation
- Unit Level Assessment: Field Experience Dispositions Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Alignment *</th>
<th>Dispositions</th>
<th>Alignment *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professional Commitment &amp; Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Standards</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 4</td>
<td>A. Demonstrates compliance with laws, regulations, and policies CF Goal 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Objectives or Targets</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 4</td>
<td>B. Maintains professional appearance CF Goal 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 2, 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Methods, Materials, and Resources</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 3, 4</td>
<td>C. Builds and Maintains a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment CF Goal 1, CF Goal 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 4</td>
<td>NCATE 3c, 4a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Evidence of Research in Lesson Planning &amp; Implementation</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 2</td>
<td>D. Prepared for methods / field meetings CF Goal 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructing and Engaging Learners in Learning</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 1</td>
<td>E. Attendance and Punctuality CF Goal 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CF Goal 1g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F. Technology</strong></td>
<td>NCATE 3B</td>
<td>F. Demonstrates effective collaboration skills with colleagues CF Collab./Commun., NCATE 1c, 1d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 4, 5</td>
<td>NCATE 3c, 4a, 4d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessing Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professional Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G. Assessment: Use to Guide Instruction</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 4</td>
<td>G. Demonstrates respect for cultural differences CF Goal 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCATE 3C, 4A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H. Assessment: Feedback to Learners</strong></td>
<td>CF Goal 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSTP 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Conceptual Framework – CF, Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession – OSTP, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education – NCATE, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation – CAEP, Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support – InTa
## Unit Level Assessment: Field Experience Pedagogy Evaluation

### Summative Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations (3 points)</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (2 points)</th>
<th>Emerging or Does not meet expectations (1 point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning for Instruction and Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Standards</strong></td>
<td>Plans are aligned to appropriate <a href="https://www.ohio.gov/index.cfm?OFF=202&amp;TOP=1578">Ohio Academic Content Standards</a> and <a href="https://www.corestandards.org/">Common Core State Standards</a></td>
<td>Most plans are aligned to <a href="https://www.ohio.gov/index.cfm?OFF=202&amp;TOP=1578">the Ohio Academic Content Standards</a> and <a href="https://www.corestandards.org/">Common Core State Standards</a></td>
<td>Most plans are not aligned to <a href="https://www.ohio.gov/index.cfm?OFF=202&amp;TOP=1578">the Ohio Academic Content Standards</a> and <a href="https://www.corestandards.org/">Common Core State Standards</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Objectives or Targets</strong></td>
<td>Articulates objectives/targets that are appropriate for learners and standards, objectives/targets, and learning tasks are consistently aligned with each other.</td>
<td>Articulate objectives/targets for learners and standards, objectives/targets, and learning tasks are loosely or are not consistently aligned with each other.</td>
<td>Does not consistently articulate objectives/targets for learners and standards, objectives/targets, and learning tasks are not aligned with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Methods, Materials, and Resources</strong></td>
<td>Objectives/targets are supported by methods, materials and resources that: 1) Differentiate instruction to support learner development AND 2) Organize instruction to ensure content is comprehensible, relevant, accessible, and challenging for learners.</td>
<td>Objectives/targets are supported by methods, materials and resources that: 1) Differentiate instruction to support learner development OR 2) Organize instruction to ensure content is comprehensible, relevant, accessible, and challenging for learners.</td>
<td>Objectives/targets are not consistently supported by methods, materials and resources that: 1) Differentiate instruction to support learner development AND/OR 2) Organize instruction to ensure content is comprehensible, relevant, accessible, and challenging for learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Evid. of Rsch in LP &amp; Impl.</strong></td>
<td>Connects assessment practices and instructional strategies to research and/or developmental theory.</td>
<td>Minimally or superficially connects assessment practices and instructional strategies to research and/or developmental theory.</td>
<td>Does not connect assessment practices and instructional strategies to research and/or developmental theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Instructing and Engaging Learners in Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations (3 points)</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (2 points)</th>
<th>Emerging or Does not meet expectations (1 point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. Demonstrates belief that all students can learn</strong></td>
<td>Articulates expectations and incorporates instructional strategies for students that foster high levels of achievement.</td>
<td>Scaffolds instruction to support learners as they reach their academic goals.</td>
<td>Does not consistently scaffold instruction to support learners as they reach their academic goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 Arizona K12 Center. (2012). *Standards continuum guide for reflective teaching practice.* Northern Arizona University (p. 23)
### F. Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exceeds Expectations (3 points)</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (2 points)</th>
<th>Emerging or Does not meet expectations (1 point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selects, adapts, and uses <strong>instructional technologies</strong> in developmentally appropriate avenues that are relevant to learning objectives and/or targets of the lesson AND Plans include at least one example of interactive technologies that 1) Convey key concepts AND 2) Enable learners to demonstrate knowledge or skills</td>
<td><strong>Selects instructional technologies</strong> that are developmentally appropriate, relevant to the learning objectives and/or targets of the lesson AND <strong>Uses interactive technologies appropriately to:</strong> 1) Convey key concepts OR 2) Enable learners to demonstrate knowledge or skills</td>
<td><strong>Does not consistently select instructional technologies</strong> that are developmentally appropriate and/or not relevant to the learning objectives and/or targets of the lesson AND/OR <strong>Does not use interactive technologies</strong> NOTE: Include a Not Applicable option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### G. Assessment: Use to Guide Instruction

| Uses various methods to assess various groups and/or individuals AND Uses formal or informal data to design instruction and assessment | Assess various groups and/or individuals AND/OR Minimally uses **data to design instruction and assessment** | **Does not consistently use appropriate assessments to assess individuals or groups** AND/OR **Does not use data to design instruction and assessment** |

### H. Assessment: Feedback to Learners

| Communicates **comprehensible and descriptive feedback** that addresses some of the needs of the learners in relation to specific learning objectives and/or targets AND Provides timely and frequent feedback, guiding learners with support to improve | **Communicates feedback** that addresses some of the needs of the learners in relation to specific learning objectives and/or targets **Provides feedback, guiding learners with support to improve** | **Does not consistently communicate feedback** that addresses some of the needs of the learners in relation to specific learning objectives and/or targets AND/OR **May not provide feedback,** guiding learners with support to improve OR **Feedback is not timely** |

### Goals for Improvement

Following the Three-way Evaluation between the Candidate, the University Supervisor, and the Cooperating Teacher, the Candidate will identify **one to three** specific and measurable goals for improvement during the student teaching experience. The University Supervisor and Cooperating Teacher will affirm and/or suggest goals. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide a copy of this completed for to your student teaching university supervisor.

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6 Center for Educational Leadership (5D+ Teacher Evaluation Rubric)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal (must have a minimum of one goal)</th>
<th>Connection to form</th>
<th>Details and Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Incorporate more interactive technologies into instruction</td>
<td>I. Technology</td>
<td>I will incorporate at least two opportunities a week for my learners to use interactive technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unit Level Assessment: Field Experience Professional Dispositions Evaluation**

*What are dispositions?* Dispositions are the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation and development as well as the educator's own professional growth (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education). These dispositions are based on The Ohio State University Educator Preparation Education’s 2013 Conceptual Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exceeds Expectations (3 points)</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (2 points)</th>
<th>Emerging or Does not Meet Expectations (1 point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Commitment &amp; Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Demonstrates compliance with laws, regulations, and policies’</td>
<td>See Level 2</td>
<td>Consistently demonstrates compliance with laws, regulations, and policies (school and district) AND Maintains appropriate confidentiality with all students, parents/caregivers, and colleagues at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Maintains professional appearance</td>
<td>Consistently models professional appearance and appropriate dress for licensure area</td>
<td>Dresses appropriately for licensure area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May or may not dress professionally and appropriately for licensure area most times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 Wording in this row is based on ODE Standards for Teachers, Standard 6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Prepared for methods/field meetings</th>
<th>Prepared for and engaged in methods/field experience and appointments AND Successfully completes all commitments for course and professional responsibilities</th>
<th>Prepared for and engaged in methods/field experience and appointments AND Completes most commitments for course and professional responsibilities</th>
<th>May or may not be prepared for and/or engaged in methods/field experience and appointments AND/OR Willing to complete commitments and professional responsibilities but lacks consistency OR Unwilling to take responsibility for professional commitments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. Attendance and Punctuality</td>
<td>See meets expectations</td>
<td>Reports on time or early for appointments consistently AND Informs cooperating teacher, supervisor, and/or faculty members of absences in a timely manner</td>
<td>Inconsistently reports on time for methods/field experience and appointments AND/OR Inconsistently informs cooperating teacher, supervisor, and/or faculty members of absences in a timely manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Demonstrates effective collaboration skills with colleagues</td>
<td>See meets expectations</td>
<td>Establishes productive relationships with cooperating teacher</td>
<td>Relationship with cooperating teacher is strained or not productive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 From: Seidel School of Education & Professional Studies *Professional Progress Report*
G. Demonstrates respect for cultural differences

| Articulates an understanding of individual differences (e.g., cultural, race, socio-economic status) and how individual differences may lead to student strengths AND Identifies student differences AND Plans for individual differences by using learners’ and colleagues’ prior knowledge, interests, and cultural background to maximize learning | Articulates an understanding of individual differences (e.g., cultural, race, socio-economic status) and how individual differences may lead to student strengths AND Identifies student differences AND Plans for individual differences by using learners’ and colleagues’ prior knowledge, interests, and cultural background to maximize learning | Lack of evidence of understanding of individual differences (e.g., cultural, race, socio-economic status) and how individual differences may lead to student strengths AND/OR Uses a deficit model when describing individual differences |

**What else should a teacher candidate know?** It is the candidate’s responsibility to ask clarifying questions as well as demonstrate the expected dispositional behaviors. REMEMBER: Only those dispositions observed in the field practicum can be measured, therefore it is up to the candidate to demonstrate the dispositions.

**Glossary of Terms**

**Assessment:** "Process of monitoring, measuring, evaluating, documenting, reflecting on, and adjusting teaching and relearning to ensure that learners reach high levels of Achievement." 10

**Candidate:** A pre-service teacher that is studying to become a licensed educator for the P-12 schools.

**Common Core State Standards:** A set of educational standards benchmarked to international standards for English language arts and mathematics, voluntarily adopted by states (including Ohio). "These standards are designed to ensure that learners graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and learners have a clear understanding of what is expected of them." 11

**Cooperating Teachers:** Teachers in schools who mentor and supervise Candidates in their classrooms for the duration of a student teaching and/or field experience.

**Developmental Theory (General):** Theories that describe the stages of development of children/adolescents (e.g., Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development, Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development, Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory, Behavioral Theories, and Sociocultural Theories)

**Developmental Theory (Content-Specific):** Content-specific teaching that organizes activities and learning tasks to help learners move from one level to the next. (Stevens, Shin & Krajcik, 2009) 12

**Differentiate:** "To respond to variance among learners" by modifying "content, and/or process, and/or products, and/or the learning environment" according to learners’ "readiness, interest, or learning profile." 13

**Feedback:** "Information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner’s thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning." 14

**Field Experience:** An experience in the P12 setting. Also called practicum, pre-practicum, or internship

**Formative Assessment:** "Assessment used continuously throughout learning and teaching, allowing teachers to adjust instruction to improve learner achievement." 15

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9 Based on: Arizona K12 Center. (2012). *Standards continuum guide for reflective teaching practice.* Northern Arizona University (p. 69)


11 http://www.corestandards.org/frequently-asked-questions


Goal Setting: When teachers identify appropriate measures of learner performance (including, but not limited to, standardized tests), in order to provide information on the learning gains of learners, and set quantifiable goals related to learner progress.  

Individually Responsive Teaching (CRT): Pedagogy that responds to the needs of individual learners. Characteristics may include understanding individual learning and thinking styles, positive perspectives on parents and families; communication of high expectations; learning within the context of culture; learner-centered instruction; reshaping the curriculum; and teacher as facilitator.

Interactive Technology: Technologies that enable learners to engage with the teacher and/or content on an individual level. Examples include: SMART Boards, learner response systems (i.e., clickers), and computers, tablets, etc.

Key Concepts: The essential ideas of the content area/discipline.

Learning Environment: Any setting where learning occurs. The term may refer to the physical environment (e.g., the classroom), as well as the classroom management procedures and activities that enable teaching and learning to take place.

Objectives/Targets: Learner learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the lesson or learning segment.

Ohio Academic Content Standards: "Clearly defined statements and/or illustrations of what all learners, teachers, schools and districts are expected to know and be able to do," as determined by the Ohio Department of Education.

Research: "The use of rigorous, systematic, and objective methodologies to obtain reliable and valid knowledge."

Summative Assessment: "Assessment activities used at the culmination of a given period of time to evaluate the extent to which instructional objectives have been met."

Targets: See definition for objectives.


18 http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?page=2&TopicRelationID=1696

Appendix C: Interview Questions for PSTs and Mentor Teachers

Pre-Service Teacher Interview Questions

**Background Interview** (Early October)

**Background and Apprenticeship of Observation**

- Which program are you in within the Department of Teaching and Learning? What grade level and subject might you want to teach?
- Why do you want to be a teacher? How did you get interested in teaching?
- Can you recall a particular teacher(s) who you would consider to be your best teacher? What did you learn from him/her? Why do you think s/he was so great? Are there things about his/her teaching that you hope to emulate when you become a teacher?

**Perceptions of their Teacher Education Program**

**Courses**

- I want you to think back to the courses that you took this summer. [Show PST list of courses.] What are some of the things that you learned in each of these courses? Was much of this new to you or had you thought about these ideas before?
- Which were your favorite courses? Least favorite? Why?
- What are some of the areas of teaching that you would consider to be your strengths? In what areas do you feel weak?
- You talked a lot about what it means to be a “good” teacher in your summer courses. What does being a good teacher mean to you? What would do expect them to know or be able to do?

**Field Experiences**

- When you heard that you would be placed in a Columbus City middle school for your student teaching experience, how did you feel?
- Is there anything about the placement that excites you? Is there anything that makes you nervous?
• What do you envision learning from your field experience this year?
• Before this placement, have you had experiences working with or teaching students from cultures other than your own?

Midway Interview (Early December)

Current Experiences with Teaching

• What have been some of your biggest strengths as a teacher this semester?
• What have been some of your biggest obstacles as a teacher this semester?
• What teaching strategies and theories do you/will you rely on to help you combat these issues? From where did you learn these? Why did you choose these over others that you have learned?
• In thinking about the students that you teach, has anything surprised you?
• What have you learned from your mentor teacher about interacting with the students?
• What about teaching and learning is important to you as a teacher that you use or want to use to guide your decision making? Where did you learn about these?
• What goals do you have for yourself for next semester when you officially begin student teaching?

Current Experiences with Learning Contexts and Support Mechanisms

• Does what is taught or encouraged in your university courses differ from common themes or priorities in your field placements or group mentoring sessions with your supervisor? If so, what differs and why do you think this is the case? How does this affect the choices that you make and growth process as a teacher candidate?
• What do you think the purpose of the group mentoring sessions is? Do you find that you learn a lot from the others in the group? Why or why not?
• When you debrief with your supervisor after she has observed you teaching a lesson, what are the types of comments and suggestions that s/he makes? Are these individual mentoring sessions helpful to you? How could the content or structure of them be changed to make them more beneficial for you?

Final Interview (Late April)

Student Teaching Experience

• Now that student teaching is over, looking back, talk me through how you think your year went.
• What have been some of your biggest strengths as a teacher this semester?
• What have been some of your biggest obstacles as a teacher this semester?
• Were there any surprises or areas of major learning for you regarding lesson planning and implementation this semester?
• You mentioned at the beginning of the year that finding out that you would be placed in a Columbus City middle school was shocking to you. Were there any surprises or areas of major learning for you regarding teaching students from cultures other than your own this school year?
• Did your students teach you anything?
• What do you think they learned from you? How do you know that?
• What were some strategies that you used this year to help you with classroom management? What is important to you in creating a classroom management plan or philosophy?
• Celena: you mentioned during one of our group sessions that you would like to start the year differently than how you did this year with your mentor teacher. So how would you start it?
• What did you think of the book that I read, If Only She Knew Me? Did any of this resonate with you? What stood out?
• What were some strategies that you used this year to help you better facilitate student learning?
• You mentioned in the second video reflection that if you were to plan an instructional unit around a novel again, you would have a much better idea of how to approach it than you did this first time with Night. So how would you approach it?

Mentoring

• How did your mentor teacher support you this year?
• How would you describe his or her approach to mentoring?
• Do you have an example that you recall when he or she coached you through a situation that you were struggling with?

First Year of Teaching

• What type of school do you hope to teach in next year? Why?
• Thinking about your experiences with student teaching, what stands out to you that you want to change for next year? What worked well that you want to continue?
**Pre and Post-Observation Interviews** (Throughout)

- What are/were your goals for this lesson?
- What types of things did you take into consideration when planning this lesson?
- Did you consider the strengths, needs, and backgrounds of your students when planning this lesson? How so?
- What do you think students will get out/got out of the lesson?
- How do you think the lesson went? What would you change if you were to teach it again?
- How might you change the lesson if you were teaching a much stronger group of students? What about a weaker group of students?

**Mentor Teacher Interview Questions** (April 2016)

**Questions about their Teaching**

- Tell me a little bit about your background in teaching. How long? Where? What grades and subjects? What got you into teaching?
- How do you go about planning your teaching for the year? How do you think about units, texts, and skills that you want students to learn and engage in?
- There is a wide range of concepts that are a part of teaching language arts. What to you is particularly important for students to learn? What do you find yourself spending the most time on? The least?

**Questions about their Approach to Mentoring and Mentoring their PST Specifically**

- What is your background in being a mentor teacher? How many student teachers have you had?
- How did you get to be involved with mentoring student teachers?
- What do you think are some of the things that are most important for student teachers to leave their student teaching experience knowing or being able to do?
- What types of issues (or one issue) do you think your student teacher faced while teaching in your classroom? What are the types of support that you provided him/her to understand and resolve these issues?
- Can you think through a particular struggle that your student teacher faced this year and how you observed or mentored him or her to resolve it?
- Can you think of a metaphor to describe your approach to mentoring?
- Are there any issues specific to your school or department that provide additional challenges for your student teacher?
• What seems to be important to your student teacher based on what you hear them say about their teaching and based on what you see them doing in the classroom? Where do you think they get these ideas about what is important to them?

• What ideas do you think seem to be important regarding teaching and learning to the university? Do you see a disjuncture between the university and your school in this regard, or do you think the two spaces are fairly aligned?
Appendix D: Sample PST Lesson Plan with the MCE Template

Middle Childhood Education Spring Lesson Plan Template

Teacher Candidate Name: Allison
Lesson Title/#: Freedom Writers Lesson Plan 16
Grade Level: 8th

Lesson Foundations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Standards</th>
<th>Learning Objective(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.</td>
<td>1. I can analyze how dialogue or specific incidents in a story help move the action forward or give insight into characters.</td>
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<td>2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.</td>
<td>2. I can determine the theme of a text and analyze how it develops and relates to the text’s characters, setting, and plot.</td>
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Assessment(s)

LO 1- 1. Examine the Freedom Writers’ responses to the questions Ms. Gruwell asked. Compare your response to the Freedom Writers’ responses—are the similar? Are they different?

LO 2- 2. - “Stop & Write”- periodically asking students to take two short minutes to stop and write about themes they are noticing, character development, predictions, and general thoughts.
about the chapter.

| Prior Academic Knowledge and Skills | Identifying themes  
| Analyzing dialogue  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating personal connections</th>
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| Materials & Resources              | Freedom Writers folders  
| PowerPoint                          |
# Instructional Procedures/Steps

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher will...</th>
<th>Student will...</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional procedure, questions you will ask, checks for understanding, and evidence of culturally responsive teaching practices</td>
<td>What will students be doing? What evidence of learning will students demonstrate? Student-centered learning/Opportunities for Practice and Apply</td>
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### Opening

- **6 Minutes**
1. Introduce quote of the day, agenda, and updated folder list.
2. **LO 1** - Examine the Freedom Writers’ responses to the questions Ms. Gruwell asked. 
   - Compare your response to the Freedom Writers’ responses—are the similar? Are they different? How so? Explain.
1. Students will interpret the quote of the day as a class and update Freedom Writers folders through recording recent grades and placing papers into folder.
2. View slide and paper with responses from the Freedom Writers based on the question posed by Ms. Gruwell. Compare 
   - Look for: Creating parallels between characters and interpreting/analyzing the diary entries responses.

### Instruction

- **Minutes**
1. Continue reading Part 4 - *The Freedom Writers Diary* as a class.
   - Describe the connections between each diary entry.
   - Compare the diary entries as we read them. Are they discussing a common theme throughout the chapter? Identify the common theme this chapter is expressing. Does it relate to the main themes throughout the book thus far?
1. **LO 2** - "Stop & Write" - periodically asking students to take two short minutes to stop and write about themes they are noticing, character development, predictions, and 
2. **Stop & Write** - Reading the "Stop & Write" general prompt.

2. Complete a short response to the "Stop & Write" general prompt.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Closure</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>1. Identify one topic you would like to discuss further within the book and explain why.</th>
<th>1. Create one question for a specific character and the reason for the question.</th>
<th>Identify one topic that a student would like to discuss further.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modifications/ Accommodations/ Enrichment</td>
<td>Whole group reading and discussion</td>
<td>Reading as a whole group and discussing as a whole group ensures that all students are hearing similar responses to questions/following along within the story.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Stop &amp; Write”</td>
<td>“Stop &amp; Write” allow students to stop and think before feeling pressure to respond in a whole group setting. This allows students to write down their initial thoughts directly after reading a specific diary entry.</td>
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<td>Academic Language</td>
<td>The language function included in this lesson is analyzing. This assists the vocabulary through breaking apart specific literary terms and elements within the story.</td>
<td>Supports include “stop and write” graphic organizer and whole class discussion.</td>
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<td>Vocabulary terms include personal connections, character development, and theme.</td>
<td>Supports in place for the vocabulary terms include whole class discussion and “stop &amp; think” graphic organizer. This will allow students to think and understand these terms through examining them directly after reading.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The discourse includes explanatory writing through writing to the character and responding to the stop and write prompts.</td>
<td>Supports include stop and write prompts.</td>
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Appendix E: Sample Anecdotal Field Notes

September 17, 2015

In addition to the video recorder, I also used my cell phone to record our conversation today. This will serve as a back-up in case I can’t hear voices on one recording or I lose one. I also like doing initial transcriptions from my phone because I think it’s easier and more convenient.

Today I asked the PSTs to talk with their mentor teachers about arranging for a 15 minute block of time where the three of us could meet to talk about how thing were going so far, give the mentors suggestions for how they can utilize the PSTs in their classrooms, and talk about strategies for supporting the PST this year. They are all going to get back to me in the next few days with a couple of times that we could potentially meet.

After this I asked PSTs to share anything that stood out to them about their experiences the past week, to which I got minimal responses that didn’t include much detail. As I write this log in the afternoon of the same day, I can’t even remember what was shared. This leads me to believe that a) they are still getting used to this community of learners that we are establishing and b) like last year, this group also needs some prompting/topics for discussion, which is why I am happy that I prepared a mini lesson.

Before today’s session, I asked PSTs to drive around the neighborhoods where their schools were located and make note of the houses, businesses, condition of streets, availability of parks and community resources, etc. I asked PSTs to share out their observations today, to which [Erica] was the first to respond with clear notes that she had taken. She and a few other PSTs discussed their varying neighborhoods. Some had an abundance of churches, some had an industrial feeling and lack of community, some had many corner stores and closed down factories, some had parks and well-paved roads, etc. Building off of our discussion from last week, I encouraged PSTs to consider how their students’ worlds outside of school impact what they are bringing into school. [Karly] brought up the fact that students bring the “warfare” that their parents have between each other into school, which is evident in the fights that students get into and parents yelling at each other at the school. I asked [Karly] how she knew this, and she said this is what the teachers say that the parents and students do. I think she is hearing a lot of her mentor teacher’s perspective on the students and families in the school, which may be really
positive for [Karly] in understanding more about her students’ cultures and/or also somewhat narrowing for [Karly] if this is coming from a deficit perspective. I am not sure yet. I used this example to pose questions for the group about what our role as teachers is in these situations? How do we show that we care about our students’ experiences while also avoiding getting involved in family drama? I suggested that by pretending it doesn’t exist, is not a good solution. If there are issues of discrimination and prejudice in students’ lives, it can be a great teaching opportunity to explicitly discuss this.

I then passed out an excerpt that I pulled from Rex and Schiller to show the PSTs that discussing the worlds of our students matters because it can affect how we treat and position them in the classroom. We read the first three pages together out loud, including assigning two PSTs to read the speaking parts in the transcript. I asked for PSTs’ reactions to how Marie, the teacher in the transcript, positioned Danny, the student in the transcript. PSTs pulled out the parts that they thought were important and then I tried to start a discussion about how they might be positioning students/seeing students being positioned in their schools – as unsuccessful or successful students – made evident in the language that they use with students during interactions. I know that I modeled at least one example (“Kirsten, you better have your work today” as she’s walking into class.) [Krista] then actually brought [Jake’s] mentor teacher into the conversation by saying that she feels like this is how [Jake’s] mentor positions her students (negatively). This was a red flag to me – why was [Krista] talking about [Jake’s] mentor? Because he talks about her so much? Still, without ever having been in the classroom, [Krista] shouldn’t have said this. [Jake] then took the turn to speak and I thought he responded to this invitation to put his mentor down very professionally. He said that his teacher was very into organization and teaching students routines for behavior because she felt that by doing it now, she won’t have to in April. [Jake] said that he is trying to see the benefits of teaching this way and I encouraged him to do so.

I then asked PSTs to look at the mini task on the last page of the packet, which asked them to think back on their own schooling experience to a time when a teacher positioned them in a certain way. I gave PSTs a couple minutes to think and then asked them to share out if they felt compelled. Many PSTs shared examples when they were negatively positioned by their teacher or by other students in the class while the teacher looked on. I shared an example when I was positively positioned by teacher. Looking back, these were all pretty overt ways of positioning, so next week I’d like to return to this briefly to talk about how teachers often position student in more subtle ways, like calling on certain students to give the right answer. I am also thinking about how, during this discussion, I modeled “teacher talk” when [Carmen] shared her example to show PSTs how they might better approach the situation.
With the last bit of time, I asked PSTs to share any other experiences or stories that they have about their teaching. I can’t remember much of what they said! :( I ended the session by encouraging them to pay attention to interaction with students over the next week and really focus on how students are positioned.
Appendix F: Transcription Conventions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>:</td>
<td>Elongated syllable, where a greater number of colons means a longer elongation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>Pause, where a greater number of periods means a longer pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;&gt;</td>
<td>Speech slower than the typical speech of a given speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; &lt;</td>
<td>Speech faster than the typical speech of a given speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Emphasis or stress added to a word that is distinct from the typical speech of a given speaker, often accompanied by an increase in volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>↓</td>
<td>Speech lower in volume than the typical speech of a given speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>A stop or cutoff more abrupt than the typical speech of a given speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Overlapped speech, where beginning and ending overlaps between two speakers’ speech occur within the brackets</td>
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<tr>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>Reported speech in a story-telling event, where the speaker is quoting themselves or others in the telling or re-telling of a story</td>
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<tr>
<td>{italics}</td>
<td>Commentary from transcriber or descriptions of actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>(xxx)</td>
<td>Inaudible or undecipherable speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Speech at a higher pitch than the typical speech of a given speaker</td>
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*Transcription conventions adapted from Jefferson (1984)*