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Using Discourse Analysis to Understand the Relationships and Practices of Pre-service Co-teachers

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Abstract: Early in 2016, the Council on Accreditation of Educator Providers (CAEP) (caepnet.org, 2016) published a new set of standards that called for increased collaboration of university-school partners by means of co-construction clinical experiences. In designing the new models, pre-service co-teaching, conducted by the teacher candidate and collaborating teacher, emerged as a promising practice in teacher education (Arshavskaya, 2014; Perry, 2016). However, even with the current enthusiasm for the establishing the new practices, a working definition of pre-service co-teaching remains elusive. Thus, the study of the voices of educators who are involved in co-teaching is essential as universities make the transition from single-taught to co-taught clinical experiences. This study presents a discourse analysis of the voices of 21 teacher candidates who were enrolled in a year-long, co-taught clinical experience, along with the voices of 29 mentor teachers. The findings of this study describe the terms and language used by our candidates and mentor teachers to describe their relationships and practices. The implications for these findings are discussed in terms of our new understandings of the nuances of co-teaching and how they may be used to shape a common definition of pre-service co-teaching.

Keywords: Teacher Education Reform, Clinical Practices, Mentor Teacher, Year-long Clinical Experiences, Co-teaching, Student Teaching

Using Discourse Analysis to Understand the Relationships and Practices of Pre-service Co-teachers

As teacher educators, our capacity to prepare competent K-12 educators who are ready to meet the challenges of 21ˢᵗ century schools has been called into question in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and around the globe (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OCED], 2005). From an international perspective, OCED (2005) found that

> All countries are seeking to improve their schools, and to respond better to higher social and economic expectations. As the most significant and costly resource in schools, teachers are central to school improvement efforts. Improving the efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality, and that all students have access to high quality teaching (OECD, 2005, p. 1).

On a national level, low student graduation and high teacher attrition rates in the United States have resulted in a national call to prepare prospective and practicing teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to collaborate with colleagues and provide an equitable, high quality education for all students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Recognizing the importance of improving teacher education in the United States, the National Council of Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) recommended a transformation of teacher education programs, focusing upon clinical experiences rather than coursework. In 2010, the NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning recommended the following teacher education reforms: (a)

creating partnerships with schools to advance shared responsibility for teacher preparation; (b) providing opportunities for prospective teachers to learn by doing; (c) transforming curriculum, pedagogy, structure, and delivery; and (d) ensuring that prospective and practicing teachers will know how to collaborate with colleagues. Based upon the recommendations of the NCATE report, in 2015 the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) ultimately updated accreditation standards for teacher education, particularly in the area of clinical experiences.

Through a Teacher Quality Partnership Project (2009-2015), our Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) unit supported teams of university-school partners to create collaborative, co-taught clinical experiences situated in diverse school contexts. To that end, university-school partners engaged in a cycle of continuous program design, development, and evaluation that ultimately resulted in a new model of clinical experiences, consisting of year-long clinical practice and pre-service co-teaching. The year-long clinical experience replaced semester-long separate placements that had been required since the inception of our teacher education program. Pre-service co-teaching replaced the practice of candidates teaching solo under supervision from the hosting teacher. Our model of pre-service co-teaching defined the role of the practicing teacher as a mentor and model for the teacher candidate.

While models of co-teaching are emerging at universities across the country (Arshavskaya, 2014; Perry, 2016), few studies exist that explore pre-service co-teaching grounded in the experience in a fully functioning co-taught classroom. In a co-taught classroom, the teacher candidate and mentor teacher share instructional space, materials, and other resources, during year-long placements. This study seeks to identify the language used by the participants to describe the shared experiences of our teacher candidates and their mentor

teachers during year-long, co-taught clinical experiences in K-12 classrooms. Our overarching research question was: What is the narrative between the teacher candidates and the mentor teachers when considering their co-teaching practices? Related to that overarching question are sub-questions that address the nuances of pre-service co-teaching, including: (a) What evidence exists, if any, of the language used by the candidate and the mentor teacher to define the pre-service co-teaching relationship? (b) What evidence exists to describe various aspects of pre-service co-teaching, including co-planning, co-instruction, co-assessment, and co-reflection?

Historical Perspectives on Co-teaching

Scholars in two distinct fields of education (e.g., Science Education and Special Education) began researching and reporting on structured approaches to co-teaching more than twenty years ago. These separate lines of scholarship have resulted in a dichotomy of thinking, approach, and application.

Historical perspective of special educators. In terms of Special Education, Cook and Friend (1995) first defined co-teaching as two or more certified professionals delivering instruction to a heterogeneous group of students in a single classroom or space. More recently, Friend, Embury, & Clarke (2015) specifically stated that the purpose of co-teaching is to deliver services to students with disabilities in a general education classroom through co-planning, co-instruction, and co-assessment. Co-instruction is typically described in terms of six specific models of co-teaching, including one-teach/one assist, one teach/one observe, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Historical perspective of science educators. At approximately the same time when co-teaching was developed for special education in the United States, a group of researchers from Canada and the United States (Roth, Bowen, Boyd, & Boutonne, 1998; Roth & Boyd, 1998;

Roth & Tobin, 2002; Tobin & Roth, 2010) explored the interpersonal dynamics and benefits of co-teaching in preparing high school science pre-service teachers in urban schools. Given that co-teaching in special education was done exclusively by certified teachers, the line of research by the science educators was distinctly different in terms of participants, context and purpose. In 2002, Roth and Tobin went so far as to describe co-teaching as co-learning in three different activities: (a) learning-in-practice, (b) learning-to-talk about (or theorize) practice, and (c) learning by applying theory to practice. Furthermore, these authors reported that co-teaching fosters co-generative dialogue that evolves from conversations about *learning- to-teach,* to conversations that address *teaching-to-learn*; these conversations provide both the collaborating teacher and the candidate with multiple opportunities to make sense of their shared teaching experiences. In situations where the co-teaching is a central component of the clinical experience, dialogue becomes much more democratic because *both* the candidate and the practicing teacher regard themselves as teachers and learners (Tobin & Roth, 2010). Professional growth in both adults is significantly advanced by the partnership that they develop in their co-taught classroom.

Expansion of co-teaching in teacher preparation. In 2010, mentor teachers and teacher candidates began to use a form of co-teaching during clinical experiences (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlbert, 2010; Badiali & Titus, 2012). According to Bacharach et al. (2010), students who were taught in co-taught classrooms demonstrated significantly greater outcomes on large-scale assessments than those who were solo taught by a teacher candidate. It is important to note that the results demonstrated improved outcomes for all K-12 learners, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and students growing up in poverty. Researchers at our institution have explored the efficacy of our model of pre-service co-teaching during year-long

clinical experiences. Heckert, Strieker, and Shaheen (2013) reported on the following benefits of pre-service co-teaching, including: (a) mentor-modeling of experienced mentor teachers; (b) reciprocal relationships; (c) smooth transition of responsibility from the mentor teacher to the teacher candidate; and (d) increased ability to meet the needs of all students. More recently, research indicates that co-teaching may provide heightened efficacy and support to pre-service teachers as they develop their own thinking and beliefs around critical aspects of teaching (Arshavskaya, 2014). Further, current research suggests that co-teaching improves the candidates' efficacy in developing instructional strategies, in generating student engagement, and in classroom management (Perry, 2016).

Definitions

Over the past five years, researchers have used various definitions to describe co-teaching that occurs during clinical experiences in teacher education. Early on, Tobin and Roth (2010) used co-teaching to prepare aspiring chemistry and physics teachers. Also in 2005, Heck, Bacharach, Mann, and Ofstedal modified the literature-based definitions on co-teaching to fit their teacher education context. In doing so, they defined co-teaching as "two teachers (a cooperating teacher and a teacher candidate) working together with groups of students; sharing the planning, organization, delivery and assessment of instruction, as well as, the physical space" (n.p.). In 2013, an interdisciplinary group of researchers at our institution reviewed the literature and prepared a definition of pre-service co-teaching that is currently in use. At our institution, pre-service co-teaching is described as

> an approach that provides clinical experiences for teacher candidates who are supported by mentor teachers who serve as on-going mentors and who model and share all responsibilities for the teaching and learning of a group of K-12 students. Throughout

the experience, the teacher candidate and mentor teacher establish a fully functioning co-taught classroom in which they share instructional space, materials and other resources. PSCT is an evidence-based approach that focuses simultaneously upon the development of the teacher candidate and the learning of K-12 students. Throughout the clinical experience, co-teachers are encouraged to co-reflect upon the teaching and learning process, and engage in co-generative dialogue to find creative solutions to complex problems of classroom practice (Center for Educational Placements and Partnerships, 2015, p. 7).

Theoretical Framing and Review of Literature

Activity Theory

Cultural-historical aspects. According to activity theorists (Saari & Miettinen, 2001; Engestrom, 2000) all human activity is fundamentally goal-driven; is mediated by culture and language, rules and routines, materials and situation; and results in tangible outcomes. While teaching, and learning to teach, the individuals use their own repertoire of knowledge and skills as well as available resources to achieve their goals. During clinical experiences, the practicing teachers mentor the teacher candidates and mediate their learning.

Interpersonal and situational aspects. We begin to fully understand co-teaching as an ever-dynamic and changing process (Roth & Tobin, 2005) when we take into account the history, culture and language of the school as well as the interpersonal interactions among the two co-teachers and the students. Activity theorists provide a rationale for how interpersonal relationships and interactions become more meaningful. According to Rogoff (1990, 1995), learning is not only personal, it is also interpersonal and situational. In 1993, Brandt, Farmer, and Buckmaster described *cognitive apprenticeship* as a fluid, somewhat cyclical learning process in

which a mentor scaffolds, demonstrates, supports, and coaches the learning of a novice who reflects, approximates, and generalizes new learning and skills. In the world of K-12 education, cognitive apprenticeships not only foster the development of a repertoire of teaching practices, but they also provide the vehicle for the acculturation of the novice teacher to the school community.

Interpersonal Interactions and Relationships

The cornerstone of all interpersonal interactions is the quality of the relationship between the parties; and in this case, the parties are the mentor teachers and the teacher candidates. While collaboration and relationship development are valued, most teacher education programs lack structured approaches to preparing teacher candidates to collaborate with their prospective professional colleagues (Kamens, 2007). According to Griffin, Jones, and Kilgore (2006), less than half of all new teachers receive instruction on collaboration during their pre-service preparation. This may be due, at least in part, to the pervasive perception that collaboration is intuitive (Friend, 2000).

Similarly, while teacher education supports the need for candidates to develop skills in professional collaboration, little research has been conducted on how these skills can be improved during clinical experiences (Kamens, 2007). In 2007, Knight provided a conceptual language for seven basic principles essential to the development of effective partnerships in schools. They are: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Knight's Partnership Principles (2007) provided a common language for our approach, and form the foundation for the daily co-teaching practices of the mentor teacher and teacher candidate.

Methodology

Context

Our co-teaching apprenticeship model was developed in a state university located in the greater metropolitan area of a large city in the southern region of the United States. At this institution, each year approximately 1,000 prospective teachers complete initial certification programs in early childhood, elementary, middle and secondary education, special education, and instructional technology. Of those who graduated last year, approximately 85% self-reported as white, non-Hispanic origin; 9% as black, non-Hispanic; 2% as Hispanic, 1% as Asian, 1% as multi-racial, and 2% undeclared. The unit is fully accredited by NCATE/CAEP: Their professional associations also accredit individual programs. All of the teachers in this study were serving in a Title One school district; the specifics of the participants are included below.

Participants

The teacher educator research team requested and received institutional review board permission from the university to conduct the research. The first author of this study co-conducted the professional development on collaboration and pre-service co-teaching and co-chaired the school-university committee that wrote the co-teaching handbook (see Center for Educational Placements and Partnerships, 2015).

Thirty-three teacher candidates who enrolled in one of seven initial certification programs, along with 33 of their mentor teachers, were invited to participate in the study throughout their year-long placement (2013-2014). Of those invited, 21 candidates and 29 mentor teachers agreed to participate and completed all of the required assignments that were ultimately included in the data for analysis. The participants were predominantly female and Caucasian. Roughly 75% of the teacher candidates were enrolled in an elementary initial

certification program, and 25% were enrolled in secondary programs. All of the mentor teachers were certified in the areas in which they taught.

The current study called for a discourse analysis (Yang, 2001) of the voices of the mentor teachers and candidates who: (a) participated in the co-taught, year-long clinical experience; (b) were supported by instructional coaches who specialized in co-teaching; and (c) who completed the professional development in co-teaching. The participants were prepared to engage in pre-service co-teaching as defined above.

Research Design

Our current investigation uses Gee's (2014) model of Discourse Analysis to examine the reflections of our mentor teachers and teacher candidates during their shared experience of preservice co-teaching. In an effort to better understand the collaborative nature of teaching and learning, our teacher education research community embraced the reflective, study methodologies described by Grossman (2005) and Loughran (2007). Zeichner (2007) called upon teacher education researchers to engage in study in an effort to "…contribute to the improvement of teacher education practice and to our broader knowledge about particular questions of significance to teacher educators and policy makers" (p. 43). In particular, we evaluated the frequency of terms used by participants and compared them to terms used by Friend et al. (2015). Gee (2014) makes it clear that "discourse analysis . . . is not primarily about counting things. We use such numbers simply to guide us in terms of hypotheses that we can investigate through close scrutiny of the actual details and content" (p. 174). Discourse analysis was chosen as opposed to case study or narrative analysis for several reasons. Discourse analysis allowed us to investigate the number and frequency of terms to "investigate through close scrutiny" the descriptions the teachers and candidates were providing (p. 174). Narrative analysis

and multiple case study did not provide the same opportunity to focus on the specific terms used by Cook and Friend (1995).

Gee's (2014) model was employed to examine the narratives of teacher candidates' and mentor teachers' co-instruction as defined by Cook and Friend (1995) and Bacharach et al. (2010). This study comprises a rebuttal to the limited definition(s) of co-teaching provided in the research (Bacharach et. al., 2010; Cook and Friend, 1995). The study investigated the feedback on professional learning series attached to a co-teaching model of student teaching. Specifically, the professional learning was comprised of a full-day session for pairs of mentor teachers and teacher candidates and the completion of online modules that were housed on our university's Moodle; these activities accompanied the yearlong clinical practice model of student teaching. The full-day session addressed collaboration and co-teaching (Bacharach et al., 2010; Friend, 2005), the Partnership Principles (Knight, 2007), and approaches to using co-teaching to support classroom practices and dynamics. Online modules included follow-up activities that addressed using co-teaching to support: (a) differentiated instruction; (b) student learning and engagement; and (c) candidate growth and reflection.

Data sources.

As this study sought to describe our emerging framework of pre-service co-teaching, we wanted to examine the voices of the candidates and the mentor teachers who participated in the co-taught, year-long clinical experience, and who completed the online certificate program in collaboration and pre-service co-teaching. The study reviewed four data sets: (1) reflections of the mentor teachers; (2) reflections of the teacher candidates; (3) transcriptions of focus group data of the mentor teachers; and (4) transcriptions of focus group data of the teacher candidates. Please note the participants listed above.

Discourse analysis as a methodology and lens.

Gee's (2010, 2014) model of Discourse Analysis was chosen to enable us to see what patterns of shared understanding might emerge from the data. Gee suggests that language is used as a tool of communication within communities of practice, which he terms Discourses, and which feature shared patterns of behaviors, feelings, and actions (MacKay, 2003). In a Discourse, certain patterns of language are "given meaning through agreement by the Discourse members in relation to specific social situations and contexts" (MacKay, p. 8), and one must immerse oneself in a social group, becoming a member, to fully participate in its Discourse. Thus, in this study, using discourse analysis methodology on the data enabled us to reach a greater understanding of how the mentor teachers and teacher candidates perceived themselves during their year-long co-teaching experiences, and whether they had formed what we could describe, and define, as a co-teaching community of practice. The language used by the mentor teachers and pre-service teachers allowed us to investigate how their discourse helped to shape an emerging definition of pre-service co-teaching. In particular, our analysis was based upon the three dimensions of the co-teaching factors proposed by Friend et al. (2015), including: program structure, participating professionals, and professional relationship, under which the original researchers gathered nine factors. Rather than examine all nine, we focused upon six factors: areas of expertise, scope of duties, and accountability; and two factors of professional relationship: power and supervision. Friend is widely accepted as an expert on co-teaching in the traditional sense; expanding a definition to include pre-service co-teaching must include acknowledging the alignment to terms used in that literature.

Findings and Analysis

Our findings reveal that all of our participants were influenced by a variety of factors including the time frame, purpose of the program, the structure of the clinical experience, and their individual perspectives (Friend et al., 2015). Furthermore, analysis of our participants' discourse suggests a sharing of power and responsibilities between the mentor teacher and the candidate, which empowered the candidates' professional development during their year-long clinical experiences. Table 1. depicts the terms selected for our analysis along with the frequency of use by mentor teachers and candidates and the percentage of total comments. Note that there were 29 mentor teachers who participated in this study and 21 teacher candidates; their conversations were the crux of this qualitative study.

Table 1: Discourse analysis of Co-teaching Conversations and Reflections

Terms and Factors (Friend et al., 2015)	Frequency of Use and Percentage of Total Comments	
	Mentor Teacher (N=29)	**Teacher Candidate (N=21)**
Expertise	13/29 (45%)	5/21 (24%)
Scope of Duties	5/29 (17%)	0/21 (0%)
Accountability for Student Learning	14/29 (48%)	0/21 (0%)
Distribution of Power	28/29 (97%)	16/21 (76%)
Supervision	5/29 (17%)	6/21 (29%)

Expertise

Regarding expertise, far more (45%) mentor teachers made comments using this factor than did candidates (24%). When describing their candidates, the mentor teachers said things like, "She is so teachable" and "[She used] all of the information I was giving her." Many mentor teachers referred to themselves as *veterans* who were able to provide *content expertise* to their candidates. However, notably, there were several times that the mentor teachers acknowledged the value of their candidates' contributions. "D has so many great ideas and is always willing to share them" and "she notices things and is able to better connect with the students" are examples of that discourse.

The examples of expertise mentioned by the candidates were linked to theories taught in the program coursework. One said, "I've learned about behavior. I should define misbehavior by function . . . and address it in a more proactive approach." Another noted, "Positive reinforcement helps students achieve their goals in our classroom." Several of the pre-service co-teachers noted during the focus group sessions that they had learned a great deal during the year-long clinical. "It is eye-opening," one noted, and said that she had gained knowledge of many aspects of classroom teaching.

Scope of Duties

It would not have been surprising to hear the pre-service co-teachers describing the demands of year-long co-teaching; the program requires a great deal of dedication, and many of our undergraduate students maintain employment throughout their programs of study. However, none of our candidates mentioned anything about competing responsibilities outside of the classroom during their reflections or focus groups. There were no references to university coursework or assignments, work responsibilities, responsibilities at home, or mention of any

responsibilities they were taking on at the site of their field experience. There was little that could be coded as addressing the *scope* of their responsibilities.

The mentor teachers who did describe competing responsibilities outside of the classroom were primarily discussing the additional responsibility of completing their online reflections (17%). One said that having a pre-service co-teacher and using our model was "more work than I had anticipated." Another said, "The extra paperwork and time I devote to having a student teacher is well worth it." A notable variation on this theme was one mentor teacher who recognized her pre-service co-teacher's involvement in a number of the school's activities. The mentor teacher apparently assumed that the additional effort by the candidate resulted in the candidate's employment at the school the following year. She noted, "Once Ms. D is [working] here and taking on more responsibilities, we can take a step further to implement more co-teaching and maximize student learning." Friend's (2005) initial argument was that true co-teachers have more responsibility for student learning than a teacher candidate, or an apprentice, has the capacity to assume. Our findings indicate that while it is true that our candidates do not initially have the same capacity as the mentor teacher, the candidates increase their capacity over the year-long experience. Our mentor teachers repeatedly articulated the dedication of the candidates to their field and described their sharing of the workload and acceptance of accountability, as noted in the examples above.

Accountability for Student Learning

One mentor teacher said, "Having another teacher in the room allows students to receive additional support." That theme emerged repeatedly and it is not surprising that 48% of the mentor teachers discussed accountability for student learning. However, what is surprising is that in nearly all of those instances, the mentor teachers are describing the accountability of their pre-

service co-teachers. There is no instance where the mentor teacher is describing worry about his or her own accountability or fretting about student success from working with a teacher candidate. Instead, the narratives all focused on the benefits of working with a "co-teacher." One said it "makes life in the classroom a lot less hectic," while another noted that there was "more time for real instruction in the classroom." One said that the year-long model allowed the pre-service co-teacher to actually practice teaching without "the pressures of sink or swim." One said that s/he challenged the pre-service co-teacher to share the same materials "for a lesson with a different group. We taught on the fly…and it was amazing for all of us."

Even though none of the pre-service co-teachers described accountability for student learning, there were many descriptions that approximated accountability. One said, "It can be intense" during the focus group sessions, but s/he then added, "It is all worth it!" We do feel that the pre-service co-teachers clearly displayed their concern for student success as well as for their own success in their future careers. One candidate said, "I don't want to tell them [the students] to try harder or it might make them feel like they can't do [the work]." This statement is one example of a concern that was frequently mentioned by our candidates when they discussed the delicate balance (i.e. motivation vs. learned helplessness, support vs. enabling) that occurs when working with students with disabilities. Another candidate expressed similar concerns. The candidate said,

> I have a trouble student who always acts out. I realized he is probably doing it for attention. I found out about his home life and how his father is not really in his life much. I pitched the idea to my MT (mentor teacher) to ignore his acting out unless it is something physical. She agreed and we are trying that with him.

Distribution of Power

The distribution, or sharing, of power between the candidate and mentor teacher, which Friend et al. (2015) addressed as *parity*, was the most important finding in our study. Nearly every mentor teacher (97%) and the majority of candidates (76%) described the distribution or sharing of power in the classroom, consistent with the Partnership Principles described above (Knight, 2007). Thus, the comments of the vast majority of individuals reflected reciprocity of learning and equity in distribution of power. Mentor teachers frequently said, "our classroom," "we share," "They [the students] respect her [the candidate] and see that she is my equal," "We collaborate well," and "equality." More specifically, the mentor teachers noted things like, "It is like a triangle - her, the students, and myself," and "We dialogue back and forth throughout the lessons." One teacher noted that this sharing of power was helpful for everyone in the classroom. "It helps me, it is particularly helpful for students with disabilities (SWD) and/or English language learners (ELLs)." Many of the mentor teachers suggested that their candidates had offered helpful ideas to engage their students. One mentor teacher concluded, "My students and I have benefitted so much from her." Even though the majority of the mentor teachers and candidates made reported reciprocity and sharing, a few mentor teachers did imply that power was something that was conferred to someone else. For example, one mentor teacher said, "I like to have a second opinion on my methods and materials," which suggested her willingness to share power with her candidate in certain instances, such as when they select methods and materials.

Many noted that with practice, the "transitions went smoother" when they shifted taking the lead, from one to the other. Other candidates described how the power in the classroom moved in a triangular manner such that opportunities to lead lessons shifted from the candidate

to the students to the mentor teacher—and back again. Most notably, the language of the candidates mirrored that of the mentor teachers in one important way: all of the participants describing shared power did so repeatedly by referring to "our classroom" or "we make decisions"; the emphasis on "our" and "we" is important as an indicator of equality and shared power.

Supervision

Because in many cases, *supervising teacher* refers to the work of the practicing teacher who oversees the work of the apprentice teacher, it could have been assumed that our mentor teachers would describe their *supervision* of the pre-service co-teachers; however, none of our participants did so. When *supervision* was described in either group, it was always mentioned in relation to supervising K-12 students. For example, many mentor teachers noted that co-teaching provided them with greater opportunities to incorporate cooperative learning (and group work) because there were "two teachers to supervise students." However, *supervision* was only mentioned by 17% of the mentor teachers; it is tied for the lowest category with *scope of duties*.

We suggest that this low percentage stems from their experiences and is evident in the discussion of shared power and equality. Simply stated, we found little evidence that our mentor teachers saw themselves as supervisors, nor did the candidates appear to consider themselves *supervised* by their mentor teachers. While 29% of the candidates discussed *supervision*, they did so in terms of their supervision of K-12 students. As one candidate disclosed, "[I] make the mistake of letting a child get away with a misbehavior that then becomes difficult to fix later." Another candidate noted that one benefit she saw to the yearlong co-teaching model was that students stayed "on task because there are two people walking around checking on them instead of just one." Thus, while many of our candidates described working with groups and supervising

students as important aspects of their responsibilities in the classroom, virtually no one discussed being supervised by their mentor teacher.

Discussion

Our discussion section opens with our original operating definition of pre-service co-teaching, and then revisits the research questions. Discussion points are made according to the degree to which each group spoke of the various categories, or themes.

It should be noted that as Gee (2014) indicates, while our numbers are not the actual findings of our study, they do provide a vehicle for us to identify specific themes in the transcripts that are worthy of exploration. The findings are of interest in that our study clearly describes *shared power* in the pre-service co-teaching model; that would not be the case in the apprentice model. In this case, many of our findings indicate areas worthy of further investigation in future studies. Additionally, these findings provide a framework to situate the language of *pre-service co-teaching* currently used by our mentor teachers and teacher candidates to describe their practice. As is true in most qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012), our focus is not to generalize these findings but to point to a snapshot that illustrates the impact of our proposed teaching model for pre-service teachers. This argument compliments other quantitative studies adding to a growing literature base on the impact of pre-service co-teaching (Strieker, Gillis, & Zong, 2013; Strieker, Adams, Lim, Hubbard, & Cone, 2016).

Emerging Models and Definitions

Current definitions used to describe co-teaching in teacher preparation lack a common language and construct. Scholars in special education (Friend et al., 2015) reported, "Although *co-teaching* has for many years described a service delivery option for students with disabilities or other special needs, recently it has been used as a label for an alternative approach to student

teaching" (p.1). These authors went on to suggest that when co-teaching is conducted in clinical experiences, it should appropriately be called *apprentice teaching* primarily because of the hierarchical relationship between the mentor teacher and the candidate.

In contrast, our approach is more reflective of the co-teaching apprenticeship model discussed by Eick and Dias (2005). Throughout the yearlong experience, practicing teachers serve as on-going mentors and models for their teacher candidates, sharing all responsibilities for the teaching and learning of the K-12 students. Our co-teachers use the Partnership Principles (Knight, 2007) within a collaborative context (Roth, 2005) where the co-teachers use co-reflection and co-generative dialogue to find creative solutions to complex problems of classroom practice. When applied to the situational context of pre-service co-teaching (Center for Educational Placements and Partnerships, 2015 [CEPP], 2015), the language of the Partnership Principles (Knight, 2007) on co-teaching applied to our program is as follows:

- *Equality*: While the positional relationship between the teacher candidate and the mentor teacher may not be inherently equal, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of each teacher *do* have equal value in the teaching and learning process. There is an expectation that the positional relationship will diminish (and possibly, be eliminated) as the candidate builds capacity.

- *Choice:* Both co-teachers have choice in how lessons are constructed and assessed.

- *Voice:* Each voice is empowered and respected.

- *Dialogue*: Co-teachers engage in on-going and co-generative dialogue.

- *Reflection*: Co-teachers engage in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

- *Praxis*: Co-teaching is co-praxis: a shared experience.

- *Reciprocity*: The co-teachers learn from one another.

While we use many of the co-teaching arrangements described by Friend et al. (2015), important differences do exist in how we define our purpose for co-teaching and our approach. Friend et al. (2015), claims that when co-teaching is done in teacher education, it is more closely aligned with apprentice teaching than with the co-teaching done in K-12 settings. Friend et al. (2015) justifies their claim with the argument that the purpose of apprentice teaching is to induct new teachers into the field, and the purpose of co-teaching (in K-12) is to deliver services to students with disabilities in a general education classroom. However, this argument seems to be inherently flawed. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), induction programs are provided by school districts to support beginning teachers during the first three years of employment. In teacher education, co-teaching is conducted by mentor teachers and teacher candidates. The candidates are enrolled in a clinical experience during their senior year. Because successful completion of the clinical experience is a requirement for graduation, co-teaching cannot be considered part of their employment, which occurs after graduation. Furthermore, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) state that induction is a program offered by a school district. Pre-service co-teaching is not a program offered by a school district; rather, co-teaching is a practice that is co-designed, co-constructed, co-implemented, and co-evaluated by members of the school-university partnership. Co-teaching provides an important vehicle for mentor teachers to support our candidates as they develop the confidence and competence to educate an increasingly diverse student population, including those with disabilities, which in fact, is our purpose for co-teaching.

Discussions of the Shift in Power from Mentor Teachers to Candidates

As noted above, the narrative produced by our candidates and mentor teachers supports three categories of factors that Friend et al. (2015) identifies for *co-teaching,* including areas of

expertise, scope of duties, and accountability. Specifically, our intent is to prepare teachers who have the capacity to educate all learners, including those with disabilities. Our candidates enroll in year-long clinical experiences and work closely with mentor teachers throughout that year. Over the course of the year-long experience, the balance of control and power is gradually shifted from the mentor teacher to the teacher candidate. Together they reflect upon their teaching, justify their instructional decisions, and theorize their practice.

This shift in control is also fueled by the mentor teacher's support for the candidate's maturation as a professional teacher. As the candidates gain more experience, they obtain the confidence and competence to increase the scope of their duties and accountability for the learning of all students, including those with disabilities (Strieker, Gillis, & Zong, 2013). This shift in power and control of the classroom is supported by the shared experiences of co-teaching where co-teaching is co-learning through co-praxis (Roth & Boyd, 1999).

Co-teaching as Fundamental to Teacher Agency

Our model of pre-service co-teaching is couched in the positive notion that agency is fundamental to learning and learning to teach. Throughout the year-long clinical experiences, we coach our candidates to *think like teachers, and talk like teachers, (and yes) even walk like teachers!* Our collaborative model supports our candidates as they move through the clinical experience, co-teach with their classroom teachers, and assume greater responsibility in establishing and meeting their own professional goals. Therefore, we see co-teaching, co-reflection, and co-generative dialogue as essential to the candidates' building their own capacities to be in charge of their own development, rather than simply reacting to the demands of external forces.

Implications

At our institution, this study serves as a starting point for us to further our own understanding of the nuances of co-teaching and how they may be used to shape a common definition of pre-service co-teaching. While this study was not conducted to formulate a new definition, nor model, of co-teaching for wider use, we hope that our study may inform other colleges and universities that are interested in initiating co-taught clinical experiences, particularly those institutions in need of a starting point for conducting their own study. Additionally, the body of literature including this study on pre-service co-teaching coming from the authors may suggest a trend that is useful information for other colleges considering pre-service co-teaching. Possible questions for future investigations include:

- Are all candidates enrolled in a year-long co-taught clinical placement experiencing shared power with their mentor teachers, as well as feelings of accountability, and dedication to meeting the needs of their K-12 students?

- What strategies and modifications can be initiated when systemic contradictions emerge within the local and broader contexts?

- What strategies and modifications can be initiated when complications to the theorized model of pre-service co-teaching model threaten to overwhelm the mentor and/or the teacher candidate?

- What framework, model or approach best describes pre-service co-teaching?

Based upon the narratives produced by our participants, we feel strongly that our co-teaching model provides our candidates with ongoing opportunities to effectively co-plan, co-instruct, co-reflect, and co-assess with their mentor teachers. Even with this finding, many questions remain, particularly in terms of how our candidates are evaluated by their university

supervisors during the year-long clinical experience. Will the old models of supervision continue to be effective or should supervision also become more collaborative and developmental? Questions on candidate supervision indicate the need for future study by our university research teams as well as by teams in other institutions that wish to pursue study of the shared experiences of pre-service co-teaching.

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