

## Undoing the Divide: Teachers and Teacher Educators as Multicitizens

By Daniel J. Birmingham, Ben Pineda, & Kyle A. Greenwalt

This school looks much like the one where I spent several years of my career teaching. From the outside, there is something very familiar about this place. As I walk in the large double-doored entrance, I am poised to observe the intern I have been assigned to work with, as well as meet her mentor teacher, for the first time. Once inside, I am immediately hit with the sound of children talking, playing, and hurrying to their first class. I am again reminded at the efficiency with which they can reconnect with friends in the four minutes they have between science and social studies. I make my way to the office to alert the staff to my presence and get directions to room 150.

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The moment I clip the visitor pass to my dress shirt, I am reminded that this trip into this school is very different than the countless other times I have entered school buildings—*my* school building. I walk down the hall as students hurry to class. Although none of these students' faces look familiar, with certain students, I have an uncanny feeling that this is a student from my past. I arrive at room 150 minutes before class is to begin and greet the intern that looks both excited and terrified. I silently wonder if it is my presence or the fact that she is undergoing a major life transformation that invokes this terror. It probably is a little of both.

I quickly introduce myself to the mentor

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teacher with the promise of talking more after class. I look around the room for a place to sit and observe the lesson. Desks are packed into this space and are beginning to fill up with students. I pause, unsure of where to go next. The intern offers no assistance as she goes over her lesson plan in her head. The mentor teacher is now greeting students at the door and attending to their pressing issues—things such as jammed lockers and hurt feelings. Unsure if every desk will be occupied, I settle for sitting on a counter at the back of the room. I feel ridiculous. I am already a head taller than most of the students and now I am perched above the class as if I am observing this lesson from a guard tower.

In some ways, the lesson goes as most any lesson does. There are moments of excitement and great promise, and others where we all appear to be losing track of where we might be going. I silently write notes in the back of the room, hoping that they will help me say something profound after the lesson is over, when I will have to sit down and try to get these unfamiliar people to talk to me about that most personal of things—one's work with children. Several students look at me inquisitively. Not having been introduced to the class, I can only assume they wonder who this man scribbling on a notepad in the back of the room is. The students exit the room as the lesson ends and the bell signifies their next obligation.

The three of us—intern, mentor teacher and myself—arrange the desks in a triangle in order to discuss the lesson. Both of them look at me to get things started. I begin by once again introducing myself to the mentor teacher. Although I had wanted this conversation to be informal, I find myself rattling off the lines of my resume in hopes of being seen as a legitimate source of expertise. It is early in the year and we are three strangers sitting together discussing the performance of one. I start with positives, insert some critique and circle back to the positive. It is a tested strategy I employed during parent-teacher conferences throughout my teaching career. As I speak, I try to gauge the reaction of both the intern and teacher. Am I making sense? Am I coming off as the academic who waltzes in and has all the answers? Am I being too easy or too harsh? The mentor teacher must sense a pause in my thought process because she jumps in to share her thoughts on the lesson. The intern responds well to the comments, explains her decisions, and asks for us to expand on similar experiences we had in the classroom. That part is easy: teaching is one thing I can always talk about.

I leave those two as they prepare for their next class. I feel good about what has just occurred, even though I am not exactly sure what good it did. I get lost looking for the office and eventually require the assistance of a few students to point me in the right direction. As I sign out for the day, I introduce myself to the office secretary. I hope she will remember my face next week when I come back.

### **Making Sense of the Divide**

For the field instructor in the above anecdote, the familiar has become unfamiliar, thereby resulting in a very different type of experience than he ever had previously in public schools. We—Danny and Kyle—can easily read ourselves into that anecdote because we have both lived the ambiguities that are on display there. That is, we have lived the tensions and uncertainties involved in the relationship between an intern,

a mentor teacher, and a field instructor. These uncertainties include ill-defined roles as well as shifting power relationships (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Slick, 1997).

Undergirding the tensions of the individually lived relationship, we would assert, is the uncertain relationship between the university and the public school. Both historical and contextual factors come into play, thereby positioning the actors before, during, and after their interactions occur.

Bullough and Draper (2004) illuminate the tensions at play when a university field instructor defines “good teaching” in a way that does not match with the perception of the mentor teacher. When the relationship goes sour—as it sometimes does—“the blow up” can have a serious detriment on the novice teacher’s learning. Often, the intern feels the need to either “pick sides” or otherwise put energy into managing (or manipulating) the strained relationship between the two. Instead of focusing time and energy on improving their teaching, the intern is drawn into the drama playing out between those two persons who were charged with the task of support. Bullough and Draper (2004) conclude that, although a lack of communication is certainly at play here, more talk will not in itself fix the situation until all parties come to recognize that communication requires “attending to how triad members positioned themselves and how they responded to being positioned” (p. 418).

Thus, the relationship requires more than talking—it requires *talking through*. It requires an understanding of where each actor is coming from (a life narrative), how each actor has been positioned (perceptions of the value of theory and practice), and how each actor wishes to be positioned (expert, colleague, friend), so as to allow for mutually educative discussion and debate.

When issues of positionality are reframed within the policy arena, new problems emerge. For example, in a 2009 speech given at Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan claimed that “by almost any standard, many if not most of the nation’s 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom” (para. 1). Regardless of how one feels about the validity of such statements, what is perhaps clear is that teacher education in the U.S. is on the verge of a new era of high-stakes, rankings-driven accountability. Equally as clear is that teacher educators are being repositioned within the public discourse, and in ways that may further injure their standing with their most valued colleagues—classroom teachers.

Organizations such as the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) have assembled standards by which teacher education programs will be ranked and evaluated by the fall of 2012 (NCTQ Standards for Rating the Nation’s Education Schools, n.d.). Additionally, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has itself published a blue-ribbon panel report on the ways in which colleges of education collaborate with public schools in the preparation of future teachers. The NCATE report (2010) is clear about the direction it wants to see teacher education headed:

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To prepare effective teachers for 21st century classrooms, teacher education must shift away from a norm which emphasizes academic preparation and course work loosely linked to school-based experiences. Rather, it must move to programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses. (p. ii)

That is, the NCATE report demands a closer working partnership between two institutions that have not always equitably shared the responsibility for the preparation of the next generation of teachers. In many ways, it can be read as a stark rebuke to both professors of education and classroom teachers for their joint failure to work together, more consistently, in the past.<sup>2</sup>

This article investigates one small aspect of the work of secondary social studies teacher preparation at Michigan State University (*and*, of course, the surrounding public schools where so much of this preparation actually takes place!). We—Danny, Ben, and Kyle—have come to see that we cannot have a successful program without having close, warm, collegial relationships between mentor teachers and university course and field instructors. We cannot prepare the teachers we wish to see absent a shared identity—one rooted in both teacher education and the education of public school children. Or, as Bullough (2005) has written, as long as mentor teachers' main identification is with “teachers and school children, not university-based teacher educators and beginning teachers, it is highly likely that teacher education will remain little more than a weak exercise in vocational socialisation” (p. 144).

In what follows, we will first lay out our framework for making sense of this shared identity—a framework we borrow from scholarship in social studies education. After briefly talking about the sources and nature of our data, we will go on to present examples of the way in which our framework for shared identity allows us to make sense of the lived experiences of both mentor teachers and field instructors in our program. We conclude the article by turning to the voice of Ben—who as both a committed middle school teacher and teacher educator offers both a warning and a sense of hope for the work of mutually-shared teacher preparation.

### **Teachers and Teacher Educators as Multidimensional Citizens**

The concept of the “multicitizen” grows out of work in political science, which seeks to explore the changing nature of citizenship in light of a world where the nation-state can no longer be seen as fully sovereign across a variety of areas (Heater, 1999; Held, 1999; Scholte, 1997). In this article, we borrow such language, because we believe that the old institutional ordering that used to structure teacher education has become outdated—that is, the theory (university)/practice (k-12 schools) divide.

In particular, we use Cogan, Grossman, and Liu's (2000) framework of multidimensional citizenship. That is, we are interested in the ways in which *personal*

civic beliefs, the capacity for joint *social* action in the public sphere, with ties to multiple *spatial* locations, all in reference to a *temporal* framework that includes the past, present and future, shape what does and does not happen in field-based clinical teacher education. Therefore, these four dimensions of citizenship are brought together in order to explore the difficulties of training teachers across institutional borders: the personal, the social, the spatial and the temporal.

#### **Personal**

For Cogan, Grossman and Liu (2000), this dimension involves a dialogue between one's inner self and the public world. It requires examination of one's mind, heart, and action. In our own work, we have found this playing out on the level of our deepest areas of care. For school-based teacher educators, their own students are often the motivating force for their actions. They feel deeply committed to the well being of these students, and it is up to the intern to continue this level of care. For the university-based teacher educator, our first concern is often with the intern, and her own learning. Seeing both students and interns as people in our joint pedagogical care requires a reconceptualization of our practice.

#### **Social**

For Cogan, Grossman, and Liu (2000), this dimension involves the habits of mind and practice that speak to democratic involvements—participation, deliberation, dissent and consensus. In our own work, we have found it difficult to develop spaces where such deliberation about the nature of our work can happen. We often choose to meet off-campus, to go to the very schools where clinical education is taking place. But here, too, not all the parties who impact the structure of a teacher preparation program can be present. We are left acknowledging that we cannot change some of those things we most wish to change—such as the time, place and nature of the university coursework tied to student teaching—and at times, frustration ensues. In addition, professors of education and classroom teachers often do not speak the same language. Someone might raise an issue about how “the university” does not prepare student-teachers for “classroom management” issues; but what “classroom management” (much less “the university”) means in this space is anything but clear.

#### **Spatial**

For Cogan, Grossman, and Liu (2000), this dimension involves seeing ourselves as members of multiple, overlapping, and interdependent communities. In our own collaboration, we find this to be an almost insurmountable challenge at times. There is important work to be done in colleges of education, but being in one place often precludes one from being in another. University-based teacher educators often forget the challenges of everyday classroom practice and the immediacy of classroom life. School-based teacher educators are sometimes not aware of the

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difficulties in coordinating professional programs across many units and courses. Most troubling, the reward structures in the two spaces are not congruent. It is possible to get tenure in a college of education without being deeply involved in a school, classroom or child's life; mentor teacher teachers are given little to no financial reward for supervising interns.

### **Temporal**

For Cogan, Grossman, and Liu (2000), this dimension involves seeing the challenges of the present in terms of the past and the future. In our own work, we find that the temporal dimension is often the biggest sticking point to meaningful social interaction. We find that some school-based teacher educators are unhappy with the teacher preparation they themselves received. They bring these memories to their encounters in the present, which can color discussions and limit the horizons of the possible. University-based educators can forget that mentor teachers have their own apprenticeship of observation in regards to mentoring. They may not provide enough support in helping mentor teachers locate their unique form of mentoring best practice, and thereby allow the mentoring relationship to become either too affective or too overwhelming for the intern (Cain, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

These four dimensions are useful in that they allow those concerned with the preparation of teachers to consider the fault lines along with their work is structured. They point us to the need for a new vocabulary if actual multicitizenship is to emerge. Field instructors<sup>3</sup> are university-based teachers educators. Mentor teachers are, ideally, school-based teacher educators (in addition to their primary role as teachers of children). However, for multicitizenship to be realized, the identity of the university-based teacher educator must become equally as reflexive. That is, field instructors must also become university-based *teachers*—they must come to care for the students who are under the guidance of an intern, for whom they must also, of course, care. Student, intern, teacher and teacher educator. Identifying the legitimacy of the four different stakeholders, and then drawing upon the possibilities offered by each, public education becomes a grand concert of shifting identities, criss-crossing allegiances, and flexible relationships—all within a framework of shared commitments to a more powerful schooling experience in the future.

## **Uncovering Experiences on the Edge:**

### **Voicing (Un)Shared Identities**

The dimensions of the multicitizen align with the four lifeworld existentials of spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality which phenomenologists argue are the foundation “by way of which all human beings experience the world” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 102). The experiences which we are concerned with here involve the lived tensions of university- and school-based teachers and teacher educators.

As a study rooted in phenomenology (as opposed to say an ethnography), our

unit of analysis is the lived experience. While we briefly describe our participants below, what we are primarily concerned with is the meaning of the experience of living across institutional borders in teacher education, all in pursuit of goals which are sometimes shared, sometimes conflicting.

The teacher educators in this study consist of mentor teachers working in k-12 public schools and field instructors working on behalf the university. All of the mentor teachers in this study come to their work with over 15 years of classroom experience, representing a diverse range of settings in urban, rural, and suburban contexts. Some have served as mentors for many years while others recently accepted their first intern into their classroom. They are mostly White, and for the most part evenly split between male and female teachers. These mentors open their classroom doors to a university intern for a year-long teaching experience in learning to teach.

The field instructors are all doctoral students in our College of Education. Nearly all of them have prior experience as a classroom teacher. Like the mentor teachers, the field instructors are mostly White and evenly split between male and female. As we shall see, their prior teaching experiences often position these individuals as vulnerable and uncertain in their work in local k-12 schools. In one sense they find themselves embracing the familiarity of being in a school once again, while at the same time needing to assume or construct an unfamiliar identity in this space, as evidenced in the vignette that opened this paper. Field instructors are offered support in this work by university faculty and through meeting with other field instructors, but given that what is needed in one relationship is different in the next, they often find themselves defining and constructing their role(s) simultaneously.

Throughout the course of the school year, mentor teachers, university faculty, and field instructors come together every month to share in discussion around the current and future direction of the teacher education program. These meetings have been on-going for the past four years, since the time that the three authors of the article first decided to work towards conceptualizing the triad relationship between intern, mentor, and field instructor as the very heart of the learning-to-teach experience.

Our method of gathering data was therefore relatively simple. At one of these respective meetings, we asked participants to tell us about “a memorable experience from their work” with, respectively, a field instructor and a mentor teacher. While these data were collected during one particular meeting, the lived experiences that constitute our data are drawn from the ongoing work of building personal and institutional relationships over time. That is, the validity of the data is grounded in an on-going project of mutual recognition and dialogue. The experiences shared at this meeting therefore represent different points in time and space in the establishment of these relationships. Aspects of these lived experiences are presented below as anecdotes.

Regarding anecdotes, Max Van Manen (1994) notes that:

In striving for pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact one must both discover and give shape to one’s personal life story. In giving voice to this process of integration and personality formation teachers have always done what recently has become an

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academic interest: they have tended to share experiences with colleagues, spouses, parents, and friend through stories, anecdotes, letters, personal diaries and other narrative forms. Teachers who tend to tell anecdotes about the things that happened during the day, and who reflect on these stories with others, thereby discover what they are capable of seeing and what sense they can make of pedagogical situations. This reflection on experience can be understood as a form of practical pedagogical thinking, a theorizing of the unique. (p. 157)

The anecdote connects us with our own experience as well as inspires us to learn from it; or as Van Manen (2001) also states, anecdote “simultaneously pulls us in but then prompts us to reflect” (p. 121).

Once we collected the anecdotal data, we next turned to its analysis. Given that the dimensions of multidimensionality (time, space, self, and social relationship) align with the lifeworld existentials of phenomenology, we knew that we would be able to use them as entry points for our analysis. Danny and Kyle took the lead in this part of the work, individually reading through each account several times. We attempted to first categorize each account as best speaking to one of the four dimensions, recognizing that each account would nonetheless have aspects of all four. We then came together to negotiate our placement of each account into a particular dimension. The next stage in phenomenological analysis involves the separation of essential from incidental themes. Phenomenological data analysis does not rely on frequency of occurrence in order to determine the meaning and significance of its data; instead, Danny determined the data’s essential themes by moving back through the texts and writing down words and phrases from each account that seemed to him particularly evocative—what van Manen (2001) has called the “highlighting approach” to doing phenomenology (p. 94). Drawing from each account, already categorized into one of the four dimensions, he sought to write up the accounts in ways that captured their meaning, staying as close to the original language of the account as possible.

At this point, the representations of data were passed to Kyle. He read over Danny’s work, re-working the accounts in ways that would seek to further illuminate the meaning implicit in each account. Here, an approach to phenomenology that draws from hermeneutics was gainfully employed, one that posited meaning as emerging from a circular reading of whole-parts-whole. Gradually, through this re-writing process, a process of crystalization occurred, where essential meanings were brought out and incidental details were allowed to fall away. Finally, all three authors gave the anecdotal findings a final read, paying particular attention to our own experiences as teachers and teacher educators as checks on the validity of our representations.

We should note that the original anecdotes—as momentary, high contextualized glimpses into retrospectively captured lived reality—required us, the researchers, to “draw out” of these stories those aspects we thought spoke to the essential meaning of the experience. This “drawing out” is hopefully more like a gentle coaxing than a dental extraction! Indeed, in phenomenological work of this sort, there is often a highly intentional “pulling short” in the data analysis—a reticence to fully name



the meaning of the experience, so as to both encourage the reader to construct her own meaning, and to remind everyone involved that the meaning of any lived experience is never ultimately able to be “captured.”

That is, then, we want the reader to be fully aware that these anecdotes are rewritten by us, condensed down from their original form on paper, and, of course, situated by us within this research text. Our goal is to be faithful to the experiences as they were lived by the people writing them. In this, the best checks of validity are our own prior experiences. Or as Van Manen (2001) notes, “a description is a powerful one if it reawakens our basic experience of the phenomenon it describes, and in such a manner that we experience the more foundational grounds of the experience” (p. 122).

### **Findings: Experiences Across the Divide**

In what follows, we will use these four dimensions to illuminate the lived experiences of both mentor teachers and field instructors involved in Michigan State University’s secondary social studies teacher preparation program. We present anecdotes from experiential accounts of mentor teachers and field instructors in relation to the themes of the personal, social, spatial, and temporal. Although we illuminate each dimension through several experiences, we understand that each account inevitably contains the other dimensional as well. These anecdotes illuminate both what is possible in, as well as what limits, the building of institutional and personal relationships between actors working in k-12 schools and colleges of education.

#### ***The Personal Dimension: The Desire to Be Recognized***

The personal dimension involves examining the relationship between one’s inner sense of self and the world in which one lives. For Cogan, Grossman, and Liu, (2000) this entails an individual’s ability to “examine their basic beliefs and their translation into the public realm,” relying upon “individually and socially responsible habits of mind, heart and action” (p. 50). It is also about the willingness of the world to return these caring acts upon us.

For several field instructors in this study, their individual beliefs did not neatly align with the context they found themselves working in. This caused inner doubt, and a questioning stance towards their own competence as both teacher and teacher educator. These questions involved both the rightness of their interpretations of the pedagogical actions of others, as well as their own sense of what is pedagogically apt for their own immediate work with their interns.

One example can be seen through the lived experience of Angie, a field instructor, who shares the story of meeting a mentor teacher for the first time in her first year of field instructing. Angie writes about the discomfort she experienced as she witnessed the interaction between mentor teacher and intern. The mentor teacher was “ribbing” or teasing the intern in the meeting. The mentor later revealed that

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her last intern did not fare too well. This other intern was too sensitive; indeed, he was so sensitive, the mentor teacher made him cry. Angie was concerned about this interaction in the present, especially as it was juxtaposed with this information about the past. Yet she was equally as worried about her own ability to interpret the present situation. Being a new field instructor, Angie was left wondering if her inexperience was causing her to read the situation differently—to jump to conclusions about a situation of which she as yet had very little understanding.

Mike, a field instructor, tells a different type of story relating to the personal. His story deals with the uneasy relationships between himself, a mentor teacher and an intern. Mike had noticed over the course of several months that whenever he had talked with this intern, there had been much sighing. But he was unsure of the meaning behind these sighs—boredom? Frustration? Now the sighs became deeper and more prolonged. The mentor teacher himself always appeared busy or deep in thought, and would only pull out of this contemplative state once their three-way discussions would start. Mike was always uncomfortable with the situation, and it only increased over time. This discomfort prevented him from ever asking the types of questions that were really on his mind: questions about the ultimate purposes of one's teaching.

Jim, a mentor teacher involved in the program, tells a story revealing a much different tone in the dialogue between self and world. Jim writes of the guidance and support given to him by a university faculty member as he worked on his specialist's degree. Jim viewed this faculty member's advice and prompting as beneficial to his teaching. In this way, he drew a direct line between the professor, himself (as teacher *and* learner), and his students. He saw both the professor of education and himself in a shared endeavor.

#### ***The Social Dimension:***

##### ***The Trust Needed to Allow Dialogue About Teaching to Emerge***

This dimension includes the habits of mind and practice involved in discussion, debate and deliberation. It involves open lines of communication that allow citizens to address issues “respectfully with people whose ideas and values differ from their own” (Cogan, Grossman, & Liu, 2000, p. 51). This type of communication requires negotiation, participation and shared responsibility for action. This theme was especially pronounced in the accounts written by mentor teachers. Many of these accounts focused on establishing a partnership.

Bob, a mentor teacher, relates a story of interacting with a field instructor during his first year with an intern in his classroom. At the start of the relationship with the field instructor, he did not know at all what to expect. Yet the field instructor turned out to be patient and helpful. The field instructor took the time to help Bob understand some of his responsibilities towards an intern. When they talked about lessons they had both observed the intern give, the field instructor made Bob feel that his opinions mattered. This, in turn, made Bob comfortable when the field

instructor took a different angle on things. Bob thought this was a primary reason why he wanted to continue the process of mentoring new teachers.

Cynthia also expresses a strong reaction towards her first meeting with a field instructor. She was initially worried about the field instructor's relative youthfulness, and the lack of experience such youth might connote. Yet Cynthia quickly came to see this person as a hard working and competent professional, one who respected her. This type of relationship allowed for candid discussion throughout the year, thereby providing each member of the triad opportunities to relate stories of their own teaching practice.

The social dimension was a common theme for mentor teachers. Their stories spoke to their perception—one perhaps mixed with surprise and relief—that the field instructor were as invested as they were. There were stories about how hard a field instructor was willing to work, what lengths a field instructor was willing to go to, and how often a field instructor was willing to listen. It was important to mentor teachers that a partnership was formed in the education of the intern.

This theme was not foregrounded in the accounts of the field instructors as it was with the mentor teachers. Many field instructors lamented the lack of this partnership or relationship, yet their accounts also spoke to a tone of wondering: are such relationships of discussion, debate and deliberation possible with mentor teachers in their very own classrooms?

### ***The Spatial Dimension: Building New Homes in New Locations***

The spatial dimension involves coming to see ourselves as members of overlapping and interdependent communities. Several accounts, from both field instructors and mentor teachers, addressed the spatial dimension of multicitizen-ship. They did this by focusing on the path to inclusion. Membership in these communities, however, is not simply granted: although mentor teachers wrote of possible pathways to inclusion for field instructors in their school community, field instructors' accounts implicitly questioned the degree to which inclusion was possible.

Much like the vignette that begins this article, the school community for field instructors was familiar through their prior teaching experiences; yet they also felt like outsiders. These feelings of being an outsider inspired various actions in hopes of being seen as legitimate.

One field instructor, Nathan, writes of how he was one day alerted to the poor performance of an intern by a program administrator. This surprised Nathan, because he had spoken to the mentor teacher many times about this intern, and had not been made aware of the situation. Nathan felt that the mentor teacher must not have trusted him enough to communicate his concerns. Nathan felt as if he were driving through a fog, one that did not let him really see the landscape with any clarity. He wondered if part of the problem was the fact that he had grown up in another country, and all of his teaching experience had taken place in the country

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of his birth. This experience left him wondering about the degree to which he will ever be granted full membership in the triad.

The mentor teachers recounted stories of situations in which field instructors came to understand the climate of their school, thereby easing entry into the triad. Patti writes of a particularly positive experience with a field instructor, one who, because so many interns were teaching in the same schools, was able to come to know the particular school context quite well. Patti felt the many positive benefits this had on her working relationship with the field instructor, as well as the intern's experience.

Tony, a mentor teacher, writes about a field instructor who came to understand his inner-city school's particular needs, with its highly diverse student population, by spending at least one full day a week in the school. As the field instructor demonstrated his understanding of the physical and social spaces of the school, Tony came to respect his contributions more and more. He came to like the field instructor he was assigned to work with, and started to view him more and more as a colleague.

Christi, a mentor teacher, writes about the first time she attended a monthly, university-sponsored, meeting space for mentor teachers in the secondary social studies program. These meetings were used by the group to share problems of mentoring practice, to talk about social studies curriculum, and to ask university-based folks about aspects of the program that they were either unhappy with or unclear about. Christi noted how nice it was to put faces on the names from impersonal university email communication. It was reassuring for her to be warmly welcomed and appreciated by both university faculty and fellow mentor teachers. Christi felt welcomed into this space and immediately took on the identity of a member, allowing her to make meaningful contributions to the free-flowing conversation.

#### ***The Temporal Dimension: Past Ghosts that Haunt our Lived Present***

The temporal dimension involves seeing the challenges of the present in terms of the past and the future. The actors in these overlapping groups bring with them their personal narratives of how the student-teaching experience is supposed to go—through their own teacher training, through their work with Michigan State University in the past, and through their work with other institutions of higher education undertaking the work of teacher preparation. These prior experiences influence the expectations actors bring to this work.

Prior interactions framing present encounters with the teacher preparation program were evident in several accounts written by mentor teachers. Jill writes about her overall frustration with Michigan State University, and how the candidates trained there seem increasingly unable to handle everyday classroom management issues. She recalls a situation from some years past, with a field instructor who took these concerns seriously, and worked very hard to echo Jill's concerns about an intern's struggles. Jill connected with this particular field instructor because he took her concerns so seriously—something both current field instructors and course

instructors were not doing. This lack of improvement in an area so important for teacher success frustrated Jill.

Kelly, a mentor teacher, writes about great appreciation for her current field instructor. This field instructor talked to her so much, asked for her opinions, showed dedication and support towards both her and the intern. The field instructor even took the time to call her on the phone in the evening. This was in stark contrast to the first field instructor she had worked with, who was not very communicative.

Jason, a field instructor, recounts a story of working with a mentor teacher who held low expectations of Michigan State University. In their very first meeting, the mentor teacher greeted Jason by saying how she had always had interns from a different university, and how they had always done an excellent job. The mentor teacher went on to note that she was only taking a Michigan State University intern because her administration had said that she had to. Jason kept at it though, and each time he visited with the mentor, he noticed her stance softening a bit. The relationship grew through shared experiences until Jason was one day asked by the mentor what she should do if she wanted another intern the following year.

Several of the previous accounts serve to remind us that it is often the intern him or herself who represents the university in the mind of the mentor teacher. If the intern is outstanding, then the relationship to the university seems strong. Jeremy, a mentor teacher, writes about his first few introductory meetings with his current intern. The intern helped remind Jeremy of why he went into teaching, of the necessity for hope and high ideas in the teaching profession. This intern helped heal the scars Jeremy has suffered in working in the current high-stakes environment. The intern reminded Jeremy of the primacy of individual children in a teacher's life.

### **Summary—What Have We Learned:**

#### **Building Relationships Across the Divide**

For us, these anecdotes allow access to the implicit meaning of relationship built along the divide. These stories highlight the successes and pitfalls inherent in this process, and perhaps more importantly, recall us to the importance of the work we undertake on a daily basis. We are reminded that all relationship building commences in uncertainty and encounters boundaries along the way. These actors come with their own personal and institutional histories, influencing the ways in which relationships are constructed and perceived. The mentor teachers involved in this study generally write of building successful relationship despite low expectations initially brought to this work (often due to prior life experiences as either a mentor or intern themselves). Field instructor anecdotes reveal a position as outsider wrought with uncertainty and apprehension, that may or may not be overcome. Anxiety arises as they come to terms with the idea they are no longer insiders in school settings, regardless of their past experiences. They must reconcile their new

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position as field instructor working in school contexts as they simultaneously build relationships with mentors and interns.

These stories also remind us of the primacy of personal relationship in both teaching and teacher education. Tensions inevitably arise as individuals work to make meaningful connections between and across school and university contexts. These tensions play out among actors who, in their own ways, are all committed to the work of teacher education. One's hopes for the future both overlap and differ among individuals depending on their personal dialogue with the world around them, their capacity to exist in spaces where differing ideas are present, their interaction and inclusion in overlapping social and physical locations, and the narratives guiding their interpretation of the present as it slides into the future.

We are left with the idea that regardless of the institutional and personal tensions at play, the building of these relationships is essential for the growth and enrichment of all three members of the triad—mentor, field instructor, and intern. These memorable experiences reinforce for us this importance by showing us how success inspires further collective action, and failures to the widening of the divide.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Hope for the Future through Connection to Schools**

*But what is decisive for the structure of hope as a phenomenon, is not so much the "futural" character of that to which it relates itself but rather the existential meaning of hoping itself. Even here its character as a mood lies primarily in hoping as hoping for something for oneself. He who hopes takes himself with him into his hope, as it were, and brings himself up against what he hopes for . . . To say that hope brings alleviation from depressing misgivings, means merely that even hope, as a state-of-mind, is still related to our burdens, and related in the mode of Being-as-having been.*

—Martin Heidegger, 1927/2006, p. 396

We desire to see powerful social studies teaching and learning carried forward into our century. We do not see this as possible without effective social studies teacher preparation. Such preparation is improved when social studies educators take their understandings of the importance of multidimensional citizenship and work to live them out in their everyday working lives.

We are also certainly interested in improving the effectiveness of teacher preparation across subject areas: in our current political climate, we, as a community, *cannot* afford *not* to be. In this paper, we have tried to show how helping field instructors and mentor teachers navigate the personal, social, spatial and temporal dimensions of our work will help improve program efficacy.

But we have to admit that these considerations are secondary, especially for Danny and Kyle. Let us explain.

There is a particular aspect of these accounts, when examined as a whole,

which particularly stood out to us. Although several of the mentor teachers had low expectations for their work with university field instructors, course instructors and program administrators (and at least one continued to do so), their accounts were, overwhelmingly, filled with hope. Their memorable experiences were ones in which positive relationships had been built, and their expectations had been exceeded. This was a group who, by their very attendance at the meeting at which the data was collected, demonstrated their desire to build positive relationships with people working in a college of education. Their accounts show us the contours of the possible.

In contrast, there was relatively little evidence of hope in the accounts of those working in the university setting. These teacher educators wondered about the possibilities for building relationships. Many of the accounts spoke to fears and anxieties around issues of competence, communication, acceptance and respect. Given that field instructors generally are never given the time to put down roots in a school community, much less build sustained relationships with mentor teachers and kids, it leaves us wondering: Is the divide too great to undo?

Clearly, we do not think it is. There are certainly structural changes that can be made in the working conditions of field instructors and mentor teachers—and such things will likely help. But in the first place comes desire. And that desire, at least for those working in the university setting, is a desire to reinstall a sense of hope. In this sense, going out to work in schools, to see kids and teachers and interns working together, and to feel, if even for a moment, like a teacher again, seems like an important thing to happen.

In the above quote, Heidegger speaks to the meaning of hope. He notes that hope is not a naïve wishing for a better future, absent any plan to get there. Rather, hope is an encounter with *our own* past and present failings—an encounter with the scars and pains that many teachers and teacher educators are currently carrying around with them in this age of scripted, high-stakes, test-driven accountability. The path towards hope is through our own personal burdens. In this sense, Heidegger points to the interconnectedness of hope and anxiety.

First it was “all about the kids.” We are now seeing that it has to be about the teachers too. Let us hope that we will also see it’s about the teacher educators as well, and that the boundaries separating student, teacher, and teacher educator can be softened. And that one day, mentor teachers—as teachers and teacher educators—will no longer live out the following types of experiences on beautiful September mornings at the start of each school year:

The day has arrived for my intern to have his first field instructor observation. The day brings a sense of anxiousness for myself . . . I’m wondering how my intern feels.

My intern is struggling, but I suppose that’s to be expected. They can’t all be great from the start. I wonder if I struggled this much back when I was starting? It’s been so long I can hardly remember.

## *Undoing the Divide*

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It's been a rougher than usual start, though. It's starting to feel like a roller coaster ride. I wonder if he's going to make it?

Everyday has brought a few high points, but the low points seem to predominate. Sometimes it turns my stomach so much that I have to leave the room while he's teaching.

My intern and I have had many conversations about my concerns. He listens really well, but unfortunately, doesn't seem to take it into consideration—or maybe he doesn't know how to yet? In the back of his mind, I think he thinks it's someone else's fault.

He is content heavy. I can see it on the kids' faces—*what are we supposed to do with all of this?* He still doesn't seem to get the importance of communication and classroom atmosphere. “Knowledge is king,” seems to be his motto—did the university teach him to think like that?

The students keep trying to let him know, and they keep trying to let *me* know. Well, we'll get there; *he'll* get there—he *has* to get there. But what do I do if he doesn't?

I spotted her right away. As soon as she left the office, I could tell that she was headed towards us. She introduces herself to me and I invite her into the class. We enter to the scene of a few students asking my intern questions. He looks frazzled already. For some reason, this gets me really nervous. Upon seeing us enter, he shushes the students and motions them to sit down. Looking defeated, they return to their seats.

I look at the field instructor who already appears to have the gears turning in her brain. Part of me feels a sense of relief—surely she's seeing what I see? But as I watch *her* more, I for some reason start to feel some pity and genuine concern for *him*. He's not a bad guy . . . he's just young and inexperienced. Hasn't learned how hard this job is yet.

Their handshake's fumbled and his half smile exemplifies the nerves are starting to take over. They have a short conversation and he points to a seat where she can observe from.

I take a seat next to her and proceed to greet students that come to say hello. When the bell rings and everyone takes their seats, she leans toward me and says, “maybe you want to observe from your desk?” I stare incredulously at her. Maybe I'm blocking her view? Does she want me to see the classroom from another angle? I always save this desk for myself, even when *I'm* teaching—why would today be any different?

“Sure thing,” I answer. As I make my way across the room, I feel somewhat scolded. Her tone was respectful, even pleasant. Yet I sit down ready to observe with a growing sense of foolishness and embarrassment.

“Now who's being observed?”

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> At Michigan State University, student teachers are called “interns” and cooperating teachers are called “mentors.” We will adopt this language throughout the article.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that we should not draw inspiration from the exceptions to this rule, reaching back to Dewey's lab school (Tanner, 1997), through the development of laboratory



schools on campuses across the country, to the Professional Development Schools developed over the past two decades (Bullough, Kauchak, Crow, Hobbs, & Stokes, 1997; Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Chase & Merryfield, 1998; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Dixon & Ishler, 1992; Levine, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> And not only field instructors, who are particular example we wish to focus on in this paper, but university course instructors and program administrators as well.

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