Exploring Wobble
Through Collaborative Dialogue
to Reconcile Theory and Practice

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Abstract

This study investigated a framework for supporting English teacher candidates' efforts to reconcile theory and practice in classrooms that are subject to the tensions and challenges presented by contemporary, standardized education reforms that often ignore students' diverse cultural contexts, needs, and interests. Using the transcripts of seminar meetings in which teacher candidates engaged in structured, collaborative discussions focused on solving problems encountered during student teaching, this study used a dialogic, sociocultural perspective to consider how teacher educators can support teacher candidates as they make the transition from student to teacher. Data from a longitudinal qualitative study were used to examine the utility of problem-posing seminars as tools that can help English teacher candidates embrace the tension they encounter as competing ideologies collide during student teaching. In particular, participants' efforts to enact the

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tenets of dialogic approaches to teaching studied during university coursework were explored against the backdrop of contemporary, standardized curricula and classroom settings. Findings suggest that making collaborative problem-solving activities a key facet of English teacher education creates opportunities for teacher candidates to reconcile competing ideologies. This article provides a rationale and a structure for making inquiry, collaboration, and dialogue key components of teacher education programs.

Introduction

Supporting teacher candidates (TCs) as they make the transition from student to teacher is a complex task. As Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) noted, "teacher education goes on in two distinct settings" (p. 16): the theoretical world of the university classroom and the practical world of the K–12 setting. TCs' experiences in these two distinct settings can often present contrasting views about how teachers ought to go about their work with students. These competing ideologies can place TCs under significant tension. At one pole, TCs "are often urged by university professors to teach so that their students develop dispositions leading to agency" (Smagorinsky, Jakubiak, & Moore, 2008, p. 452). At the other, their cooperating teachers often model standardized instructional practices aligned with the scripted curricula that are increasingly prevalent in contemporary classrooms (Au, 2011; Dunn, 2015; Goldstein, 2014). These curricula and instructional practices tend to eschew students' unique interests and privilege rote learning over higher order thinking and creativity (Resnick, 2017). Thus TCs often feel pressured to adopt instructional strategies that are at odds with the theories they have studied during university courses (Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2015). Instead of illuminating a spectrum of approaches to consider, these "competing ideologies function as competing centers of gravity" (Smagorinsky et al., 2015, p. 147). Tension flowing from these competing sources about what constitutes effective teaching can lead to frustration and confusion on the part of TCs, who are unsure how to proceed given such contradictory frameworks.

It is problematic for teacher educators to expect novice teachers to navigate conflicting ideologies in this new territory on their own; instead, teacher education should aim to help TCs learn to "critique and understand the inevitable contradictions they find in school settings" (Smagorinsky et al., 2008, p. 453). Such critique and understanding can be facilitated by bringing divergent perspectives into dialogue with one another. Grounded in a dialogic perspective, this study builds on Meyer and Sawyer's (2006) inquiry-oriented seminars and Smagorinsky et al.'s (2015) notion of competing centers of gravity to examine how teacher educators might mediate the tension TCs encounter during student teaching. Through a series of weekly seminars during student teaching designed to help TCs navigate the challenges of reconciling competing ideologies, we investigated the problems TCs encountered as they attempted to employ the pedagogical stances they developed

during university coursework in their student teaching classrooms. In this article, we discuss the ways collaborative dialogue in a student teaching seminar can support TCs' efforts to reconcile theory and practice.

University teacher preparation programs are key sources of learning for novice teachers. However, researchers (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Barnes & Smagorinsky, 2016; Meyer & Sawyer, 2006; Smagorinsky et al., 2008) have noted that TCs often have great difficulty in applying their theoretical knowledge when they enter classrooms in the new role of the novice teacher. Cooperating teachers, who are also key sources of knowledge for TCs, provide concrete models and mentor TCs daily during student teaching. Teachers, though, are subject to a litany of "restrictions, rules, and guidelines" (Dierking & Fox, 2012, p. 129) that can complicate the process of supporting TCs' efforts to apply theory to practice. The sociocultural context of contemporary schools has created an environment that curtails teacher agency through an increase in scripted curricula (Dunn, 2015; Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014: Stewart & McClure, 2013) and a focus on high-stakes testing (Dunn, Deroo, & VanDerHeide, 2017; Stewart, 2018). Thus the realities cooperating teachers face in their classrooms can place the practices they model for TCs in direct opposition to the approaches for which teacher educators advocate in their courses.

The tension between these two sources of knowledge can be seen as English education programs draw on research demonstrating "the importance of whole-class discussions for literacy learning" (Sherry, 2014, p. 141) to present discussion-based approaches to teaching (e.g., Socratic seminars, literature circles) as key elements of *principled practice* (Applebee, 1986). However, Nystrand's (2006) report on the role of discourse in the English classroom pointed to the persistence of "recitation as the method of choice for promoting textbook recall" (p. 394). Nystrand's findings still ring true today, as the often-scripted curricula foisted on teachers (Stewart, 2012) and ties between standardized testing data and teacher performance (Rush & Scherff, 2015) can cause teachers to feel compelled to focus instructional time on recitation and other rote learning activities instead of class discussions (Stewart, 2018). Thus cooperating teachers are often modeling practices that contradict what TCs are learning in their university coursework. As a result, many new teachers "discredit their university classes as being theory-laden and impractical and claim that their true learning began in student teaching" (Meyer & Sawyer, 2006, p. 48). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) called this troubling and persistent problem in teacher education the *two-worlds pitfall*.

This pitfall creates significant tension between teacher preparation programs that encourage TCs to teach in ways that connect with their students' cultures, interests, and personal goals and the practices modeled by cooperating teachers that can cause TCs to question the value of the philosophies of teaching they developed in their programs. In their transition from student to teacher, TCs must reconcile two significant centers of gravity: (a) university professors who value liberatory

pedagogical stances designed to lead students toward their own interests and aspirations and (b) *standardized* schools, curricula, and cooperating teacher practices that "suggest, and often reinforce through uniform assessments and scripted lesson plans, that students should all turn out more or less the same" (Smagorinsky et al., 2008, p. 453). These competing voices can cause TCs to feel compelled to abandon the student-centered theories they have studied in their university programs in favor of enacting the highly regimented curricula (Stewart, 2018) that are often seen as *the* answer to purported crises in education (Stewart & Boggs, 2016). Teacher educators must find ways to mediate this tension.

Reconciling Competing Centers of Gravity

Bakhtin's (1981) theory of language, particularly the concept that language is always subject to both centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (disunifying—potentially stratifying) forces, forms the foundation of our work. From this perspective, every "utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) as meaning is made through dialogue. Thus "the word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object" (p. 279). Instead of seeing competing ideologies as entities that exist in a vacuum, this perspective suggests that attention ought to be paid to the ways in which alternative viewpoints respond to and mutually shape one another. The words one uses to argue for the value of one particular approach to teaching exist in a "dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Exploring those environments creates opportunities for individuals to see how competing ideologies mutually shape one another, instead of dismissing them as competing viewpoints that cannot inform a dialogue or a particular practice.

A dialogical Bakhtinian approach provides a framework for considering how competing centers of gravity can inform one another to mediate the unhealthy tension that exists when TCs view competing ideologies as authoritative discourses that demand "unconditional allegiance" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343). The centripetal (unifying) forces of language are embodied by authoritative discourse, which "enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (p. 343). The centrifugal (disunifying) forces of language fuel a "struggle constantly being waged to overcome the official line with its tendency to distance itself from the zone of contact, a struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority" (p. 345). Viewing competing ideologies from a dialogical perspective harnesses the power of the centrifugal forces of language to bring each perspective into a contact zone where "thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting, and discriminating way" (p. 345). In this zone, each perspective becomes an internally persuasive discourse, which has an unfinished

quality that allows us to "take it into new contexts, attach it to new material, put it in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it" (p. 346). This perspective creates a foundation for examining ways in which teacher educators might help TCs view the competing centers of gravity pulling them in different directions as forces that can be brought into dialogue rather than as perspectives that must be affirmed or rejected part and parcel.

When teacher educators create structures that bring competing ideologies into dialogue with one another and consider the ways in which understanding and response condition one another (Bakhtin, 1981), they can support TCs and help them find ways to reconcile competing centers of gravity. Addressing tension between theory and practice is, indeed, vital for helping TCs see themselves as competent and capable of enacting their philosophies of teaching despite challenges standardized school settings present. Therefore we believe it is important to explore ways in which elements of English education programs can be structured to mediate the frustration TCs encounter during student teaching by bringing centers of gravity into dialogue with one another. To better understand how teacher education programs can support the development of TCs' abilities to apply theory to practice and reconcile competing ideologies, this study engaged participants in discussions of the challenges they encountered when teaching from a dialogic stance in their student teaching placements. The following research questions guided our inquiry:

> What kinds of problems do TCs encounter when they seek to enact the tenets of dialogic pedagogy in standards-era student teaching internships?

> In what ways do TCs support one another when they have the opportunity to discuss the challenges they are encountering?

Dialogue and Embracing Tension Through Wobble

The framework of dialogic pedagogy (Fecho, 2011a; Lensmire, 2000; Nystrand, 2006; Stewart, 2010) provides a structure for bringing school-based content into dialogue with students' lives. We view working from a dialogical stance as taking an "approach to teaching that values questioning, examines context, explores multiple perspectives, challenges hierarchical structures, and views learning as a generative act" (Stewart, 2019, p. 213). To work from such a stance, however, one must be willing to engage in dialogue with one's own practice and be open to questions with no easy answers—questions that require us to see our practice "as being forever in flux and under constant revision" (Fecho, 2011a, p. 1). Being open to the idea of embarking on an unending journey can be overwhelming—even for a confident, experienced teacher. Novice teachers, who are learning to navigate the "unpredictable and contradictory world of the classroom" (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014, p. 48), are in particular need of support as they engage in dialogue with their own practice. In the program where this study was conducted, dialogic classroom

designs, grounded in student-centered pedagogy, are positioned as a key means of building student engagement and achievement (Fecho, 2011b; Stewart, 2010). However, many of the TCs with whom we have worked in our program have had difficulty enacting such a stance during student teaching (Stewart, 2018).

Many TCs are frustrated when they find that the concepts they have studied in their university programs are not easy to put into practice. Internal and external expectations for success create moments of dissonance when TCs can lose confidence in their philosophies of teaching when a lesson does not produce the desired results or align with a cooperating teacher's expectations. Like Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2016), we argue that it is important to take a generative view of these moments of struggle—or moments of *wobble* (Fecho, 2011a)—and see them as opportunities for growth rather than as failures. Fecho has argued that these kinds of moments in the classroom allow us to view "with a questioning eye" (p. 55) that which has been commonplace. Thus wobble moments can be seen as opportunities to learn from the tension that occurs when competing ideologies clash. Explicit, focused reflection on and conversation about wobble moments create opportunities for TCs to engage in dialogue with their practice. Such dialogue can further support TCs' ability to build bridges between theory and practice when guided by teacher educators to support one another in efforts to apply concepts studied during coursework and previous experiences as students to novel situations in their placement classrooms.

Helping TCs identify and learn from the sources of knowledge that shape their pedagogical orientations is a crucial role for teacher educators. As Barnes and Smagorinsky (2016) argued, "teacher education programs would benefit from incorporating multiple opportunities for TCs to reflect on their previous school experiences in light of their teacher education coursework and field-based experiences" (p. 16). Such reflection space would "complement the diverse range of experiences that are informing their conceptions of how to teach" (p. 16) and give TCs not only their own experiences to grapple with but those of other new teachers as well. Structured, collaborative dialogue among TCs offers a supplement to standard supervision practices in teacher education programs, which Smagorinsky et al. (2008) noted "is not the best setting in which to resolve conflicts over whose values produce effective teaching" (p. 453). Focused dialogue outside of supervision meetings between a TC, a cooperating teacher, and a university supervisor creates space and time for discussion of theory and practice outside of the context of providing feedback on a lesson observed by mentors whose ideologies might conflict. Scaffolded dialogue that explores the challenges that *TCs* see as sources of tension—or things that make *them* wobble—frames these tensions as opportunities to learn from struggle together rather than as deficits to be corrected. Such dialogue represents a means of expanding the ways teacher educators can support novice teachers as they seek pathways to success and reconcile theory and practice.

Dialogue, Practice, and Collaborative Problem-Posing

Questioning closely held beliefs is a key step in managing the tension created by competing centers of gravity. Inquiry brings the centripetal and centrifugal forces that shape one's worldview into dialogue with one another and has the potential to keep a single perspective from functioning as an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) that seeks to foreclose on the generation of new meaning. Meyer and Sawyer's (2006) work with inquiry-based student teaching seminars offered teacher educators a potential solution to the tricky footwork of reconciling theory and practice by providing TCs with opportunities "to locate their own pedagogical and ideological commitments within multiple institutions and power structures" (p. 67). Inquiry-based seminars create opportunities for TCs and teacher educators to question, understand, and critique impediments to TCs' efforts to apply in classroom settings the theories learned during university coursework.

To bring the competing centers of gravity TCs experience into dialogue with one another, we explored how inquiry-based problem-posing seminars function as developmental spaces for TCs and as opportunities for teacher educators to index and learn from challenges TCs encounter as they transition from teacher candidate to teacher. With a theoretical perspective linking dialogue, collaboration, and learning, we examined how problem-posing seminars designed to create opportunities for TCs to engage in scaffolded collaboration might enable them to develop the ability to navigate the challenges novice teachers often face in the classroom. Specifically, we examined the content and sources of the advice TCs proffered to one another during these seminars to better understand how teacher education programs might create conditions for TCs to work through the difficulties they encounter when their philosophical orientations come into conflict with the dominant instructional philosophies and practices in their placement schools.

The Student Teaching Semester as Seminar

Creating systematic opportunities for TCs to engage in collaborative discussion about the challenges they encounter while learning to teach helps novice teachers feel empowered and knowledgeable about the issues they are facing or may face in the classroom. Positioning these moments of wobble as developmental, instead of problematic, allows teacher educators and TCs to mediate the complicating factors in the transition from student to teacher. Doing so in a structured, collaborative environment creates a mechanism for bringing competing ideologies together in a productive dialogue that connects with a key concept of principled practice: "the *why* of teaching" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 20, emphasis original). When dialogue focuses on why "teaching methods work in particular ways in particular settings" (p. 20), TCs have opportunities to consider both the affordances and constraints offered by a variety of approaches.

Focusing on the challenges TCs encounter in particular contexts is a key means

of bringing theory and practice into dialogue. McKernan and Powers (2000) provided details about a networking seminar format they successfully implemented with student teachers in which the students presented their classroom concerns in an organized and methodical fashion during their weekly meeting and all members of the cohort worked together to solve the presented problems. In this format, university professors took on the role of facilitator rather than instructor, and the group formed a "community of discourse" (p. 65) that worked through their own and their colleagues' issues in the classroom. While McKernan and Powers cautioned that such a course "does not guarantee" (p. 68) that the problem being presented will be resolved, they argued that engaging in such a process may lead to "collective growth" (p. 68) on the part of TCs as they become empowered to see themselves as legitimate members of the teaching community. McKernan and Powers asserted that in such an environment, "learning is the result of an experiment in the classroom where students solve problems and learn how to think" (p. 68). Our study builds on such approaches to support the development of TCs' abilities to engage in dialogue with their own practice and develop an increased level of comfort with wobble moments while they navigate the tension that arises when theory and school contexts seem at odds.

Context and Methods

This longitudinal study included two cohorts of TCs who had taken their teaching methods courses with Trevor Stewart and been supervised in their field placements by Jim Hill and Pamela Lindstrom. Data for this study were generated when participants in Cohort 1 ($n = 7$) and Cohort 2 ($n = 5$) were in the final semester of a 5-year postbaccalaureate English education master's program at a land-grant university in the southeastern United States. This program was guided by an intentional focus on the concept of enacting a dialogic pedagogy, which encouraged participants to think about how instructional materials can be created that will invite students to bring their own cultural contexts to bear on the texts they study and create (Stewart, 2010). A key component of this approach to teaching and learning is the notion that possibilities for student engagement increase when there is a keen focus on what students bring to the classroom (Nystrand, 1997). This perspective recognizes that both teachers and students must be open to exploring the sensitive issues students bring to the classroom and that great care must be taken to frame learning as something that occurs *in process*.

From the opening methods course, participants began learning to construct conceptual units (Smagorinsky, 2008) to support efforts to bring content into dialogue with students' lives (Fecho, 2011a). In addition to two field placements, participants took a series of five English methods courses that shared common *core concepts*. Across these courses, TCs developed instructional activities, lesson plans, and unit plans designed to make learning a process of discovery through connec-

tions to personal cultural contexts. Instead of preparing TCs to teach in ways that capitulated to standardization and test preparation (e.g., teaching grammar out of context through a packet of prescribed worksheets), the methods courses focused on dialogic instructional design that merges content with experience. For example, TCs were encouraged to use thematic and conceptual connections within writing instruction to merge grammar instruction and elements of composition with students' personal experiences. These kinds of writing activities are in tension with standardized (i.e., teacher centered; high-stakes testing driven) instructional practices that favor teaching grammar out of context and developing decontextualized five-paragraph essays in preparation for high-stakes writing tests. Figure 1 outlines the core concepts that informed the learning activities throughout this course sequence.

TCs learned about each of these concepts through reading texts written by leading scholars whose work focuses on effective theoretical and practical approaches to teaching English (e.g., Fecho, 2011a; Smagorinsky, 2008). Reading and discussing these texts with peers, professors and doctoral students who were working as teaching assistants in the program, combined with guidance from cooperating teachers during field placements, functioned as key knowledge sources for the participants. Classroom dialogue, developing instructional materials, receiving

Figure 1
Core Concepts and Descriptions

	Core Concept: *Principles of dialogic pedagogy in practice*
Description	Effective planning and instruction brings content into dialogue with students' lives; Essential Questions/Binding Themes make learning a process of discovery
	Core Concept: *Navigating constraints of standards-era reforms*
Description	Considering approaches to instructional design and implementation that transcend standardization and support creativity
	Core Concept: *Writing as meaning making*
Description	Viewing writing as a tool for processing experience and a means of making connections between curricular goals and life in and out of school
	Core Concept: *Teaching as collaborative process*
Description	Learning to teach as a process that involves collaboration with others and attention to school and classroom cultures where teaching is something done with, not to, students

feedback on those plans, and other course assignments (e.g., a statement of teaching philosophy) provided a variety of learning contexts for the students to make meaning from and apply the core concepts across the program.

Data Generation and Sources

Data for this study were generated as participants ($N = 12$) engaged in problem-posing seminars as the central focus of course meetings spread across each cohort's student teaching semester. These seminars provided participants with opportunities to work together to address problems they were encountering in their placement classrooms. Each seminar was audio-recorded, and one member of the research team took field notes. Members of the research team transcribed each seminar and recorded memos, which made notes of key concepts that stood out in the transcripts from each meeting. In each seminar, one participant brought a problem to the group for consideration using a standard protocol (see the appendix) to outline the particular challenge that he or she had encountered while attempting to teach from a dialogic stance. After the presenter had described the problem and shared one or more artifacts that helped further illustrate the challenge he or she had encountered, the group had 5 minutes to ask clarifying questions. Following this question-and-answer period, the rest of the participants discussed the posed problem and worked together to generate potential solutions to the challenge. The seminar leader who had posed the problem took notes during this discussion so that he or she could put suggestions into practice during the remainder of the student teaching semester.

Data Analysis

Building on the processes established for a previous report from this study (Stewart, 2018), data analysis began with each member of the research team reviewing the transcripts individually and making note of salient trends and themes in the data. These thematic categories were generated to index the tension created by TCs' efforts to enact the core concepts (see Figure 1) studied during the program and the sources of the advice proffered to navigate that tension (e.g., theory or an observed practice). The team then met to discuss themes and develop shared language through which we organized the data into broad, thematic categories for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005). Then, as a team, we employed these thematic categories to index and categorize the kinds of problems posed and advice being proffered while also ascertaining the origins of that advice. We created two overarching dimensions to organize the data for further analysis. Table 1 provides a description of the criteria we used to assign these codes, which enabled us to index the ways the TCs were drawing upon their knowledge base to support one another and reconcile theory and practice. Our focus on the origins of the proffered advice supported our efforts to index potential tension between the pedagogical theories the participants studied (core concepts) and the practices they observed teachers enacting in the classroom.

The first dimension, which we labeled *origin*, focused on what we saw as the sources of the advice being offered: *theory/observation* or *practice*. This dimension provided a means of ascertaining the core concept and learning contexts of the advice proffered. The second dimension accounted for the domain or focus of advice. This second dimension originally included additional domains (e.g., assessment, instructional design); however, in alignment with our beliefs about dialogic practice, we collapsed those domains into two categories: *relationships/culture* and *engagement/motivation*. These two domains better represented the stance that all elements of instructional design, including assessment, flow from the tenets of dialogic pedagogy.

Using these two coding dimensions, the data were organized into coding tables that supported our efforts to index connections between the advice participants offered one another during the seminars and the core concepts (figure 1) participants studied throughout the program. mapping the data onto the core concepts was a key step in our investigation of the ways TCs can support one another when they have opportunities to discuss the challenges they encounter during student teaching. Given our focus on bringing competing centers of gravity into dialogue with one another, it was particularly important to attend to the ways in which core concepts from the program were informing the advice being offered in discussions of the why and how of teacher practice in standardized classrooms. This data analysis step created a finer grain of magnification, which enabled us to examine the discussion

Table 1
Coding Categories and Criteria

Dimensions	*Criteria: Advice*
Origin of advice	
Theory/observed	Connections made to course readings, class discussions, or something the participant observed/learned as a student; absence of a clear indication that advice flows from explicitly from experience
Practice	Connections made to experience teaching/enacting the role of the teacher
Domains within advice related to teacher practice	What is the focus of the advice? What kind of advice are they giving?
Relationships/culture	Aspects of teacher practice related to creating a classroom culture that was conducive to learning and/or related to relationships between students and teachers, among students, and TC/cooperating teacher relationships
Engagement/motivation	Aspects of teacher practice related specifically to interest and relevance in the contexts of engagement and motivation

of these challenges or wobble moments in the context of TCs' efforts to critique, understand, and mediate contradictions between theory and practice.

From the advice on teacher practice that pertained to engagement/motivation and relationships/culture, we marked the percentage of the program's core concepts that the TCs appeared to have been drawing on to form their advice within each domain. This analysis step was designed to examine the ways the participants were bringing competing centers of gravity into dialogue in these sessions by making connections to core theoretical concepts as they generated potential solutions to the challenges their peers were experiencing in their practice. Table 2 illustrates these connections. A small percentage of the data, though, did not map onto core concepts from the program. In these instances, we used the code "exogenous" to track other concepts being drawn on to inform the advice offered.

Viewing the problems posed and the advice proffered against the backdrop of the core concepts focused our analysis on how the participants supported each other in their efforts to enact dialogic practices in standardized school settings. This focus allowed us to pause and consider ways in which ideas or perspectives become meaningful "in response and address to an alternative idea or value" (Matusov & Lemke, 2015, p. 9). Thus our analysis indexes the ways in which these seminars brought competing discourses into dialogue to support participants' abilities to remove these discourses from "an isolated and static condition" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345) and wrest new meaning from them.

The following excerpt from the data provides an example of our analysis procedures. In the second problem-posing seminar of the 2016–2017 cohort, Morgan (all names are pseudonyms) sought help from her peers concerning the issues of participation and personal connections with content, both of which she perceived to be lacking in her placement. Samantha addressed one of the

Table 2
Percentage of Core Concepts Identified in Domains of Advice Offered

Core concept	Percentage
Relationships/culture	
Principles of dialogic pedagogy in practice	64.94
Navigating constraints of standards-era reforms	5.19
Writing as meaning making	3.9
Teaching as collaborative process	24.03
Exogenous	1.95
Engagement/motivation	
Principles of dialogic pedagogy in practice	84.96
Navigating constraints of standards-era reforms	0.88
Writing as meaning making	7.08
Teaching as collaborative process	3.54
Exogenous	3.54

framing questions from Morgan's problem-posing protocol with the following advice:

> Another question that you had was "What methods might be useful to appropriately guide these students to the realization that there is a bigger world around them than parties and hunting?" I know you didn't mean to say their worlds don't matter, but embrace partying and hunting. . . . So, hunting, that's a big—you're talking about morals and ethics here. Hunting is ethical.

Samantha suggested that Morgan's point of view might be problematic because she appeared to have dismissed the personal importance that so many of her students placed on hunting. She pushed Morgan to consider not what she personally viewed as important but what the students thought was important. She posited that this approach might solve both of the issues present in Morgan's classroom. We applied the engagement/motivation code to Samantha's response because this advice pertained to harnessing students' interests to motivate them to engage in class discussion, a central issue to the problem Morgan was experiencing in her placement. From the lens of core concepts emphasized in their program, Samantha suggested creating opportunities for the texts of students' lives to transact with the texts of the classroom to foster engagement in instruction, a principle of dialogic pedagogy.

Findings

These problem-posing seminars brought into focus the wobble moments the participants encountered during student teaching, which provided a space and structure for the participants to work together to reconcile the competing centers of gravity that were pulling them in opposing directions. Across the data set, we saw instances of the core concepts of the program grinding against the instructional practices that were the norm in the participants' student teaching placements. In this section, we draw on the data to illustrate the ways that these seminars functioned as a tool that brought competing ideologies into dialogue. Through this dialogue, competing concepts became discourses that informed one another, instead of functioning as fully formed, static, authoritative discourses that can carry only a single meaning that must be affirmed or rejected (Bakhtin, 1981).

Participants' struggles with enacting instructional practice that creates a classroom culture in which students are engaged with the material, find it relevant, or are making meaning for themselves were evident across the data set. In each of the problems the participants posed, it was clear that having difficulty reconciling their efforts to teach from a dialogic perspective with the instructional practices their cooperating teachers and school curricula valued. However, despite the contradictions between theory and practice the participants encountered, the data indicate that the participants drew on core concepts from the program as they worked together to offer solutions that would enable them to build bridges between dialogic practice

and standardized classrooms—thus making progress toward reconciling theory and practice.

Classroom Culture and Relationships, Including Teacher Persona

The problems posed and elements of advice proffered by the participants to which we applied the relationships/culture code indexed the tension between core concepts from the program and the practices occurring within the placement classrooms. Participants' challenges in this coding category were directly linked to the problems related to enacting instructional practices that created a classroom culture conducive to exploring ideas and building the collaborative relationships that facilitated those explorations. When dialogue between the content and students' lives and/or a meaningful relationship between the teacher and the students was not prevalent or was omitted altogether, the participants struggled to create a classroom culture that was conducive to learning. The ways these seminars supported the participants' abilities to mediate this kind of tension were evident in the discussion during Teresa's problem-posing session.

Teresa was struggling to create an engaging classroom culture in a 10th-grade Honors English class in her student teaching placement. Teresa's cooperating teacher required her to focus the bulk of her instruction on timed writing tasks geared toward preparation for the state writing test. Her cooperating teacher asked students to complete a packet of work over the course of the semester that Teresa perceived as representing rigor through quantity rather than depth of thought. Teresa reported that the result of the packet's introduction into the classroom was a heightened environment of stress to the point of paralysis due to students' concerns over their grades. Her questions for the cohort during her problem-posing seminar focused on how she could teach in ways that she viewed as productive inside the paradigm required by her cooperating teacher. Teresa asked the group for suggestions that she could implement to help students to see the tasks themselves as meaningful rather than just as progress toward a class grade. The most pressing instance at the time of the seminar was a timed writing practice that Teresa had been required to implement and which the cooperating teacher had claimed she would "grade lightly," although the highest grade her cooperating teacher gave any of the papers was a 75.

As the participants considered Teresa's problem, the discussion turned toward emphasizing work as "living documents," where students are asked to look at the feedback and are encouraged to revise their work as part of the learning process. Carrie situated her advice in the context of the reality of Teresa's classroom. The pressure to prepare students for the writing test that Teresa's cooperating teacher was feeling were real, and abandoning these test-preparation packets in favor of more individualized writing prompts was not a viable option. In an effort to find common ground, she encouraged Teresa to allow the students to revise their timed writing essays based on the feedback they received, thus allowing papers to be

seen as a developmental tool. She suggested that Teresa tell the students to use the instructor's feedback to "rewrite it the way you would now that you've seen this so we can see that you're growing from this." Putting herself in the position of one of Teresa's students, Carrie said,

> I feel like if a teacher is handing me a grade, and it was a timed thing where I was stressed out about it, and they just told me that was my grade and I couldn't do anything about it, I wouldn't look at it again. I would throw it away.

Carrie continued by acknowledging the stress that students are likely to encounter despite the efforts Teresa might make to direct the students' focus away from grades and onto the feedback she might offer them. She sought to frame this stress in a positive way, as she said that if a student is "going to be distraught by this, at least let it be productive."

Carrie's advice was reflective of the program's emphasis on teaching as a collaborative process; through iterations of composition and feedback, the students and teacher work together for learning to occur. Carrie acknowledged the difficulty that standardized testing presents in the form of increased pressure to perform, yet she suggested an avenue by which Teresa could enact a core concept from the program within the constraints presented by the cooperating teacher's classroom culture, thereby providing meaning to the writing assignment. We viewed this advice as a push to modify the relationship between the students and the TC, moving Teresa from the role of test administrator to participant in the development of the students' writing. Most importantly, we see Carrie's effort to find common ground between Teresa's desire to make the essays meaningful to students and the reality of the pressure teachers feel to prepare students for standardized tests as an example of the way the dialogue in these sessions created an opportunity for the participants to bring competing centers of gravity into dialogue, wrest new meaning from them, and develop solutions to instructional dilemmas that are informed by both perspectives.

In her problem-posing session, Nancy found similar difficulty in creating a culture in the classroom that balanced the standardized instruction to which students were accustomed with a dialogic approach to learning. Nancy taught in a school with "block scheduling" (90-minute class periods) on an alternating basis: A day and B day. She was finding that her B-day classes were participating in activities centered around discussion, and she was confident that the students in her placement were making meaning from *Siddhartha*, a core text of her unit. Nancy's key problem was that her A-day classes, while excelling in reading and taking quizzes on the content, were not nearly so successful with in-class dialogue. These discussions were notably silent or stilted. Nancy brought the question of how to better establish a classroom community to seminar, hoping to improve both class participation in classroom discussions and the students' sense that their contributions were valued. The discussion in seminar turned to what Nancy could do in these classes to validate the contributions that students made in class. Lisa offered advice that she had

used for this purpose in her placement when she was working to create a classroom culture built upon the idea that the students have important things to contribute to the dialogue. Lisa's advice was to split the students into three groups and give each group questions to discuss while she circulated the class and encouraged individual students:

> I can spend time in each group . . . and then I can like affirm on the spot, and be like, "That's an amazing point, David. I love that you brought that up. Does everyone get why that's such a great point?" And they like nod and shake, and I make them write notes. I'll be like, "Everyone put that down on their paper." And so, they'll do that, and David walks away thinking like, "Oh, man, I definitely did something."

Lisa suggested using small groups to provide space for cooperative learning, where each student can feel valued. Lisa's advice drew on the core concept of teaching as collaborative process. She described how she made the comment that David had a good point and encouraged other students to write it down as well. She highlighted the meaning the student had made, acknowledging to the students in the group that she is not the sole arbiter of meaning in the classroom. In this way, Lisa enacted the idea that teaching is done with, not to, students. This discussion points to the ways these seminars provide opportunities for participants to consider the problems they encounter, engage in dialogue with the principles informing their practice, and consider how and why particular approaches can be effective in particular situations.

Increasing Engagement Through Interest, Relevance, and Personal Connections

The data points to which we applied the engagement/motivation code indexed the participants' efforts to address aspects of teacher practice related to engaging and motivating students through interest and personal relevance. Returning to the example used earlier to explicate our analysis processes, Morgan framed her problem as twofold: Her students, whom the cohort termed "packet kids," were accustomed to working through packets of work, and they lacked interest in her instruction. Drawing on the core concept of principles of dialogic pedagogy in practice, Samantha cautioned Morgan about trivializing student interests and urged her to use those interests to engage the students in the class. Samantha's advice to Morgan was indicative that Samantha viewed "class, school, and community activities as interconnected dialogues that build on one another" (Fecho, Falter, & Hong, 2016, p. 10). Samantha's call for Morgan to embrace student interests, no matter her own bias, was a push to utilize the tension between the two dialogues and make space for the texts of students' lives alongside standardized curriculum.

In her own problem-posing seminar, Samantha raised the issue of student engagement in writing instruction in her ninth-grade "standard" English class. Samantha noted that the students were energetic and enjoyed discussion but that the talk often strayed from her planned instructional focus and did not translate into productive writing. When we looked at how Samantha framed her cooperating teacher's response to the

issue, we interpreted Samantha's perception of her cooperating teacher's approach to be less concerned with Samantha's desire to engage the students in writing by making the writing personally meaningful and more concerned with making sure students answered the writing prompt, maintaining a standard of behavior (quiet, compliant students) consistent among the classes. Samantha characterized her cooperating teacher's advice as a "need to crack down on behavior more" rather than any specific input on modifications to the writing activity.

During Samantha's seminar, the dialogue among the participants focused on embracing the energetic nature of the class in question and the success found in collaborative work with students. We saw the participants working from the core concept of principles of dialogic pedagogy in practice as they offered suggestions on how to utilize prompts and varying advice about what constituted an effective prompt. The participants framed the problem as less of a behavior management issue and more about how to best use the characteristics and interests of this particular class to engage students in writing. Samantha's struggle to find ways to use daily writing prompts to help students make personal connections and engage them creatively in their writing resonated with the participants.

Rachel noted that her students regularly asked, "Why are we doing this? What does it matter to me?" Morgan had faced similar questions in her own classes. She discussed her students' responses to a unit she had been teaching that used "The American Dream" as a binding theme. While this unit was explicitly designed to bring content into dialogue with students' lives through writing, her students—much like Rachel's—had wondered, "Why are we talking about this? It's not important." Instead of seeing these kinds of responses as problematic behavior, the group agreed that addressing them was an important first step in engaging students. Rachel encouraged Samantha (and the rest of the participants) to "lean into [this tension] and take the time to answer that question." Rachel pointed out that it is important to find out what individual students' goals are and to "explain all the ways that English will benefit [them] for that career." The group agreed that creating assignments that respond to students' goals and setting expectations for students on a personal basis were means by which Samantha could accomplish her goal of promoting learning and engagement.

The participants, however, were savvy enough already to recognize that this approach alone would not solve the challenge Samantha brought into focus. One participant did offer advice more focused on simply shutting down any kind of talk and using punishments (e.g., lunch detention) to get students on-task. However, she allowed that she was "also struggling with [engagement] right now," despite her efforts to eliminate off-task behavior through punishments. Their discussion addressed the reality that dialogic approaches to instruction require teachers to reach out to students and build relationships with them through collaboration and individual conversation. Morgan drew upon the core concept of teaching as collaborative process as she shared her own experience of talking with a particularly

unengaged student who had regularly been off-task during periods of instruction focused on grammar. Not surprisingly, his writing often had significant mechanical problems. Instead of simply viewing this as an issue to be addressed on a disciplinary level, Morgan described how she responded to this student's struggles by taking the opportunity to talk with him individually and help him make the connection between grammar and writing. She noted that meeting with students outside of class to discuss ways to improve their writing was a practice that her cooperating teacher had modeled for her with great success:

> Every day she has a meeting with a kid after school, and it's like, "What do you want to do? How can we get you there? And this is why you need to pay attention in class." It's very intensive, spending a lot of time extra with the kids, but it really does help.

While conferencing with this particular student, Morgan pointed out that practice with grammar will help him avoid feeling like he is "getting caught up with [his] words" when he is writing. Thus we see Morgan building a relationship with a student and working to help him see that grammar can help him communicate with others and make his voice heard. Morgan's advice highlights the importance of building relationships with students by meeting with them individually, helping them establish their own goals, and articulating how the content can help them achieve those goals.

The data points we tracked using the engagement/motivation code represented an array of ways in which standardized curricula and approaches to instruction can create tension for teachers who are seeking to enact dialogic approaches to instruction. The dialogue in the problem-posing seminars allowed the participants, in Rachel's words, to "lean into" this tension. Instead of shying away from it or feeling compelled to abandon the theories that were guiding them, the participants were able to draw upon the core concepts of the program and bring them into dialogue with the competing ideologies, curricula, and practices in their placement classrooms. This dialogue created a mechanism for understanding. Bakhtin (1981) argued that "understanding comes to fruition only in response" (p. 282). Through these seminars, understanding and response informed one another to allow the participants to make new meaning and reconcile the centers of gravity that were causing them to feel the disconcerting sensation of wobble.

Implications

We are encouraged by the trends in the data that index the ways that the participants responded to the challenges they encountered as they sought to teach from a dialogic stance in standardized classrooms. Across the data set, we saw the participants working together to bring theory into dialogue with practice and mediate the tension that occurred as they were working in classrooms where they

felt compelled to prepare students to succeed on standardized tests despite the TCs' pedagogical commitment to allowing students' cultural contexts to guide their instruction. Drawing upon the core concepts from the program *and* the often-conflicting practices favored by cooperating teachers, the participants generated solutions to challenges that made them wobble. Thus the problem-posing seminars created a scaffolded, developmental space for the participants to examine the challenges they encountered and generate pathways to success by bringing into dialogue the competing centers of gravity exerting tension on them.

As the participants drew upon the *Core Concepts* from the program and the practices they observed in classrooms, they were able to offer each other potential solutions to the challenges they encountered during student teaching. The experiences of the participants in this study illustrate the value of these seminars as a first step in answering Smagorinsky et al.'s (2015) call for activities that enable teacher educators to relate campus-based ideals to concrete activity in the K–12 classroom. Problem-posing seminars that operationalize a Bakhtinian dialogic approach to embracing the tension that occurs when the two worlds of university programs and student teaching placements collide can function as a means for acknowledging the "different centers of gravity affecting teachers" (Smagorinsky et al., 2015, p. 180). Bringing those centers of gravity into dialogue instead of privileging one approach to instruction over another provides a mechanism for mediating conflicting ideologies in the context of the student teaching placement.

The problem-posing protocol we employed in this study (see the appendix) is but one approach to creating a supportive, focused context for exploring tension. It could be altered in myriad ways to suit the needs of individual programs, philosophical underpinnings, or teaching contexts. As Fecho (2011a) argued, "good teaching is like good cooking, neither of which is about following recipes" (p. 4). There are many ways to enact inquiry and wrest new meaning from the ideologies and practices we encounter. Instead of attempting to prescribe a particular format, we highlight the importance of structuring seminars so they focus on learning from *both* centers of gravity. By positioning both centers of gravity as sources of knowledge that exist on a continuum, teacher education can avoid reinforcing paradigms that reify a binary between theory and practice. Drawing these centers of gravity "into the contact zone" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345) illuminates their potential to mutually shape one another. Seminars that embrace the tension that can arise between theory and practice, instead of seeking to remove tension by ceding wholly to one center of gravity or the other, create conditions for new meaning to be made through understanding and response. We encourage teacher educators to enact practices that engage TCs in dialogue that will help them explore both centers of gravity to generate practical solutions to complex challenges.

As a part of dialogic practice, our program strives to prepare TCs to acknowledge and embrace the tension they will find in their classrooms. We encourage them to ask "How can I . . ." instead of simply saying "I can't . . ." when they en-

counter an instructional directive from a cooperating teacher that countermands their own philosophies of teaching. In this way, we ask them to embrace wobble, put their beliefs into disequilibrium to form new understandings (Fecho, 2011a), and allow understanding and response to mutually shape one another (Bakhtin, 1981). Problem-posing seminars and similar activities make it possible for TCs to consider what they might learn from a divergent perspective. This approach to teacher preparation would be irresponsible without providing a mechanism for scaffolding such work. Problem-posing seminars provide such a scaffold. The data from this study suggest that our efforts to scaffold such development are effective, and we encourage teacher educators to consider ways they might include similar practices in their programs.

Making collaborative dialogue related to reconciling theory and practice an integral part of teacher preparation will lay the foundation for such dialogue to be part of a teacher's professional identity and practice. However, it would be naive to think that novice teachers will be able to continue this sort of dialogue without future support. Upon graduation, the challenges that caused TCs to wobble during student teaching will appear again with the prospect of teaching in their own classrooms in the coming year. It is this future uncertainty that concerns us the most. "When the theoretical orientation goes unaccompanied by a related set of pedagogical tools," as Smagorinsky et al. (2015) pointed out, "it is sure to fade in the immediate rush and tumble of the school day" (p. 179). The habits developed during focused, systematic participation in dialogue that seeks to reconcile theory and practice can lay the foundation for developing confidence in the ability to marry theoretical orientation with pedagogical practice across contexts. However, this foundation needs to be nurtured during the first years of teaching—and beyond. The question of how to do this has no easy answer.

Finding ways to support novice teachers as they work through the challenges they encounter will require all stakeholders to turn our gazes inward to consider how we might reimagine teacher preparation and induction. As teacher educators, we must ask how we can alter and improve our programs so that our graduates are better prepared to sustain dialogue between theory and practice. What changes might we put in place to help TCs create and sustain habits of mind that result in collaborative problem solving, instead of working in isolation? Second, as teacher advocates, we must consider ways in which we can better serve novice teachers and provide structure for them to receive continued support as they encounter the challenges of actualizing their theoretical orientations in their own classrooms. The latter will require engaging in dialogue with school leaders and policy makers to at least begin a conversation about how teacher induction might be altered to better serve novice teachers and the students in their classrooms.

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Appendix
Problem-Posing Protocol

1. Using the template, the presenter will pose his or her problem for discussion and open the dialogue by sharing the *Framing Questions* and a relevant artifact* (5–7 minutes).
*Note: If the artifact is something that can't be easily shared in document form (e.g., a conversation with a parent or student), craft a document that can summarize the experience or conversation.

2. The group will ask any necessary clarifying questions, and the presenter will respond briefly (5 minutes).

3. The group uses the framing questions as a structure for helping to identify possible solutions to the problem that has been posed. The presenter takes notes but does not participate in the discussion (20–25 minutes).

4. The presenter summarizes and comments on what he or she heard during the discussion— focusing on key issues and strategies for moving forward (3–5 minutes).

5. The presenter will write a two- to three-page reflection that highlights ways the group has contributed to his or her understanding of the issue. This reflection will describe the presenter's attempts to implement some of these ideas in the weeks following the session. Were they effective? Why? Why not? What did you learn from this process?

Problem Posing Protocol Template

Presenter: _____

Focus Issue
Explanation: Briefly (3–4 paragraphs) describe the issue that has been troubling you. You might also include some information about how you've attempted to address this issue already.

Context
Describe the class (e.g., English 9), what you have been reading/studying, and the students in this class (remember to preserve confidentiality). Also include some demographic data about the school and the students in this class.

Framing Questions
  Examples
      How can I support my students as I ask them to step out of their comfort zones?
      How can I get my honors students, who are mostly White, to discuss issues of race as we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

Artifact
Include at least one artifact (e.g., summary of a failed discussion, student work, classroom diagram, sample assignments).