Positioned as pedagogues, finding their teaching personas: critical, project-based clinical experiences in PDS/school-university contexts

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Abstract

Purpose – Policy makers, professional associations and scholars continue to advocate for the integration of enhanced clinical experiences for future teachers' preparation. These recommendations reflect the growing recognition that few events in preservice teachers' education are more significant than their experiences in the classrooms of veteran peers. Aware of the fact that the field of teacher education needs examples of effective clinical experiences, the authors examined the "critical, project-based" (CPB) model, employing Photovoice activities in a dropout prevention course in a secondary education partner school at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper aims to discuss the aforementioned objective.

Design/methodology/approach – Aware that the field of teacher education needs examples of effective clinical experiences, the authors examined the CPB model, employing Photovoice activities in a dropout prevention course in a secondary education partner school at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this article they detail a practitioner research examination that explores the experiences of 12 preservice middle/high school teachers, reporting on these individuals' considerations of general pedagogies, writing instruction strategies and teaching personas.

Findings – Results suggest that preservice teachers might best identify pedagogical practices that are consistent with their nascent teaching identities via experiences that occur in school-university partnerships in which future teachers are positioned as pedagogues.

Originality/value – This manuscript explores the use of the "CPB" clinical experience model, identifying the impacts of this approach for preparing future teachers.

Keywords Critical, Project-based, Clinical experiences, Teaching persona, Instructional capacity

Paper type Research paper

One of the students that was in my group shared one of his letters about teachers being like closed/open doors. [He] talked about how teachers that are closed off discourage students from

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> coming in. But when a door is open students feel wanted. . .The way we act and talk to our students tells them whether we're a closed or open door.
>
> –Hannah

Hannah, a preservice high school science teacher nearing her student teaching internship in our four-semester master's licensure program, recently noted the above in one of the reflections she drafted while completing a project-based clinical experience in a counseling and dropout prevention course that considered youths' perspectives on "extraordinary" teaching via Photovoice and writing activities. The young man with whom she worked had articulated the importance of teachers' everyday interactions with students as a foundation for effective pedagogies. This high school 9th grader highlighted this "open door" quality, a characteristic that he recognized both Hannah and his teacher—Hannah's mentor for this experience and the seventh author (Kitchen) of this article—had modeled.

Traditionally and still too frequently preservice teachers are "placed" for their clinical experiences with veteran practitioners through what is sometimes pejoratively referred to as the "cannon method": they are "launched" into classrooms to observe haphazardly-identified mentor teachers whose sole qualification is that they volunteer to serve in such a role (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Parker, Groth, & Byers, 2019). In contrast, Hannah and 11 of her English, math, science and social studies preservice teacher peers had the opportunity to work in a "critical, project-based" (CPB) clinical structure (Dutro, Cartun, Melnychenko, Haberl, & Pacheco Williams, 2018; Pytash & Zenkov, 2018, Pytash & Zenkov, 2018). This clinical experience involved an intentionally selected mentor (the seventh author, Kitchen), a boundary-spanning university-based teacher educator (the first author, Zenkov), four teacher education doctoral students from our local university (the second, third, fourth and sixth authors—Taousakis, Goransson, Staudt and Stephens), an independent researcher (the fifth author, Ewaida) and two other veteran teachers from the school (the eighth and ninth authors, Hostutler and Castorena). Working with this team of teachers and teacher educators in one of the partner schools of our college's secondary education program, these preservice teachers employed a Photovoice methodology (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017; Wass *et al.*, 2020) to call on a class of 15 "at risk" ninth graders to reflect on the question, "What makes an extraordinary teacher?" and represent their answers through images and writings.

We engaged in the design, implementation and examination of this alternative clinical experience because we recognized that the field of teacher education needs not just additional illustrations of such structures but also more research on teacher education efforts that are clinically-centered and grounded in "third space," partnership, and Professional Development School (PDS) principles. We conducted a practitioner research examination of this structure, employing elements of a case study method to explore the experiences of 12 preservice middle/high school teachers, reporting on these future teachers' considerations of their general pedagogies, writing instruction strategies and teaching personas. Here we describe the outcomes of this early experience for these teacher candidates, addressing three research questions:

RQ1. What were preservice teachers' perceptions of effective general pedagogies, drawn from their experiences with the CPB clinical experiences?

RQ2. What were preservice teachers' perceptions of the nature and utility of writing instruction, based on their experiences with the CPB clinical experiences?

RQ3. How did preservice teachers describe their teaching identities or personas and detail the relationship between these and the instructional strategies they highlighted, across these clinical experiences?

In the sections that follow, we summarize the research literature in which our study is rooted (including studies that address National Association for Professional Development Schools'

Essentials #2 and #8), detail the methodological structures we employed to examine this clinical experience, describe the qualitative findings of this exploration and discuss the implications of such approaches for teacher education more broadly. Results of this study suggest that preservice teachers might most efficiently develop their teaching personas or identities, cultivate an appreciation for writing instruction and best determine effective instructional practices that are consistent with their evolving identities via experiences in school-university partnership or PDS settings. These structures and settings enable them to be positioned as pedagogues, to operate in short-term instructional capacities and require them to face and explore these teaching personas.

Literature review

Our teacher preparation pedagogical and research efforts were a response to education policy makers' and teacher education professional associations' calls for the integration of enhanced clinical experiences (American Association of Colleges for Teacher, 2018; ATE, 2015; Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, & Ahn, 2013; Zeichner & Bier, 2015). As well, many teacher educators have documented the importance of these field experiences for preservice teachers' practices, particularly those experiences that occur early in preservice teachers' preparation (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Fraser & Watson, 2014; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009). Numerous scholarly reports have illuminated the importance of school-centered clinical experiences as core features of teacher education programs (Flessner & Lecklider, 2017; Gelfuso, Dennis, & Parker, 2015; NCATE, 2010).

Here we explore the research literature on clinical experiences, summarizing the aims and outcomes of such experiences; detailing the critiques of traditional, observation-focused experiences; and addressing the rationales behind clinical experience innovations. We do not explicitly address the research literature on the impact of such practices on preservice teachers' general or writing pedagogies, both due to the limitations of space in this manuscript and because these are both widely documented and expected outcomes of effective clinical experiences. Through this review we consider the "clinical preparation" elements of NAPDS Essential #2 and the "boundary-spanning roles" focus of Essential #8.

We also outline the objectives of school-embedded experiences, including the "CPB" structures that we implemented and examined, which are more reasonable to carry out in PDS and school-university partnership contexts. We offer a summary of relevant PDS and school-university partnership research to contextualize our implementation and examination of these clinical experience innovations. Finally, given our study's consideration of the alignment between preservice teachers' teaching "identities" or "personas," we briefly examine the research literature on these concepts.

Aims and outcomes of clinical experiences

Clinical experiences are increasingly recognized as one of the most critical components of teacher preparation (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012; UTRU, 2015). The primary intention of such experiences is to develop preservice teachers as effective practitioners, enhancing their abilities to address the diverse learning needs of our PK-12 populations (Lavadenz & Hollins, 2015). These experiences are also seen as helping to meet the professional development demands of both school-based classroom teacher mentors and university-based teacher educators (Czerniawski *et al.*, 2019; Murray, 2017). Such experiences can be important for supporting preservice teachers' abilities to understand the cultures of and to connect with students who often do not share their backgrounds (Bennett, 2013; Salmona, Partlo, Kaczynski, & Leonard, 2015). As well, these structures can introduce preservice teachers to inclusive teaching methods and "high leverage" pedagogies (McLeskey & Brownell, 2015).

More recently clinical experiences have been recognized as the means through which preservice teachers and school- and university-based teacher educators might consider a

common set of pedagogies (Underwood & Mensah, 2018). Such experiences are no longer just a bridge between the pedagogical theories introduced in university classrooms and classroom realities; rather, they are recognized as means to explore the pedagogical practices that are the shared domain of all educators (Dennis *et al.*, 2017; Forzani, 2014). In summary, clinical experiences have the potential to be the common spaces where schools' and universities identify, implement and examine effective—or "core"—teacher education pedagogies (Dutro & Cartun, 2016; In Grossman, 2021; Peercy, 2014).

Critiques of traditional clinical experiences

Many recent clinical experience-related policy calls and scholarly examinations not only make a case for more clinical experiences, but for more intentional versions of these experiences. (Goldhaber, Krieg, & Theobald, 2017; Henning, Gut, & Beam, 2015). In spite of the grand aims of clinical experiences, too often traditional clinical structures require preservice teachers to engage in observation and other activities that may or may not further their future professional practice (Harfitt & Chow, 2018; Kaymakamoglu, 2018). This highlights what Feiman-Nemser and Buchanan identified as the "two worlds pitfall," a phenomenon rooted in the idea that teacher education activities most often occur "in two distinct settings and [operate] from the fallacious assumption that making connections between these two worlds is straightforward and can be left to the novice" (Feiman-Nemser & Buchanan, 1985, p. 63).

Smagorinsky and colleagues (Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2013) reworked Feiman-Nemser and Buchanan's concept into the "multiple-worlds pitfall," suggesting an even greater complexity of preservice teachers' challenge of learning to make the best pedagogical decisions. Teacher education scholars continue to question this gap, noting that when future teachers experience these pitfalls they may "act in inconsistent ways in their instruction to meet competing, if not always binary, expectations for their practice and their student outcomes" (Johnson & Barnes, 2018; Smagorinsky, Shelton, & Moore, 2015, p. 153). These deep divides can result in preservice teachers entering the field positioned to replay the pedagogies they experienced in their own school experiences (Braaten, 2019; Schutz, Grossman, & Shaughnessy, 2018), rather than enacting research-based orientations that consider the needs of all learners.

Clinical experience innovations

To better address these aims and answer these criticisms of clinical experiences, teacher education practitioners and scholars have considered a range of alternate clinical methods for preparing teachers to enter the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Pellegrino & Zenkov, 2016). Scholars have extended proposals to include the "core practices" with which all teachers should be proficient, including "practice-based" strategies and "pedagogies of enactment" (Grossman, Kazemi, Kavanagh, Franke, & Dutro, 2019; McDonald *et al.*, 2014) and scaffolded "rehearsals" or "practice spaces" (Reich, Kim, Robinson, Roy, & Thompson, 2018). These structures intend to create clinical experiences that blend together pedagogical, teacher education and scholarly objectives (Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker, 2020). These also attempt to empower preservice teachers to develop justice-oriented frameworks (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016), while reconciling the "two-worlds" pitfall (Johnson & Barnes, 2018).

One of the core commitments of teacher educators exploring these innovations is to provide preservice teachers with regular and meaningful access to a variety of clinical experiences in authentic school contexts. This was our aim with our consideration and application of CPB clinical experiences (Pytash & Zenkov, 2018). The CPB structure significantly departs from clinical experiences that are part of more typical, observation-oriented teacher education programs (Boyd, Gorham, Justice, & Anderson, 2013;

Ronfeldt, 2015). This alternative experience called on our team of boundary-spanning university-based teacher educators (including the authors of this article), the future teacher participants, the intentionally selected mentor teachers and the other veteran teacher facilitators to collaborate on a school-based intervention that addressed the academic needs of youths (focusing on their writing skills) and positioned young people as experts on "extraordinary" teaching (Zenkov & Harmon, 2009; Zenkov *et al.*, 2014).

As an example of an innovation oriented around these explicit pedagogical objectives, the CPB clinical experience model also strives to address the sustainability and positionality critiques of third space structures (Hollins, 2015). CPB structures are short-term opportunities where preservice teachers partner with school- and university-based teacher educators to work with youth, often focusing on young people who are disenfranchised by school and its core literacy tasks (Thompson, Hagenah, Lohwasser, & Laxton, 2015). Such structures position preservice teachers as mentors and coaches for youths in real classrooms, most often addressing adolescents' writing development and relationships (Chandler-Olcott *et al.*, 2018). As a literacy skill that is relevant to all subject areas, writing ability and efficacy are closely related to students' overall school achievement and closely tied to their decisions to graduate from or drop out of high school (Hickman *et al.*, 2017; Paquette & Laverkirk, 2017). Finally, CPB structures also operate with the assumption that youths whose voices are least often heard might be the ones to whom scholars and teachers should listen most (Cook-Sather & Curl, 2014).

PDS pillars, "Essentials," and research

Clinical experience innovations—including CPB structures—most frequently occur in school-university partnership and PDS settings, where university- and school-based teacher educators can collaborate on the planning and implementation of innovative pedagogical interventions. The pillars of PDS (Holmes Group, 2007) and the Essentials of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (in particular, Essential #2) articulate how PDSs and school-university partnerships are foundational elements of teacher preparation and professional development (NAPDS, 2021). Clinical experiences in PDS settings have been demonstrated to prepare future teachers for the realities of everyday instructional, assessment and accountability practices (Ikpeze, Broikou, Hildenbrand, & Gladstone-Brown, 2012; Sibert & Rieg, 2016). And while not all of the promises of PDS have been realized, the clinical experience practices of this model have more systematically attempted to address some of the most pressing problems of teacher education (Martin & Mulvihill, 2020; NCATE, 2010; Widdall, Lachance, & Livermore, 2019).

In both US and international settings, research has both historically and more recently documented how early career graduates of PDS programs—who were prepared with more intentionally planned clinical experiences and mentor matching—report higher levels of teacher efficacy and evaluate their own learning opportunities more positively (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Conaway & Mitchell, 2004; Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift, Canrinus, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). As noted earlier, PDS and school-university partnership elements and activities (highlighted in Essential #8) are explicitly grounded in the notions of third space (Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011), and they call on university-based teacher educators to work alongside preservice teachers, veteran teachers and young people in educational spaces (Clifton & Jordan, 2019; Williams, 2014).

Historically, the PDS movement explicitly endeavored to span the school-university divide (Holmes Group, 2007). In the "Nine Essentials" of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS), Essential #8 ("Boundary-Spanning Roles") states that such school-university collaborations should support "college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional

settings" (NAPDS, 2021, p. 4). This recognition that the most effective clinical experience structures are based in such partnerships can also be found in NAPDS Essential #2 and in Standard 2 of the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards (CAEP, 2022), which notes that "effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice are central to candidate preparation" (para. 1).

Teacher identities and personas

Much has been written about the ways preservice teachers develop their identities; empirical literature on teacher personas is much less common. But preservice teacher learning is consistently framed as crucial in the development of these identities or personas (Olsen, 2008; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013). Of course, these terms and concepts—"identity" and "persona"—are not interchangeable, in actuality or in research literature. But they are certainly related, and, given the purposes of our study—focused on preservice teachers' identification or development of pedagogical practices they deemed consistent with their perceptions of themselves as teachers—here we briefly and in merged fashion explore these notions.

Teacher identity has been defined as "being recognized as a certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 99) by the teacher themselves and by others (Yuan & Lee, 2016). A teacher's identity is most often considered multi-faceted and fluid (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), is impacted by reflection and knowledge building, and is recognized as political, social and emotional in nature (Flores & Day, 2006). Forming a teaching identity has been described as "making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences" (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 220). Scholars have also recognized that, particularly in secondary classrooms—like those into which our study participant would be moving—subject matter knowledge is connected to how teachers think of themselves and form their identities (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006).

Similarly, a teacher's persona—described by the individual themselves—helps us understand how an individual perceives the act of teaching. Personae, too, can shift regularly, based on one's perception of the expectations of the context in which they are functioning. In comparison to a teaching identity, a teaching persona is more adaptable, short-term and can be similar to adopting a role (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Identity formation and persona development occur differently in preservice teachers and experienced educators, particularly with the "possible selves" of their teaching roles (Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010).

A consistent finding from across the research literature is that preservice teachers do not arrive in our teacher courses as blank slates. Rather, based on their own educational pasts, they have preconceptions about the practices they will enact (Berliner, 1986; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). In Olsen's (2008) study of the impact of teacher education coursework, he found that these prior conceptions of teaching and learning impacted the pedagogies future teachers appreciated and considered employing in their future classrooms. For our study, we considered Larson's (2008) recognition that identity transformation and persona awareness occur primarily through engagement with others (e.g. students, mentor teachers, peers, professors) in authentic learning spaces—like the clinical, classroom context of our project.

Methodology

Theoretical framework

Our commitment to PDSs and school-university partnerships, our implementation of boundary-spanning teacher education roles and our application of the CPB clinical model were all grounded in the notion of third space, which is rooted in hybridity theory (Soja, 1996).

This concept highlights the importance of using a variety of cultures and ways of life to understand any given phenomenon (Rochielle & Carpenter, 2015). Professional practices informed by a third space orientation emphasize functioning "in between" a variety of viewpoints to help recognize strengths and weaknesses of current structures and systems.

As the animating ideal of PDS and school-university partnership efforts (Garin, 2017; Hunzicker, 2019), the notion of third space explicitly attempts to assist in the bridging of university and PK-12 schools (Abraham, 2021; Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkelman, & Nichols, 2011; Daza *et al.*, 2021). Such structures acknowledge that school and university settings—represented by university- and school-based teacher educators, who frequently serve in almost invisible "mentor" roles—each play a unique capacity in the development of preservice teachers, and these future teachers must "live across" these two spaces (Gutiérrez, 2008; Murray, 2017). Indeed, all constituents in these contexts might operate in such boundary-spanning roles (Burns & Badiali, 2020).

Researcher positionality

While third space and boundary-spanning notions ground our practices and roles, as critical teacher educators facilitating CPB experiences with diverse school and university constituents, it is important that we are clear about our professional positionality. This paper's first author (Zenkov)—a white male university-based literacy and teacher educator for more than two decades—served in a co-teaching role alongside three school-based educators. These individuals (Kitchen, Hostutler and Castorena) are also the seventh, eighth and ninth authors of this manuscript: Kitchen was a white male social studies teacher and the instructor of record for students in the class that was the site of the CPB project; Hostutler and Castorena were two veteran English teachers (a white female and a Black female), who co-facilitated the project. The lead teacher was serving in multiple roles for the students in this class, including as an intervention specialist, general literacy instructor and counselor. The project was also intended to contribute to the experiences of the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth authors (Taousakis, Goransson, Staudt, Ewaida and Stephens) of this manuscript—four doctoral students and one independent researcher (all white females and former English teachers)—who were interested in the possibilities of implementing CPB work in their own teacher educator contexts.

This project took place in a ninth-grade intervention elective where all students had been identified as "at risk" for school disengagement. The course included writing and reading instruction, life skills lessons and study time elements. The CPB project functioned as a clinical experience for the 12 future secondary teachers, all of whom were in the second of three phases of their teacher licensure programs, during which they are expected to serve as co-teachers for one lesson in their clinical sites and consider the nature of content literacy instruction, including writing pedagogies. In the CPB project, these preservice teachers served in 1:1 mentoring roles for high school students, with each future teacher matched working with them side-by-side for each of the project days. Taousakis, Goransson and Staudt operated in two mentoring capacities: formally for the youths (each working with one young person) and informally for preservice teachers. The high school students—representative of the ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse demographics of the school—also served as research informants and experts on "extraordinary" teaching (additional details below).

Practitioner research orientation and case study elements

For this examination of a CPB clinical experience structure, the authors of this article were functioning as university- and school-based teacher educator members of a teaching/researching team. Given the shared pedagogical roles of all authors, we considered our

exploration of this CPB intervention to be an example of practitioner research. PDS, school-university partnership structures and partner school settings have proven to be particularly stimulating contexts for conducting practitioner research (Dana, 2017; Helfrich, Hartman, & Sisson, 2019). Such contexts support the collaborative research that allows classroom teachers and university professors (school-based and university-based teacher educators) to even temporarily cross traditional institutional boundaries and roles, and to focus simultaneously on youths', preservice teachers', veteran teachers' and our own learning (Burns, Yendol-Hoppey, & Jacobs, 2015; Many, Fisher, Ogletree, & Taylor, 2012; Mule, 2006). Ultimately, such settings and structures are effective not just for promoting preservice teachers' consideration of effective classroom teaching strategies, but also for future teacher educators' examination of effective educator preparation practices (Burns & Badiali, 2018; Badiali, Polly, Burns, & Garin, 2021).

To explore the effects of this CPB experience on teacher candidates' considerations of their general pedagogies, writing instruction strategies and teaching personas, this examination drew upon elements of a case study methodology. As a research methodology, a case study approach is defined as an in-depth exploration of a person, a group of people, or a unit. Generally, the case study subject or subjects are described, key issues are identified, analysis is conducted and recommendations are made for a course of action for that particular case or those cases. Researchers examine these individuals or groups in their natural settings to increase their understanding of them. Case studies help researchers generate new ideas, illustrate theories and show how different things are related to one another (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Cases can be either an individual person (Stake, 1995) or a collection of individual cases (Stake, 2006).

While we have not been able to gather the in-depth, long-term data on what we are considering the case of the preservice teachers involved in this implementation of a CPB structure, these features of a case study approach informed our examination and many of the methodological choices we describe below. While PDS and school-university partnership arrangements typically depend on large-scale shifts in institutional features and professional roles, we appealed to just one of our secondary education program's 18 partner middle and high schools for a more manageable and immediate shift in the short-term CPB clinical experience that we examine in this article. Here we describe the outcomes of this early clinical experience for these 12 preservice teachers, addressing three research questions:

RQ1 What were preservice teachers' perceptions of effective general pedagogies, drawn from their experiences with the CPB clinical experiences?

RQ2 What were preservice teachers' perceptions of the nature and utility of writing instruction, based on their experiences with the CPB clinical experiences?

RQ3 How did preservice teachers describe their teaching personas and detail the relationship between these and the instructional strategies they highlighted, across these clinical experiences?

Participants and setting

In addition to the co-author participants of this project, this study involved 12 future English, science, math and social studies teachers who were enrolled in a master's licensure program at a very large, diverse state university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. While the majority of future teachers in our secondary education program were white females in their early twenties (as is the case in many teacher preparation programs nationwide; USDOE, 2021), the 12 CPB participants consisted of six who identified as female and six as male, with eight White and four Latinx future teachers. Six were English preservice teachers, two were science, two were social studies and two were math.

The school where this study took place is located outside a major US city in the mid-Atlantic; the school was a member of the partner school network of the secondary education program with which this paper's authors were affiliated. At the time of the project (2019–20), the school served 745 ninth graders, whose demographics matched those of the wider school population, which was 35% Hispanic, 26% white and 19% Black. Two-thirds of students were classified as "economically disadvantaged" and 16% were receiving English learner services.

Clinical experience structures

The 12 preservice who completed the CPB experience functioned in one-to-one mentoring roles with the 15 high school students. The teacher of record (Kitchen), who also served as a school-based teacher educator (SBTE), and the university-based teacher educator (or UBTE, Zenkov) co-designed the project focus and daily lesson plans. We decided that given these youths' tenuous relationships to school and the intervention nature of the class, the focus of the clinical experience project should be something with which these young people were very familiar: school, or to be more precise, teaching. The schooling histories of these adolescents suggested that they had experienced many challenges in school and likely had strong opinions about teachers and teaching—good, bad and innocuous. Of course, this focus on teaching (or "extraordinary teaching") was also explicitly relevant to the teacher candidate participants.

On the first day of the six-session, four-week project, the SBTE and UBTE facilitated "get to know you" activities for the adolescent students, preservice teachers and PhD student co-authors. The SBTE and UBTE then matched each future teacher and PhD student with a youth mentee, and these future teacher and doctoral student mentors interviewed adolescents about what made an "extraordinary" teacher. During and between subsequent project sessions, mentors worked with the youth to take "photo walks" around the school, take pictures outside of school, identify photographs that represented their ideas about teaching and teachers and help them craft written reflections on images over the course of the project addressing three questions:

Q1. What makes an extraordinary teacher?

Q2. What do teachers do to support your willingness to attend and succeed in school?

Q3. What do teachers do to get in the way of your willingness to attend and succeed in school?

For the four middle sessions of the project, the youths engaged in daily one-to-one photo elicitation conferences with their mentors and shared draft images and writings with the class. The project culminated on the final day with a tour of our university campus and a presentation of adolescents' final pictures and reflections (one image/writing combination for each of the questions above) to future elementary teachers at our university, with the idea that youths would appreciate sharing how they would have liked their own elementary teachers to instruct them.

Data sources

All preservice teachers completed four or five web-based reflection forms across their clinical experiences, one form after each project session, addressing the following questions:

(1) Describe how you related to the students. What did you do? How did they respond?

(2) Observe students' writing, then reflect on one piece of student writing that you read or heard. What did you learn about the student from their particular piece of writing?

(3) If you were doing this lesson again, what would you do differently? Why?

(4) How do you imagine today's interactions might influence your teaching practices—particularly how you teach writing?

(5) What did you learn about yourself as a teacher? As a person? Which of these practices seemed most consistent with ones you'd imagine implementing in the future?

Analysis

Our review of preservice teachers' reflection forms involved qualitative content and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We completed open coding of the reflections, which included four steps (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We first acquainted ourselves with the data, which constituted a period of "digesting and reflecting" (Clarke, 2005, p. 84). We then began initial coding: we were careful about keeping our first codes "tentative and provisional" (Saldana, 2016, p. 114) until we were able to complete the first cycle of examining the approximately 50 reflections. We then compared our tentative outcomes to the data and analyzed the resultant codes for emergent themes, developing sub-themes and tracking these with supporting evidence, to determine broader themes. We triangulated data across individual preservice teacher reflections to increase trustworthiness and validate our findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, we reviewed themes related to the research questions, cross-checking these to reach consensus.

Findings

While we detail themes related to our research questions as distinct results related to participants' general pedagogies, writing pedagogies and teaching personas, we observed considerable overlaps between these categories. We discuss the relationship between these categories and the implications of the results of our study in the final section of this manuscript.

General pedagogies

The sub-themes related to preservice teachers' reflections on their general pedagogies included insights about teachers knowing themselves as human beings, relationship- and classroom community-building processes and responsive, student-centered instructional planning.

Teachers must first recognize themselves as human beings. A commonly appearing sub-theme was related to the notion that approaches to teaching have to begin with teachers appreciating that they and their students are, first and inescapably, human beings and learners. To best serve students, teachers must acknowledge that part of the human condition is the fact that they bring biases to any teaching interaction, and that they must investigate how these shape their pedagogical practices. Ultimately, teachers may need to be open to changing aspects of their own belief systems.

These insights were perhaps best illustrated by preservice English teacher Sadie: "It's great students [when] open up, but it doesn't mean you suddenly fully know them, their interests, even their intentions in the class. I think it's good instead to log the rapport building details but also be open for them to change and surprise you." Sadie recognized that working to know students is a humbling process of constant refinement, as teachers *and* students are ever emerging. This willingness to modify their convictions helps teachers to acknowledge that they are working to become better versions of themselves—as human beings and pedagogues.

In addition, several of the preservice teachers noted that via this clinical experience they became more aware of how their schooling experiences had shaped them into the people they were. The brief but intense interactions they had with young people in these temporary teaching roles prompted this deepened awareness, which helped them to empathize with their students' unique journeys. Future math teacher Vida explained, "During my undergrad experience I had some life altering decisions that I needed to make and I realized that I kept trying to avoid talking about [these with her clinical experience mentee]. In trying to tip-toe around [these issues], I came off a little detached. I am still trying to figure out how to talk about [these things) without closing [my students] off." Such candor was relevant with our project because we were considering our own and youths' relationships to school and the roles teachers had played—or might play—in enhancing these relationships and their future students' experiences.

Via these series of often intimate exchanges with their mentees, preservice teachers recognized that a lack of openness had implications for their pedagogical orientations and practices, beyond the interactions of our unique projects. Vida expressed how these one-to-one interactions engendered a sense of empathy in her for students who may have similar sentiments about their own lives and willingness to share these in the classroom. Another preservice English teacher, Gary, echoed this insight: "We need to be more honest with students on bad days and let them know that sometimes we're not at our best. And that this can go both ways in helping us understand that students are not always going to 'be there' completely in our classrooms." These future teachers first confronted their own very human emotions, reactions and even flaws, which readily translated into their abilities to humanize their interactions with their students.

Developing healthy relationships with students and inclusive classroom communities are processes. A second finding related to general pedagogies that we identified in preservice teachers' reflections was the idea that the work to develop relationships with students is not always straightforward and does not always result in the immediate development of such connections. Rather, the intimate structures of the CPB project allowed future teachers to appreciate that creating classroom spaces where students feel a part of a community and express their individuality were elements of such longer-term relationship-building efforts. And future teachers recognized that such endeavors were often comprised of small, yet powerful, moments.

Preservice social studies teacher Nicole highlighted an interaction with a student that helped her understand the intentional nature of this ongoing relationship development:

> When she got to the classroom, the first thing she asked me was "Did you think I wasn't going to come today?" I said that I expected her to be here because the Snapchat backgrounds would really up her game against her peers. . .and she laughed. It was great to see that the awkward connection I had been working on for three days paid off.

This exchange marked a shift in the dynamic between this preservice teacher and this student. And Nicole recognized both the alteration and the importance of these one-to-one structures.

Candidates also consistently observed the need for teachers to be persistent with their community-building and relationship-development endeavors, even in light of youths' apparent disregard. Future science teacher Jacky noted, "The students reminded me that they do want to be helped and guided. At some point I thought maybe students do not need/want help when they resist, but now I know that I need to keep on trying. It does not mean that I would be invasive but instead I would be caring." She and other future teachers described how students may not always be ready to demonstrate such engagement in a single exchange, but that it is the responsibility of the teacher to continuously invite students into these classroom community spaces.

Our planning must reflect the reality that we teach students, *not just* content. Perhaps the theme that most explicitly related to preservice teachers' pedagogical practices was associated with their evolving notions of instructional planning. While preservice teachers were future English, math, social studies and science teachers who recognized that their primary responsibility was to impart content connected to their respective subject areas, via this unique clinical experience they became more aware of the need to plan with their students in mind. Future English teacher Nina was particularly articulate about this shifting instructional focus: "My belief is that I have to strategically plan my lessons not just for the content, but for my students. What's working? What's not working? What can be modified? What needs more synthesis? How do I expand discussions? What kind of material am I exposing my students to?"

As well, it was not just the substance of this planning of which preservice teachers became more aware, but also the very planning processes in which they engage. In one reflection, future science teacher Jacynda noted that "I will not be, at least I don't want to be, the teacher that is super structured and doesn't give students any sort of autonomy." Her instructional content had evolved to include this quality of choice. Incorporating autonomy and focusing not just on their subject area content but also on these youths' connections to the content amounted to more rather than less instructional planning: "Nonetheless, I figured that if I would have prepared a little more, then I would have challenged Kelly a little more, or guided her to another level."

Writing pedagogies

In their reflections these subject area teachers consistently commented on youths' relationships to writing and their reluctance to write. But, guided by the reflection prompts, they also pinpointed writing instruction practices they imagined taking into their classrooms. These included insights about the nature of writing as a vulnerable task, the nature and range of writing instruction scaffolds and the need for writing assignments to include both clear structures and opportunities for creative expression.

Writing is always a personal, vulnerable activity. Preservice teachers acknowledged that writing can seem like a defenseless activity for young people, particularly when it requires them to communicate feelings. This quality was perhaps best illustrated by future English teacher Gabriel's reflections:

> This experience has helped me to better understand how to help students see their personal experience and struggles as raw material for them to draw from in their writing. . .[T]his approach lets students find ways to discover who they are and how they see the world—first. Then [we can] work with them to develop skills to use conventions to make their writing even better.

Effective writing instruction relies on endless scaffolding efforts. Preservice teachers' reflections often addressed the need for intentional instructional planning with writing pedagogies. They recognized a need to provide youths with a smorgasbord of scaffolds and unflagging encouragement. Sadie, one of six future English teachers, wrote to the utility of a "gradual release of responsibility" with writing tasks; she detailed her interactions with her adolescent mentee (identified with a single-letter pseudonym):

> I gathered that D was insecure in her writing and needed reassuring. She would approach topics with a ton of trepidation and nearly give up, afraid to get the answer wrong or get caught trying. But if I encouraged her or leveled with her, she sprung up and above expectations.

Particularly with writing tasks, and perhaps more so in classes where students did not expect to write (i.e. outside of English classes), such scaffolds had to be personalized to individual youths' experiences, needs, interests and senses of both content and writing efficacy. One of preservice math teacher Noah's reflection illustrated this quality:

> Understanding that students all come from different capabilities is vital when teaching reading or writing. Being able to make the work accessible—but still challenging—for all the students is important in fostering growth and development academically.

Writing instruction is best when it balances guidelines and creativity. The youths in our project expressed a faded love of writing, recalling enjoyment when writing in early elementary school, when writing was equivalent to telling stories and expressing their creativity. One of the most consistent insights regarding writing instruction, from all of the future teachers who participated in our study, was that youths simultaneously—and often in a seemingly contradictory manner—desired both structure and freedom in their writing assignments.

Noelle, one of our social studies preservice teachers, was particularly articulate about the need for being explicit with the guidelines for the writing tasks she would incorporate:

> As a social studies teacher, I do not directly teach writing, but it makes me want to do some tutorials on what my expectations are for written assignments next school year, [focusing on] the vocabulary of my students and their ability to contextualize terms.

And Sadie—that future English teacher—poetically echoed this insight:

> I think I need to be mindful of how projects are introduced. Projects are like a student is hiking through their class, and they round the bend and there's a gigantic mountain. Some students are excited about the challenge, others are horrified and turn around. I want to make sure my projects, colossal in their entirety, appear like small steps to climb.

But preservice teachers appreciated that step-by-step writing instructions also needed to leave space for the personal, engaging students and creative expression, even in math classes, as Vida detailed:

> In terms of writing in a math class I think that it is important to involve your students as much as possible. Whether that means engaging the students physically with activities or emotionally where I could incorporate their beliefs and interests in projects. I got the sense that the opportunity to express themselves in a judgment free space was something that they craved.

Teaching personas

The daily reflections we called on preservice teachers to complete explicitly asked them about their teaching personas, so it is not surprising that they frequently stepped back from the strategies they were observing and implementing to consider the relationships between these practices and who they believed they were and would become as pedagogues. The two most consistently appearing sub-themes were related to their personal identities and how these translated into pedagogies, and the means through which preservice teachers observed alignment between who they were as teachers and the practices that matched their pedagogical selves.

Our personal identities will inform but should not delimit our teaching identities or our pedagogies. The structures of the CPB experience—and, by extension, the reflection activities they completed after project sessions—provided future teachers with opportunities to consider the relationships between their developing teacher personas and their pedagogies. Preservice English teacher Richard recognized that he longed to have his teaching identity be rooted in a collaborative, student-centered orientation. But he wasn't yet sure how to enact that persona in his instructional interactions: "I want to learn how to show respect without being a pushover. I want to give the wheel to students but I don't trust that they have the maturity needed for that."

Through this clinical experience, preservice math teacher Vida and preservice English teacher Nina encountered conflicting notions of their teaching personas. Vida discovered that

she was more comfortable as an observer in group settings with peers, youths and veteran teachers, recognizing how her natural way of being as an individual might need to shift if she were to find the most effective pedagogies: "I learned that I am much more comfortable observing than participating in group settings. I definitely need to push myself to be a bit more extroverted." Nina appreciated that she was a willing "player" in her pedagogical exchanges with the young people in our project, noting, "Today I learned that I am more outgoing than I give myself credit for." Through this awareness she could "push" herself professionally, to help students "understand that I 'm not there to judge them, but rather respect and understand them."

We best develop our teaching identities when modeling occurs in the moment and our need to reflect is urgent. In their reflections preservice teachers highlighted numerous instances of positive, and sometimes even profound, moments of pedagogical modeling. Across their series of reflections, completed over just the course of three weeks, both the number of these observational instances and the specificity of the strategies they documented increased. The majority of these instances involved positive, consistent connections between the pedagogies and identities these future teachers were witnessing and that they imagined employing themselves.

Preservice English teacher Sadie's reflection, submitted after our second CPB session, powerfully illustrated this finding. Preservice teachers spent most of a class working independently with their mentees, and Sadie's student had given most of her attention to her smartphone:

> My reaction was to feel disrespected. However, it was great speaking with [the lead teacher], and [appreciating] how he knew, from rapport building, that [my student] meant no disrespect. The action didn't change, but the intention did, and I wasn't frustrated at all.

Sadie's opportunity to immediately reflect on, and to discuss with a mentor, what she initially perceived as a failed pedagogical moment enabled her to recognize that she needed to view her one-on-one investment on this day in light of a longer-term set of interactions with this student.

After one later CPB session, future social studies teacher Noah articulated his appreciation for these one-on-one interactions with students, which were a core element of this experience. He reflected on the utility of these exchanges through alternative, less effective strategies he had experienced as a secondary school student:

> I find myself drawn to helping them and getting them to interact with others, rather than sit in a corner to do work, because that's what I needed in high school and didn't get it.

In these examples we see that preservice teachers' opportunities to reflect on their pedagogies—even in view of what they perceived as negative experiences—can help them consider the relationships between their developing teaching personas and their pedagogies. Such considerations are most effective when reflections are based on authentic pedagogical interactions.

Discussion and implications

The PDS movement, practice-based structures and the concept of third space have offered teacher educators theoretical and practical promises for effective reforms to the roles and elements of the teaching and teacher education professions, but for too long these have remained ideals and frameworks rather than realities that our schools and universities have enacted in a widespread manner. It is evident from the findings of the study on which we report here that not only do alternatives to traditional clinical experiences exist, but that these might have novel and significant impacts on the preservice teachers who populate our

teacher education programs. While in this article we have not focused on the influences of the CPB clinical experience model on the many other constituents involved—adolescents, school- and university-based teacher educators, classroom teachers and doctoral students in education—CPB structures at least imagine such effects, and it seems reasonable to propose that such outcomes might be positive and worth both highlighting and examining.

We also imagine that CPB projects implemented in PDS and school-university partnership contexts might offer responses to long-articulated concerns about the sustainability of PDS ideals (Reece, Roberts, & Smith, 2016). While the CPB elements we have implemented and examined here might be perceived as "non-traditional," we have envisioned these as "prototypes" that can inform teacher education programs' operations more broadly (Haj-Broussard *et al.*, 2015). Ultimately, such a model illustrates the sort of university course and clinical experience connections for which everyday practitioners and eminent scholars have long argued (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Zeichner, 2010). Of course, as with any project and study there are limitations to our practices and this examination, including the fact that our sample size included only a dozen preservice teachers and our data set was limited to their reflection forms.

We have argued elsewhere that the teacher education profession is in the midst of an existential crisis—one partly of our own making, as we have been unreasonably and unwittingly committed to traditional scholarly roles and structures, and one born of neoliberal attacks on public institutions (Zenkov & Pytash, 2022). As a result, we cannot function only in the realm of archetypes, oblivious to the narrowing notions of accountability that many conservative policymakers are operationalizing in efforts to reshape the very nature of education across the PK-20 continuum. While PDS theorists have looked to these partnerships as one means to answer both of these critiques, we propose not just that CPB projects might be ideal tools of PDSs' operations, but ones that are sustainable in ways not often proposed: Perhaps the clinical practices that are the most sustainable and that will have the greatest impact are those that explicitly and immediately respond to intersections of teachers', preservice teachers', university-based teacher educators' and youths' pedagogical, curricular and community concerns (Dresden, Blankenship, Capuozzo, Nealy, & Tavernier, 2016; Sawyer, Neel, & Coulter, 2016). That is, CPB and similar practice-based efforts in school-university and PDS settings might be some of the most tenable structures to implement, as these are typically abbreviated, attempting to model rehearsals of alternative classroom instruction and teacher education structures, rather than enact them on an everyday basis (Hodges, Blackwell, Mills, Scott, & Somerall, 2017; Vrijnsen-de Corte, Perry den Brok, Kampc, & Bergen, 2013).

While we recognize that the CPB model likely does not represent a large-scale solution to the challenges schools and universities face with regard to effective clinical experiences or best practice general or writing pedagogies for PK-12 students or future teachers, we propose that preservice teachers do not just need to spend more time in classrooms learning about limited notions of the "realities" of teaching and learning. Rather, preservice teachers might be more often be positioned as pedagogues, required to interact with young people, in the intimate ways that CPB structures allow. Perhaps it is the case that such interactions reveal the teacher you are and the teacher you want to become, and maybe one conclusion to draw is that all clinical experiences should involve such intense cycles of student interaction, debriefing with intentionally selected school-based teacher educators, guidance from university-based teachers with whom they have established rapport, and regular reflections on and discussions of their practices and personas. The most effective clinical experiences might scaffold future teachers into knowing—and learning about—their *students* by beginning with *a student*. And such authentic, partnership-based experiences might be even more important in post-pandemic contexts, enabling us all to appreciate the new and evolving personas and pedagogies that this era will demand.

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