MENTOR TEACHER POSITIONING DURING PEDAGOGICAL DOCUMENTATION WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PRESERVICE TEACHERS

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved grandmother, Carol Jean Swartzentruber (1931-2023), who taught me to bloom where I'm planted.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all the people who have supported my work and wellbeing over the course of this program and this dissertation. To my husband, Andy, I am continuously inspired by your positivity and enthusiasm for life. Your attitude has impacted my perseverance in this program through many challenging years. To my mom and dad, thank you for offering support in the form of encouragement, prayers, countless meals, and a quiet space to work. To my sister, Monica, your love for teaching motivates me in the classroom and in my research. I am convinced that positive change is possible in our schools because of your commitment to learning and willingness to grow and adapt. To my committee members, Robyn, Leia, and Margaret, I owe a debt of gratitude for your expertise and willingness to teach me with gracious patience. I have always felt like an equal in our relationships which inspired me to have great confidence as a researcher. Thank you for giving me time and space to think, question, and share my ideas. To Lori, your dedication to my journey through this program has been transformative. I will always cherish the countless "big idea" conversations we had about how to make a difference with our work. I admire your commitment to community-engaged research and your attention to the personhood of the individuals you work with. I am grateful to have had a place with you where I felt seen, heard, and challenged regularly. To Dani, Elizabeth, and Kathy, thank you for making it possible for me to complete this degree and continue working full-time and for your unwavering support along the way. Thank you for being excited about my work and taking a genuine interest in my questions, and for ultimately making this dissertation study possible. To my colleagues who participated in this study, I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your willingness to share your mentoring practice with me with transparency and vulnerability. You embody what is good in this field, and I am privileged to work alongside you.

ABSTRACT

Teacher education research shows that partnerships among mentor teachers and preservice teachers facilitate meaningful professional development when both are afforded the opportunity to assume dynamic positions of teacher *and* learner. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to explore mentor positioning and pedagogical documentation at a university-based early childhood center with five mentor teachers (MTs) and five undergraduate preservice teachers (PTs). It explored the efficacy of pedagogical documentation review as a tool to facilitate moments of reciprocal mentoring. Through the framework of cultural-historical activity theory and subject positioning theory, I investigated how mentors positioned themselves during pedagogical documentation and examined how mentor positioning impacted dyadic learning experiences. Data included video recordings of mentor meetings, reflective journals, and interviews. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and cycles of inductive and deductive coding. Findings indicated that some mentors in the *above* positioning offered support for PTs' sustained professional growth. In the *below* position, mentors invited PTs into their decision-making processes and adopted a growth mindset that illustrated their own need for continuous learning. Mentors described the practice of patient listening as a strategy for increasing PT contribution in the *equal* position. In a few exchanges, mentors and PTs both took the position of learner, and the documentation itself became the teacher – leading to the construction of new knowledge and a *greater-we* positioning. The discussion guides teacher educators to reconsider whether independence or collaboration is the ultimate goal of teacher preparation and draws careful attention to the pedagogy of listening within the mentoring relationship.

Keywords: mentoring, early childhood teacher education, preservice teacher, mentor positioning, pedagogical documentation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The field of early childhood teacher education calls for innovation and creativity that ensure meaningful learning opportunities exist for future practitioners. Teacher education programs assume the essential responsibility of preparing teachers, not only to work with children, but to actively engage in their own learning and professional development (Sumrall et al., 2016). One of the pivotal ways teacher education programs seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice is by requiring clinical field experiences during which preservice teachers (PTs) are afforded the opportunity to acquire essential pedagogical expertise alongside a mentor teacher (MT). Through practicum placements in early childhood classrooms, preservice teachers are afforded situated learning in context, which is essential to their construction of professional knowledge and practice. Broadly termed *student teaching*, this practicum is an extended period of time when preservice teachers assume a full-time practicing teacher role in an early childhood classroom with the guidance and support of an experienced mentor teacher (Sumrall et al., 2016). However, simply being in the classroom context does not create a high-quality learning experience for preservice teachers; much of the quality is determined by decisions and dispositions of the mentor teacher (Ambrosetti, 2014). During their classroom placement, MTs and PTs embark on a dynamic relational and professional journey characterized by varying levels of trust, vulnerability, integrity, reflection, collaboration, and support (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019). Mentors embody many nuanced roles for PTs including advisor, advocate, model, encourager, friend, colleague, and collaborator (Ambrossetti, 2014).

The mentoring literature in teacher education describes several approaches that MTs might use when working with PTs throughout their practicum – several of which are supported by the empirical research and others that have shown to limit PTs' development of professional competencies. Of particular focus in evaluating the efficacy of mentoring approaches is the mentor's positioning in relation to the preservice teacher (Quinones et al., 2020). Knowing the deeply-rooted power dynamic of mentor-as-teacher and PT-as-learner, teacher educators are exploring mentoring approaches that support the development of PTs' *relational agency* – a disposition of engagement, interpretation, and ultimately action toward professional development (Ben-Harush & Orland-Barak, 2019; Edwards & D'arcy, 2006). Within the framework of subject positioning theory as applied to mentoring in teacher education, there is an existing typology of positions that MTs and PTs can adopt, called *mentoring positionings*, each with its own consequential learning opportunities for the student and teacher (Fleer, 2015; Quinones et al., 2020). To reflect the increasingly collaborative teaching teams in early childhood education, the co-teaching and team-teaching models of mentoring continue to grow in prevalence across academic and clinical spaces (Simons & Baeten, 2016). Adopting a mentoring position that situates PTs and MTs in reciprocal, dynamic roles has been shown to connect to learning dispositions and professional competencies for PTs within and beyond the practicum classroom (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020; Quinones et al., 2020).

This study explored the mentor positioning within the context of pedagogical documentation review among dyads of mentors and preservice teachers. Specifically, it explored the efficacy of pedagogical documentation review as a tool to facilitate moments of *reciprocal mentoring* – the bidirectional exchange of learning (Quinones et al., 2020). This study focused on the practice of pedagogical documentation inspired by teaching practices in the public

preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Edwards et al., 2020; Malaguzzi, 2012). Within this approach, teachers seek to document the life of the classroom as it is experienced by children – through artifacts like photos, video, anecdotal notes, and children's work samples (Edwards et al., 2020; Katz & Chard, 1996). During shared review of pedagogical documentation, teams of teachers engage in studying, interpreting, and analyzing the artifacts for the purpose of new shared understanding that will inform curriculum decisions and emerging paths of inquiry with children (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Gandini & Goldharber, 2001; Krechevsky et al., 2013; Project Zero and Reggio Children, 2001).

Key to this collaborative space is dialogue among participating teachers – the opportunity for *intersubjectivity* where the bounds of one's understanding might be challenged and shifted (Rinaldi, 2006). In fact, Rinaldi (2006) later describes pedagogical documentation as a *generative force*, implying that it drives teachers to produce new meaning impossible to find without the guidance of the children's actions and words. Drawing upon an "image of the teacher as researcher," pedagogical documentation offers pathways for practitioners to investigate their own questions and assume a critical stance toward dominant pedagogical discourses (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). This study interlaced the practices of PT mentoring and pedagogical documentation to learn more about how the act of shared pedagogical documentation review serves as a vehicle for reciprocal mentoring. Knowing that dynamic mentor positioning offers distinct learning opportunities for PTs, it follows that mentors must create spaces for dialogical meaning-making where PTs can assume both the role of learner *and* teacher.

Problem Statement

The literature is not clear on *how* teacher educators can enact a balanced mentor position in a practical sense – leaving a great deal of ambiguity for mentor teachers and teacher educators

hoping to move toward a more collaborative model of mentoring. Missing from the literature are evidenced-based applied tools for collaboration that practice a mentor position that is conducive to optimal learning for preservice teachers. Furthermore, limited mentoring research offers methods that cultivate ongoing teacher inquiry and prioritize professional learning for practicing mentor teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to explore the practice of pedagogical documentation as a tool for dynamic and reciprocal mentor positioning among teams of early childhood mentor and preservice teachers.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study examined the following research questions:

1. How do mentor teachers position themselves in relation to preservice teachers during pedagogical documentation?
2. How does mentor positioning impact dyadic learning experiences and opportunities?

Overview of Research Design

I investigated these research questions using a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research was most suitable to address these questions because of its capability to provide a *thick description* of the experiences of mentors and preservice teachers in context (Geertz, 1973; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative methodology aligns with my social constructivist onto-epistemological beliefs, within which what someone considers to be real is constructed in that individual's mind and truth is subjectively determined by their perspective (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 1998). Additionally, social constructivism holds that meaning is constructed collectively through shared social interactions – bringing focus to the group over the individual

(Gergen, 1985). A social constructivist stance acknowledges the complexity within and among individuals and groups, which considers the multiple simultaneous relationships and interaction among the MTs, PTs, and all participating members of their surrounding classroom and academic communities.

I used a case study approach as described by Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998). Both Stake and Merriam's approaches are informed by constructivist onto-epistemologies. Merriam defines a *case* as "a thing, a single entity, around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27; Miles & Huberman, 2020, p. 24). Similarly, Stake describes a case as "a specific, complex, functioning thing…which has a boundary and working parts" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). This study drew upon the descriptive, interactive nature and uniqueness of the case study approach, as it seeks to share with the reader an in-depth description of the specific phenomenon under study (Yazan, 2015). The bounded system in this study consisted of the mentors and PTs within the practice of pedagogical documentation at the university-based early childhood center, and the phenomenon under study was mentor positioning within the process of pedagogical documentation.

The university-based early childhood center is a licensed, accredited program with eight classrooms from birth to kindergarten situated at two locations. The classrooms include one infant, three toddler, three preschool, and one kindergarten. The primary function of the center is to provide an applied setting for preservice teachers as they investigate children's development in context and cultivate informed teaching practices. The center provides university support for hundreds of students through their coursework and practicum placements, the most intensive of which occurs in the semester-long, senior-level placement earning teacher candidates 12 course credit hours. Practicum students worked 30 hours per week in an assigned classroom for a 15-

week semester in Fall and Spring, and a 12-week term in the Summer, when this study took place.

Participants were recruited from teaching teams in the classrooms at the university-based center. Participants include lead classroom teachers in their role as mentor to senior-level practicum students enrolled in the semester-long intensive placement at the center. Each mentor teacher was paired with one practicum student for the 12-week summer term. Across the center, students in this practicum placement were considered full members of the teaching team, often assuming leading roles in managing the daily routines of the classroom, planning for, and teaching large and small group lessons, observing and documenting children's learning and development, engaging in collaborative and reflective teaching practices, and building relationships with children and families. Because of their invested and embedded position in the classroom context, these students had insight into the nuance of classroom life in the same way a lead teacher might.

This study utilized a purposeful sampling strategy since the aim was to provide information-rich descriptions (Patton, 2015) of mentor positioning and participants' engagement with shared pedagogical documentation. I invited mentors and preservice teachers to participate in this study designed to learn more about the role of shared pedagogical documentation among teaching teams. I used data sources that provided an emic perspective and holistic description of the phenomenon under study (Stake, 1995). Data included video-recorded mentor meetings, guided reflective journals, and interviews. Mentor participants video-recorded a weekly collaborative meeting where teams of MTs and PTs shared classroom pedagogical documentation and engaged in observation, interpretation, and planning. These mentoring meetings were already embedded into the regular practices of the program, although they were

not typically recorded. Following the recorded meetings, I asked mentor teacher participants to engage in 15 minutes of guided reflective journaling, in a modality of their choosing, to offer their thoughts and interpretations of their mentoring role in the shared pedagogical documentation process. Lastly, to triangulate the data and draw upon cross-case connections, I conducted individual interviews with each MT. Both the guided journaling and interviews were additional tasks for this study, although the program directors agreed to embed these tasks into the mentors' job responsibilities by providing dedicated time outside of the classroom to complete the journal and interview. Through the combination of these three data sources, I gained a holistic understanding of their mentoring practices and experiences related to the mentor meeting recording of pedagogical documentation.

Data from this study were analyzed with the goal of answering the research questions, which examined how MTs position themselves in relation to PTs during the process of shared video documentation and the learning that occurred following these positions. I analyzed data from three sources: mentor meeting video recordings, guided reflective journals, and mentor interviews. I analyzed the video, journal, and interview data using a reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). In this multi-phase approach, I first familiarized myself with the data. Then I conducted multiple iterations of coding, categorizing, and identifying emergent themes connected to each research question. For the first research question, I utilized conceptual categories to organize the data during the first coding cycle while also open coding the data with emergent codes. For the second question, I used a situated contextual analysis of coded excerpts to then explore what happened afterward. Finally, I revisited the themes and subthemes for each research question to refine, clarify, and define them

– ensuring that they were truly grounded in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Rationale and Significance to the Field

Early childhood educators carry the expectation to offer children high-quality learning opportunities, adapt to a range of systemic requirements, and sustain professional development to stay adept at the most recent research-based practices. Additionally, veteran classroom teachers are tasked with mentoring the upcoming cohort of novice teachers – a role that too often is absent from ongoing professional learning and operates as an assumed skill of the trade (Ambrosetti, 2014). According to the mentoring literature, many teachers report they did not directly learn how to mentor PTs (Ambrosetti, 2014). Instead, classroom teachers often learn these skills as they go, without adequate support for developing their mentoring practice with research-based pedagogical tools.

Research on mentor positioning demonstrates a shift in pedagogy from a gradual release approach to a co-teaching or integrated model. Within an integrated model, MTs and PTs function as a collective, and their relationship is characterized by reciprocity – where both the MT and PT engage in both teaching and learning from one another, constructing knowledge together in a shared space (Yoon & Larkin, 2018). While it may seem as if achieving this balance of authority is straightforward, the nuance of shared leadership, collaboration, and autonomy proves to be quite complicated in practice. So, it follows that MTs may need to adjust their mentoring approaches to the evolution of research-based practices. The question remains, however, of *how* they might carry out a reciprocal mentoring approach in a practical sense. Missing from the literature are suggested mentoring practices that challenge the typical notions of a unidirectional flow of learning from mentor to PT. Instead, educators need to explore

approaches that facilitate a disposition of *relational agency* where both members exercise the capacity to interpret the subjectivity of another as a valuable and transformative resource (Edwards, 2005).

The shared review of pedagogical documentation is one method that could challenge the traditional positioning among MTs and PTs. Grounded in the application of social constructivism, the shared review of documentation draws upon the tenet that diverse perspectives enrich the construction and restructuring of shared knowledge (Edwards, 2005; Edwards et al., 2020; Yoon & Larkin, 2018). Through this practice, teaching teams gather around a visible artifact from the classroom (e.g., video, photographs, or written anecdotes of children's learning) designed as a provocation for observation and shared interpretation that draws upon the subjectivities and expertise of all team members (Edwards et al., 2020; Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Gandini & Goldharber, 2001; Krechevsky et al., 2013; Project Zero and Reggio Children, 2001). This study explored the emergent process of pedagogical documentation when used as a mentoring tool with preservice teachers. Specifically, it contributes to the teacher education and mentoring literature by investigating how this experience positions experienced MTs in a collaborative stance with novice PTs in ways that support the development of essential professional competencies.

Researcher Lens

I viewed this research through a critical interpretivist paradigm. I consider the nature of reality to be subjective and constructed by and among individuals (Creswell, 2013). So, it was essential that I identified and clarified my role as the researcher. I hold many intersecting identities and I brought multiple subjectivities to this study. As Peshkin (1988) describes his

subjective I's, my identity as a classroom teacher, mentor, graduate student, and researcher impacted the course of this study from conception to closure.

I began my career as an educator in a public-school setting, and have since taught in private, charter, and university-based early childhood centers. As early as my second year of teaching, I became a mentor for preservice teachers. I have since mentored PTs across many levels of coursework, from their first practicum experiences to their final senior practicum placement. Like the experiences of the mentors I interviewed in this study, I did not receive any mentoring training or professional development for the first six years as a mentor. In my own teacher education, I pursued a Master of Arts in Teaching – a graduate-level track with two semester-long student teaching placements. Of these two internships, I had one mostly positive and one mostly negative experience. One internship was characterized by a hands-off mentoring relationship, sporadic feedback, isolation, and confusion. The other experience was characterized by communicative support, collaborative presence, belief in my capability, and a balanced co-teaching approach. These experiences inform my work as a mentor and focus my lens as a researcher. Approaching this study, I was curious about mentoring dispositions and the way this cultivates or detract from a supportive mentoring relationship with PTs. I also wondered about the ongoing support necessary for MTs to feel empowered to do the work of mentoring.

Continuing my education after eight years in the early childhood classroom, I was able to bring a new perspective into my studies and research as a doctoral student. Instead of approaching learning through a teacher education lens, this graduate program explored education through a primary focus on child development. Shifting my gaze toward children reestablished the reasons why I entered the teaching profession originally – leading me to give myself permission to engage in teacher inquiry. I pursued a new role as a teacher-researcher. Because of

the breadth of experiences I have that are relevant to this area of research and practice, I was uniquely prepared to conduct this research. My connectedness to the nuance of classroom life and complexity of mentoring relationships informed this research from conception to reporting, and my interpretation can offer a contextualized contribution to the field of mentoring in teacher education.

Researcher Assumptions

This study was informed, not only by my experiences as a mentor and classroom teacher, but also by several assumptions that influenced my research. Primarily, I assumed that most mentors are not adequately supported with practical strategies and focused professional development on effective mentoring practices. This leads into my second assumption that mentoring has taken a metaphorical "back seat" to simply filling vacant teaching positions. In an educational climate where the teaching profession is experiencing mass turnover, the most pressing issue will take priority. I argue, however, that solid mentoring practices could potentially correct this trend by empowering novice teachers to exercise agency over their own professional learning as they enter the field as classroom teachers. I also operated from the assumption that the model of mentoring that occurs in this university-based center is not indicative of the mentoring that occurs in most other school settings, especially in public school practicum sites. The center where I conducted the study is characterized by a dual emphasis on mentoring and classroom teaching, where the mentoring role is embedded into the job description. Whereas, in many other contexts, mentoring is an add-on to classroom teaching practice where, at most, teachers may receive a small stipend for agreeing to mentor PTs. Lastly, I assumed that unbalanced power dynamics are the reality for most, if not all, mentoring relationships. These power dynamics are the cultural current that drives the formation of

mentoring identities and practices, if left unchallenged. To achieve balance, mentors must actively seek out and implement practices that recalibrate the distribution of power and agency toward preservice teachers.

Key Terminology

Preservice Teacher and Mentor Teacher

I use the terms *preservice teacher* (PT), *students*, and *student teacher* to signify the individuals enrolled in university-based teacher education programs. I use the word *children* to refer to the young children in the early childhood classroom. Also, I use the term *preservice teacher* with hesitancy because of the variety of paths leading to participation in teaching education programs (e.g., practicing teachers pursuing additional education or certification after having professional teaching experience). However, I use this language to be consistent with the language prevalent in the literature.

I use the terms *mentor teacher* (MT) and *demonstration teacher* (DT) to describe the individual working as the lead classroom teacher and assigned mentor for preservice teachers. In the context of this case study, this job is titled *demonstration teacher*, so some switching between the two terms is necessary.

Mentor Positioning

For this study, *mentor positioning* was defined as the situated place a mentor teacher assumes in relation to the preservice teacher during shared interactions (Quinones et al., 2020). The concept of *positioning* was originally studied and understood within the context of conversations – focusing on a person's placement within a system of connected social relationships (Quinones et al., 2020). Consistent with another recent study on mentoring dynamics, the application of this concept to mentoring illuminates the importance and nuance of

explicit and implicit power dynamics in the complex MT-PT relationship. At times, MTs and PTs are subjected to defined positions based on the systemic professional demands and necessities. Through a cultural-historical framework, however, a person chooses their assumed position in certain contexts among those positions that are obtainable to them in each social situation (Quinones et al., 2020). So, contextual and systemic factors are largely at play in mentor positioning, as the mentor is situated in a position of power by default. The decision to challenge the normative position is left in the hands of the MT and their willingness to adopt an alternative place, which can change the positions and subsequent learning opportunities available to PTs (Quinones et al., 2020).

Reciprocal Mentoring

This study explored the efficacy of pedagogical documentation as a tool to create opportunities for *reciprocal mentoring*. Reciprocal mentoring is defined as the bidirectional nature of learning among MTs and PTs, characterized by opportunities for both the mentor and PT to assume the role of teacher *and* learner. Reciprocal mentoring stems from the belief that both individuals possess *funds of knowledge* that contribute to the partnership (Moll et al., 1992; Nolan, 2017). Importantly, this reciprocity is dynamic and fluid – adjusting to the contextual moment in a way that dignifies the work and contribution of all practitioners, regardless of their years of experience.

Documentation

In this study, documentation is defined as evidence of children's learning as recorded through tools like video, photographs, work samples, and anecdotal notes. The aim of documentation is to evidence learning as it occurred and was experienced by children (Edwards et al., 2020). The concept of pedagogical documentation as defined here stems from the work of

Loris Malaguzzi in the public education system of early childhood in Reggio Emilia, Italy beginning in the 1950s (Edwards et al., 2020; Malaguzzi, 2012). From these foundations, teachers utilize documentation to *make the learning process visible*, meaning they take an intensive approach to demonstrate how the children's thoughts, actions, and words illustrate the teaching and learning story (Edwards et al., 2020; Katz & Chard, 1996). The primary purpose of documentation is to provoke observation, interpretation, and analysis, which leads to new emergent questions and guides curriculum decision-making (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Gandini & Goldharber, 2001; Krechevsky et al., 2013; Project Zero and Reggio Children, 2001). In this study, the chosen media for documentation were video recordings of children and teachers in the classroom context. Once recorded, that video documentation was then brought to collaborative spaces where practitioners watched, noticed, interpreted, and analyzed what occurred in the video through shared reflection.

Pedagogical Documentation Review

In this study, pedagogical documentation review is the joint venture of observing, reflecting, and interpreting documentation in a collaborative, dialogic space. The primary form of reviewed documentation in this study were videos of children and teachers in-context. During the process of pedagogical documentation review, a group of educators gathers around a video excerpt recorded by and brought to the meeting by one team member. Typically, the video is a few minutes in length, leaving most of the meeting time for sharing observations, posing questions, and sharing interpretations. The child or children are viewed as protagonists in the documented story – drawing upon the pedagogical foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach, which hold to the *image of the child* as intelligent, strong, and naturally curious (Malaguzzi, 1994). During the initial phases of this process, teachers work to suspend judgment and initial

reactions to the events unfolding on the video. In this practice, the teachers attempt to see the world through the child's eyes, rather than evaluate the child's actions or words as appropriate or inappropriate. Instead, they are urged to sit in a disposition of curiosity, noticing what they see and remaining curious about what insight this offers about the child. At a transition point, the team shifts to thinking forward, where members share their interpretations and ideas for how classroom curriculum might be shaped by what they observed.

Organization of Dissertation

In the subsequent chapters, I explain the theoretical frameworks that inform this study, the recent literature pertinent to this area of research, and the methods I utilized when conducting this research. I offer a detailed description of the case study context, reveal the study's findings, and discuss conclusions, limitations, and implications drawn from this research.

In Chapter 2, I describe cultural-historical activity theory and the subject positioning framework. I detail the recent literature on mentoring in early childhood teacher education – specifically expounding upon the gradual shift from an apprenticeship model toward an integrated model. Then, I describe the origins of pedagogical documentation from the philosophies and practices of early childhood education in Reggio Emilia, followed by a description of the process of pedagogical documentation review in a collaborative context. In Chapter 3, I discuss the study rationale, participants, and the study timeline. I also detail the data collection methods, analyses, and how I addressed issues of data quality. I conclude Chapter 3 with a discussion of ethical considerations and commitments. In Chapter 4, I describe the physical context and pedagogical culture of the early childhood center where this study took place. This chapter provides insights into the community of practice surrounding the participants, specifically as it relates to their distinct practice of pedagogical documentation. In Chapter 5, I

reveal the study's findings organized by each research question. The first question is discussed through four findings, and the second research question is described through five illustrative vignettes. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a discussion of how these findings are connected to the mentoring literature and situated within the field of teacher education. I discuss synthesized conclusions, limitations, and implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that informed the design, data collection, and analysis of this study – cultural-historical activity theory and the subject positioning framework. Then, I discuss various approaches and relevant empirical research on mentoring practices in early childhood teacher education. I describe the positioning literature, and how this concept relates to mentoring PTs. I detail the method and practice of pedagogical documentation in early childhood education and explain how it has been used as a tool for teacher inquiry and professional learning.

Theoretical Framework

This study considered mentoring practice and pedagogical documentation through the lens of the subject positioning framework, which is nested within cultural-historical activity theory. Positioning is a critical concept within mentoring partnerships, as it calls attention to systems of dynamic relationships and the subsequent learning experiences that result from assuming a different position (Quinones et al., 2020). In this section, I discuss both frameworks and illustrate how they provided a lens to examine dyadic mentoring interactions in this study.

Cultural-historical Activity Theory

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was developed from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1978). CHAT holds that cognition is culturally situated and is described through three main components: the activity in which one participates, the other people involved in that activity, and the cultural practices relevant to the context of that experience. Furthermore, activities are accompanied by cultural tools that provide a means through which cognitive development occurs (Newman & Newman, 2016). In the case of this study, shared

documentation review served as one such tool. CHAT elevates the cultural underpinnings that each person brings to social spaces – acknowledging the complexities of one's social and cultural practices, and further, the intricacies of the formation of a third culture comprising an intertwining of each person's cultural beliefs and practices (Quinones et al., 2020). Rather than considering the individual, interpersonal, and cultural components as distinct categories of development, a cultural-historical perspective holds that collaborative spaces are most fully understood by knitting together the self, interactions with others, and the cultural and systemic contexts that exist within and surrounding the group (Newman & Newman, 2016).

Subject Positioning Framework

The subject positioning framework provides a theoretical lens through which we can better understand the way MTs and PTs position themselves in relation to one another (Fleer, 2015; Quinones et al., 2020). Originally used to understand teacher-child relationships, Fleer's work was later applied to mentoring relationships (Quinones et al., 2020). According to the subject positioning framework, mentors can situate themselves *above*, *below*, or *equal* to the PT. *Above* positioning occurs when a mentor positions themselves as more knowledgeable or experienced, and the PT is positioned as inexperienced or novice. In the *above* position, the mentor might offer suggestions, strategies, or directives for the PT to try. In the *below* position, mentors assume a learner role in the dyad, while the PT assumes a leading role. These situations may occur when sharing theoretical understandings gleaned from university coursework and recent shifts in macro-level pedagogy. *Equal* positioning occurs when PTs and MTs have a fully collaborative and collegial disposition. In these situations, the PT is given autonomy accompanied by accountability and emotional support (Quinones et al., 2020). Mentors can also adopt the *greater-we* position, where the dyad considers a challenge or idea through a unified

stance. Quinones et al. (2020) call this *collaborative mentoring positioning*, where mentors and PTs are partners who learn and teach alongside each other as a cohesive team. A key distinction of the greater-we positioning is that the children in the classroom and other teaching team members view the PT as a classroom teacher. In this position, knowledge and expertise is shared bidirectionally among the mentor and PT (Quinones et al., 2020).

Strategies for Reviewing the Literature

For this review, I utilized the One Search online library database through the University of Tennessee. This search engine provides access to a collection of relevant peer-reviewed journals. Aside from theoretical literature and seminal works, I narrowed my search to include work published in or after 2018, but then widened my search to include works published in or after 2013. I refined the searches with the following filters: *2018 - present*, *articles*, *English*, *peer-reviewed journals*. I used several sets of search terms to find relevant literature. For the review of the early childhood education mentoring literature, I used the following search terms: *early childhood* + *mentor* + *teacher* (132 results), *preservice teacher* + *mentoring practices* (158 results), and *mentor position* + *preservice teacher* (16 results). To review the pedagogical documentation literature, I used the following search terms which produced the following results: *pedagogical documentation* + *Reggio Emilia* (25 results), *pedagogical documentation* + *collaborative* + *teacher* (18 results), and *early childhood* + *pedagogical documentation* (100 results).

Mentoring in Early Childhood Teacher Education

Teacher educators are tasked with preparing future teachers with essential competencies and professional skills to enter the landscape of early childhood education. While initial coursework offers theoretical understanding of early childhood education, PTs begin to develop

an applied skill set from being in the classroom context. Through practicum experiences, PTs can experiment with theory and practice with the guidance of a mentor teacher. Current research on mentoring in teacher education juxtaposes two approaches or models of mentoring – an apprenticeship model and an integrated model. Historically, the apprenticeship model has been practiced most frequently, however, some scholars and teacher educators contend for a more balanced approach to mentoring as is present in the integrated model.

Apprenticeship Mentoring Model

The *apprenticeship* model of mentor teaching is characterized by a top-down approach that is primarily teacher-directed (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). The rationale for this model of practicum experience is that PTs gain exposure to the context where theory can be applied. The duality of theory and practice is viewed from a positivist paradigmatic stance, holding that theory and application occur separately (Puroila et al., 2021). In an apprenticeship model, mentoring relationships are unidirectional, where a more knowledgeable MT transfers knowledge to a novice PT (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017). With this approach, mentors use an individualistic approach to focus on specific areas of needed growth for each PT. Throughout the practicum placement, mentors support PTs in developing these identified skills and competencies.

Within the apprenticeship model is the gradual-release approach as originally described by Guyton & McIntyre (1990). Initially, preservice teachers observe while the mentor models teaching practice. Over the course of the practicum placement, the mentor passes off teaching responsibilities gradually until the PT teaches independently without direct guidance from the mentor. The phasing-in/out method typically culminates in a version of solo teaching, where the PT assumes all planning, teaching, and classroom management responsibilities for a period of

time. This model has been and continues to be prevalent across many early childhood settings, as classroom teaching experience is often considered to be a sufficient prerequisite for mentoring (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014).

There is growing criticism of the apprenticeship model in the field of teacher education and the mentoring literature (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014; Collins & Ting, 2017; White & Forgasz, 2017; Zeichner et al., 2015). To build a PT's independence and confidence, a MT may refrain from interjecting or giving in-the-moment feedback as to not interrupt or challenge the authority of the PT in front of children (Soslau et al., 2019). Additionally, PTs may try to emulate the practices of MTs by copying strategies and teaching techniques without hearing and knowing the rationale behind practices and decisions made by the mentor (Soslau et al., 2019). Missing from this model are opportunities for PTs to participate as part of a collaborative learning community where they are actively engaged in and responsible for all the processes of teaching (e.g., observing, assessing, planning, and implementing) in collaboration with their mentor at every phase of their practicum experience.

Another criticism of the apprenticeship model connects to the essential skill of *adaptive expertise* (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). Adaptive teaching expertise encompasses the processes of planning, teaching, reflecting, and adjusting (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020; Hayden et al., 2013; Parsons & Vaughn, 2016; Soslau, 2012). When looking for evidence of adaptive expertise in situ with nine MT-PT dyads, one team of researchers found limited instances of shared adaptive expertise (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). This means that mentor teachers in this study did not regularly engage in sharing their decision-making processes with PTs or verbalizing when and why they adapted instruction. So, one primary critique of an apprenticeship model is that MTs may not engage PTs in the mental processes of teaching,

therefore leaving PTs to interpret and transfer practices to their own skill set without knowing the MT's intended rationale. Furthermore, the apprenticeship model does not allow for mentors to assume the role of learner in the dyadic relationship. Some researchers have found that this model does not allow the mentor's teaching practice to be problematized and questioned (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014).

Integrated Mentoring Models

Recent literature in teacher education has shifted toward a mentoring model that responds to the criticisms and perceived weaknesses of the apprenticeship model, called an *integrated* model of mentoring (Puroila et al., 2021). An integrated model challenges the dichotomy of theoretical knowledge from coursework and applied classroom practice, and instead, views practicum experiences as a transformative step in teacher development (Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016). Further, an integrated model challenges the typical power dynamic among mentors and PTs and is characterized by learning communities where shared meaning is co-constructed (Collins & Ting, 2017). This alternative approach to mentoring moves away from the individualization present in the apprenticeship model to establish a collegial community where the preservice teacher is an acting member of the collective.

Shifting from a traditional apprenticeship model to an integrated model is not a simple adjustment. Systemically, integrated mentoring requires that mentors are not just considered supplemental tutors but are considered teacher educators in a similar capacity as university instructors, and therefore, are provided with regular opportunities to pursue specific professional development on mentoring (Ambrosetti, 2014; Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Puroila et al., 2021; White & Forgasz, 2017). This mentorship model requires robust partnerships among mentors, placement sites, preservice teachers, and university instructors, characterized by regular

communication, fluid expectation-setting, and site-specific adaptation (Collins & Ting, 2017; Puroila et al., 2021). Provided that the necessary structural supports are implemented for MTs, this model requires mentors to bring PTs into the processes and less-visible methods of teaching by routinely engaging in dialogue, reflection, and decision-making together with the teaching team (Foong et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020).

In practice, integrated mentorship models are contextually situated, molding to suit the mentor, school site, and surrounding systems. One such integrated model is the co-teaching model. In co-teaching, mentors and PTs engage in a cycle of inquiry in practice (observation, instruction, and reflection) together through in-the-moment *huddles* (Soslau et al., 2019; Tobin, 2006). Rather than waiting until meeting or planning time, this informal check-in brings conversational transparency to teaching reflections and decisions in real-time. Huddles have been shown to reduce the fear and stigma associated with feedback – normalizing input from the teaching team and strengthening the capacity for adaptability among team members (Soslau et al., 2019).

As mentioned before, the larger systems surrounding mentoring relationships will either create pathways or barriers to the effective implementation of integrated mentorship models. Unfortunately, research points mostly to the encountered and anticipated barriers to enacting an integrated mentoring approach.

Practical barriers. Recent research outlines the potential and actualized barriers to implementation of an integrated mentoring model. Such barriers include a lack of mentoring training, increased time commitment, lack of reciprocal respect, and an unwillingness for MTs to release control (Guise et al., 2016; Puroila et al., 2021; Soslau et al., 2019). In their mixed methods study of 111 early childhood teachers, Puroila et al. (2021) found that nearly 62% of

teachers who had mentored one to two students had no mentoring training. To fully shift from the traditional apprenticeship mentoring model to an integrated approach, mentors will need systemic support at the school and district levels to re-learn new ways of interacting with and learning alongside PTs. Additionally, Soslau et al. (2019) posit that an integrated approach will require an increased time commitment. This shift requires dedicated time outside the classroom for co-reflecting and co-planning and must be built into the daily and weekly schedules of the teaching team. In integrated models like the co-teaching model, regular communication is key to building this partnership, and while this can happen in the classroom to a degree, depth of shared interpretation and planning requires that teams are given extended time outside of the classroom for collaboration (Collins & Ting, 2017; Tobin, 2006).

Pedagogical barriers. Compounding onto the practical barriers to integrated model implementation, are the pedagogical barriers to implementing this mentoring approach. Some researchers have found a lack of reciprocal respect between mentors and PTs (Guise et al., 2016; Soslau et al., 2019). Preservice teachers may come to distrust their mentor if they sense they do not value their ideas and perspectives. PTs report a perceived lack of reciprocity in the relationship – adopting a permanent stance of learner instead of a dynamic partnership where each member learns and teaches interchangeably (Guise et al., 2016; Soslau et al., 2019). Furthermore, Soslau et al. (2019) hold that if the mentor is not satisfied with the PT's level of professionalism or commitment, they are unlikely to adopt a willingness to share classroom leadership and responsibilities. Integrated models demand that MTs share (give up) power and control to provide ample meaningful opportunities for PTs to function as contributing, autonomous members of the teaching team. This act encourages a reflective stance on the MT's teaching practices, as they are laid bare for another person to consider – requiring vulnerability

and a teachable disposition on the part of the mentor. However, once successfully navigating the transparent exchange of pedagogy and practice, therein lies the potential for mentors and PTs to operate as authentic collaborators (Guise et al., 2016; Soslau et al., 2019).

Pedagogical Documentation Practice and Review

Defining Pedagogical Documentation

In the literature, pedagogical documentation is defined as the process of *making the learning process visible*, meaning that teachers take an intensive approach to demonstrate how the children's thoughts, actions, and words illustrate the teaching and learning story (Edwards et al., 2020; Katz & Chard, 1996). Distinct from the practice of observation, pedagogical documentation brings particular attention to visible paths of children's learning as it evolves. For example, teachers might document learning and teaching through anecdotal notes, children's work samples, photographs, or video – reflecting learning as it occurred for children (Edwards et al., 2020). While documentation may be displayed formally or disseminated to various stakeholders (e.g., families, school leaders, other teachers, etc.), its primary purpose is to provoke observation, interpretation, and analysis, which leads to new emergent questions and guides curriculum decision-making (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Gandini & Goldharber, 2001; Krechevsky et al., 2013; Project Zero and Reggio Children, 2001). Scholars and teacher educators offer an important distinction between documentation and the process of *pedagogical* documentation – saying that the latter is not a product or outcome, but an iterative and emergent process of reflection and action (Kang & Walsh, 2018). Moss (2019) further explains the scope of the pedagogical documentation process by drawing the distinction between documentation collection and the subsequent reflective action. He says that teachers collect documentation in the form of artifacts (photos, videos, work samples, etc.) to be shared with a collective of

educators and serves as a provocation for critical interpretation and democratic dialogue (Moss, 2019). In fact, it is only through the act of reflection and interpretation that documentation becomes *pedagogical* (Alaçam & Olgan, 2021).

Origins and History

The method and practice of pedagogical documentation, as described above and in this study, stems from the work of Loris Malaguzzi in the public education system of early childhood in Reggio Emilia, Italy beginning in the 1950s (Edwards et al., 2020; Malaguzzi, 2012). Since its inception, the educational approach of pedagogical documentation has become internationally recognized in countries such as Sweden, Finland, Germany, Turkey, Australia, England, Norway, United Arab Emirates, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States (Alaçam & Olgan, 2021). In the United States' educational context, pedagogical documentation has close connections to styles of documentation stemming from progressive education and the Child Study movement (Katz & Chard, 1996).

Pedagogical Documentation in Practice

In practice, pedagogical documentation occurs in multiple phases, requires acute listening and attention to details, and clearly parallels the methodological underpinnings of qualitative research. Kang and Walsh (2018) describe pedagogical documentation in five stages: *recording*, *organizing*, *analyzing*, *creating displays*, and *reporting*. In the analyzing stage, teams of teachers practice *multiple listening*, where they suspend judgment on what they see and hear (Rinaldi, 2006). Instead, they engage with the artifact with an open mind and a willingness to hear new perspectives. A similar practice of *emergent listening* (Davies, 2014) details the practice of listening poised to notice the biases through which we understand what we see and hear. The

insights gleaned from this type of listening are not initially apparent and require sustained interaction with both the content area and dialogue around it (Clark et al., 2022).

Pedagogical Documentation as Professional Development

Pedagogical documentation can function as a methodical and meaningful tool for teachers' professional development. In one of only a few quantitative studies on pedagogical documentation in recent literature, Rintakorpi (2016) found that professional development was a primary benefit of pedagogical documentation. Furthermore, the teachers in this study had a positive perception of this form of professional development – achieving the goal of educators' continued learning while aligning with the principles of child participation and centering children's perspectives (Rintakorpi, 2016). In another study with early childhood teachers and one pedagogical leader, Sousa (2019) found that teachers' professional learning through pedagogical documentation was connected to evidence of children's depth of learning and was considered a source of empowerment for both teachers and children. Also, this study found that pedagogical documentation enacted a *pedagogy of listening*, where teachers were careful to see and hear children's perceptions (Clark & Moss, 2001; Rinaldi, 2006; Sousa, 2019).

Additionally, through the processes of sharing pedagogical documentation, teachers participate in collaborative inquiry with other teachers, which reflects the interpersonal nature of the profession. Meaningful professional learning does not occur in isolation, but within school communities alongside children, families, and other teachers. The act of pedagogical documentation demands that teachers come face-to-face with the perspectives held by others, since it is designed to elicit dialogue and the emergence of conflicting ideas (Bowne et al., 2010; Guidici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Rinaldi, 2006). Through collaborative dialogue, educators engage in professional (and personal) risk-taking, as they lay bare their values, emotions, and

beliefs that inform their subjective lens. Carlina Rinaldi (2000), president of the Reggio Children Foundation, calls this *intersubjectivity* – where educators are confronted with the ideologies and biases of one another in collaborative spaces. Pedagogical documentation builds upon a foundation of intersubjectivity as teaching teams gather around an artifact with lenses formed by their biases, beliefs, and experiences. In collaborative spaces like these, teachers participate in *negotiated learning* through documentation, where meaning is constructed within the group and mediated by the other group members (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006). In this sense, pedagogical documentation ensures that teachers learn alongside other educators, rather than in isolation where they are exposed only to their own opinions and ideas.

Teacher as Researcher

Teacher research holds to an image of teachers as agentic producers of new knowledge rather than passive consumers of existing professional knowledge (Baker, 2020; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Pedagogical documentation builds upon the image of teacher-as-researcher – professionals who are not only capable of, but deserving of their own paths of inquiry, space to experiment, and opportunities to arrive at new findings (Maldonado-Ruiz & Soto Gómez, 2021). Simply put, teachers are qualitative researchers and pedagogical documentation is the research method. Data collection occurs through the artifacts observed and recorded in the classroom, and data analysis occurs within the collective team of teachers as they take what they know about children's development (the theoretical framework) and make sense of the artifacts situated within the particular context of the classroom (the research context).

Pedagogical Documentation and Preservice Teachers

Teacher educators are challenged to offer preservice teachers opportunities to expand their thinking beyond prescriptive curriculum and uniform thinking about professional learning.

Instead of following a set curricular path, the process of pedagogical documentation demands that PTs employ critical thinking skills and engage in collaborative dialogue with other professionals as they reflect on children's learning (Edwards et al., 2020; Suárez, 2006). Although the literature points to the benefits of pedagogical documentation with early childhood teachers, the empirical literature is lacking studies that explore PTs experiences with this process. One of the most recent studies was published in 2010, leaving a gap of 13 years of research and practice. In this study of undergraduate early childhood PTs, a team of teacher educators found that documentation can function as a tool for collaborative dialogue and shared inquiry with PTs (Bowne et al., 2010). They also found that PTs did not understand documentation as an action-oriented process. Rather, they engaged with practices of documentation without understanding that they were doing so. For example, some PTs stated that they were reflecting and making curriculum plans based on what they learned from observation and shared interpretation of the artifacts. However, when asked if they discussed documentation, many PTs did not feel as though they had *done documentation* (Bowne et al., 2010). This points to potential misunderstandings that can emerge when interpreting the act of pedagogical documentation apart from the practiced expertise of the mentor teachers who engage with this work regularly. Also, it calls for the connectedness of teacher educators (course instructors) with mentor teachers to ensure consistent language across coursework and practicum settings. Pedagogical documentation can be the link that connects all stakeholders – bringing university teacher educators, mentors, PTs, and school communities together to step into the complexity and nuance of teacher education pathways (Maldonado-Ruiz & Soto Gómez, 2021).

Conclusion

In this review, I discussed cultural-historical activity theory and the subject positioning framework which provide a lens through which researchers can view mentor positioning within the activity of pedagogical documentation. Then, I detailed the recent literature on mentoring in early childhood teacher education. The literature describes two fundamentally different approaches to mentoring – an apprenticeship model and an integrated model (Puroila et al., 2021). In the apprenticeship model, PTs train under an experienced mentor and are gradually released to teach independently as they gain experience (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017; Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). In an integrated model, like co-teaching, MTs work to establish a learning environment where PTs are acting and contributing members of the teaching team. I also defined the practice of pedagogical documentation as making children's learning visible, which subsequently provokes observation, reflection, and interpretation among teams of educators (Edwards et al., 2020; Katz & Chard, 1996). This act propels emergent curriculum decisions and promotes a critical stance on pedagogy (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Gandini & Goldharber, 2001; Krechevsky et al., 2013; Project Zero and Reggio Children, 2001).

This review explored the state of the literature on mentor positioning and pedagogical documentation separately. Current research is lacking empirical studies that examine the intersection of PT mentoring and pedagogical documentation. However, several potential bridges could connect the two in research and practice. For example, as the mentoring literature continues to shift away from an apprenticeship model toward integrated models, the introduction of pedagogical documentation to co-teaching teams of MTs and PTs could offer regular opportunities for PTs to offer insights alongside MTs. The present study addressed this gap in the research by exploring the intersection of mentoring and pedagogical documentation from a lens

that considers the co-constructed nature of learning and the positioning that reciprocal mentoring requires.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to explore the role of shared documentation review as a practical tool among teams of early childhood mentor and preservice teachers. This study examined the current mentoring practices at a university-based child development school through a comprehensive look into the practice of pedagogical documentation review. First, I discuss the suitability for qualitative methodologies to answer the research questions, followed by an explanation of my onto-epistemological paradigmatic stance. Then, I discuss the case study approach I used to frame this study. Next, I describe the research population, sample, and data collection methods. I conclude this chapter with the study timeline, analytical approach, and how I addressed issues of data quality.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative methodologies were suitable to address my research questions because of their capability to provide a *thick description* of the experiences of mentors and preservice teachers in context (Geertz, 1973; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The aim of qualitative research is to understand how people interpret and make meaning of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I sought to better understand mentoring dispositions as evidenced in the pedagogical documentation process along with the ways mentors make meaning of the practice alongside PTs. Qualitative methodologies align with my social constructivist onto-epistemology. Within the constructivist paradigmatic stance, what someone considers to be real is constructed in that individual's mind and truth is subjectively determined by their perspective (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 1998). *Social* constructivism holds that meaning is constructed collectively through shared social interactions – bringing focus to the group over the individual (Gergen, 1985).

Approaching this study from a social constructivist paradigm brought focus to the complexity within and among individuals and groups – considering the multiple simultaneous relationships and interaction among the mentor teachers, preservice teachers, and surrounding school and university communities. Within this study, qualitative methods captured specificity and depth within and among the cases. Approaching this research qualitatively acknowledges the gray area and nuance of positioning and the inherent messiness of pedagogical documentation, which cannot be captured through numbers, but must be shared through words (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In this study, mentor teachers shared their constructed perspective or subjectivity. A constructivist onto-epistemology and qualitative methodology views subjectivity as inescapable, assumed, and valuable. Here, mentors' years of professional practice, pedagogical insights, and ways of knowing did not detract from the validity of the findings but added to the anthology of complex narratives of mentoring in teacher education today.

Case Study Approach

I used the case study approach as described by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). Both Stake and Merriam's approaches are informed by a constructivist onto-epistemology. Aligned with Miles and Huberman's interpretation of a case as a "phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context," Merriam defines a *case* as "a thing, a single entity, around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27; Miles et al., 2020, p. 24). Stake describes a case similarly as "a specific, complex, functioning thing…which has a boundary and working parts" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). This study drew upon the particularistic, descriptive, and practical nature of the case study approach to share with the reader a thick description of the specific phenomenon under study (Yazan, 2015). The bounded system in this study consisted of the mentors and preservice teachers in the early childhood classrooms of a university-based program, and the phenomenon

under study was mentor positioning within the practice of pedagogical documentation. The bounds of this case study are significant to the interpretation of its findings since the context of the university-based center is unique and distinct from many other early childhood educational contexts in the United States. Key to implementing the practice of pedagogical documentation is the infrastructure to support collaborative meaning-making among teaching teams and a pace of classroom life that is conducive to observing the natural curiosities and behaviors of young children. Lastly, one of the fundamental purposes of a case-study approach to research is to provide insights that will inform and improve practice (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In this case, the study aimed to facilitate space for observation and reflection with mentor teachers that would inform their ongoing and ever-evolving teaching practice.

Research Context

This study was conducted within a particular context that warranted in-depth description to situate the reader's understanding of the methods and findings. The next chapter, Chapter 4, describes this case study's context through a description of its physical setting, organizational structure, history, mission, and pedagogical influences. In Chapter 4, I also describe the layers of connectedness between the university coursework, practicum site, and embedded mentoring practices in this context. I offer a detailed illustration of the community of practice at the center, describe their overall culture, and outline some of the scholars and practitioners that have influenced their current pedagogical framework – specifically around the practice of pedagogical documentation.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from five preschool classrooms at a university-based early childhood center. The primary participants were the lead teachers (called

demonstration teachers in this context) and secondary participants were the senior-level practicum students. Descriptions of the mentors' demographic information and years of teaching experience can be found in Table 3.1.

Both primary and secondary participants (MTs and PTs) were provided with informed consent detailing the goal of the study, expectations for participation, and any potential benefits or risks. I expected that mentor and preservice teachers would not experience any risks from participating in this study. I anticipated that participation could benefit PTs and mentors by drawing attention and priority to the practice of pedagogical documentation and mentoring practice. In my teaching experience, bringing time and attention to any pedagogical practice offers opportunities for learning and growth.

This case study focused on MTs in the context of mentoring interactions. MTs were paired with senior-level practicum students enrolled in the semester-long intensive placement at the center. The size of the PT cohort varies from term to term, but this term had six students enrolled in the course. Each practicum student was assigned to one of six classrooms at the center. This study utilized a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2015), since the aim was to provide information-rich descriptions of MT and PT engagement. To account for any undue influence I had on mentors' participation, I recruited MTs through their assigned pedagogical coach. Instead of meeting with the teachers directly, I provided the coaches with detailed study information and informed consent. During one of their weekly coaching meetings, the classroom pedagogical coach (in some cases this was a center director) asked mentors to participate in this study. Coaches later gave me the completed informed consent, after which I met with the participants during a portion of a weekly teacher meeting. Five out of the possible six mentors agreed to participate in the study.

Table 3.1

Mentor Teacher Demographic Information and Experience

Name	Age	Highest Degree Earned	Years of Teaching Experience	Years of Mentoring Experience	Years Working at this Center
Catherine	29	Master's	10	5	4
Ella	52	Bachelor's	34	27	27
Leona	41	Bachelor's	17	10	17
Sabrina	47	Master's	18	12	2
Valerie	43	Bachelor's	25	15	17

I recruited PTs by attending their weekly seminar and sharing about the study. I coordinated with the course instructor, who is also the center associate director, to find a time when I could utilize 15 minutes of the seminar. To protect confidentiality, I gave each PT a blank envelope with an informed consent inside. They each had an opportunity to sign the informed consent or simply return the paper to the envelope unsigned if they did not wish to participate. I then left the seminar, and the course instructor collected all the envelopes. She returned them to me on-site at one center location. All the six practicum students (PTs) consented to be in the study. Participation was contingent upon *both* members of the dyad consenting to participate, so the sixth PT was not part of the study.

Study Timeline

Planning for this study began more than a year before data collection began. In collaboration with my advisor, committee members, and the early childhood center directors, I crafted the study design and began making plans for how I would conduct this research, given my embedded role as a Demonstration Teacher in this center. I proposed this dissertation study to my doctoral committee members in Spring 2023, and I obtained their approval to move forward with my proposed plans. I obtained approval from the center directors after presenting the information in Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. I obtained Institutional Review Board approval in May of 2023. I began data collection at the start of the summer term in June, and data collection continued through July. During this term, the cohort of six senior-level students fulfilled the practicum requirements necessary to obtain pre-K through third grade licensure – five of whom participated in the study.

PTs taking this course in the summer term typically spend the first several weeks of their placement getting acclimated to early childhood classroom life through building relationships

with the teaching team, children, families, and familiarizing themselves with routines, rituals, and ongoing curriculum projects. During the next phase of their placement, PTs often begin co-planning and implementing project-based lessons alongside their mentor teacher. Toward the end of the term, in late July, PTs are typically collaborating reciprocally with their mentor to plan, assess, and modify lesson plans and projects. In this phase, PTs may also begin to make autonomous decisions within the classroom (e.g., project work, whole group teaching strategies, and relationship-building strategies with families and children).

For the first data collection method, mentor teachers recorded a meeting where shared video pedagogical documentation review occurred with PTs during the month of June. Each pedagogical documentation session was between 20 and 30 minutes in length due to the scheduled time for the meeting. Following the recorded meetings, mentor teachers spent 15 minutes reflective journaling in response to provided prompts. In July, after receiving and reviewing the recording and reflective journal, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each mentor teacher. During these interviews, I utilized the documentation review sessions and their reflective journals as a springboard for discussion. This interview provided insight into mentor teachers' perceptions of their position within the practice of pedagogical documentation alongside preservice teachers. I analyzed the data in iterative cycles as they were collected. First, I analyzed the video recording data, then I continued the thematic coding cycles through content analysis with the reflective journals. These two sources and corresponding analyses informed my approach to interview data collection, as I sought to clarify and gain a deeper understanding from the mentor's point of view. After the mentor interviews, data collection concluded. Analyses continued into August and September. During the remaining months of the Fall semester of 2023, I completed the writing of this dissertation study.

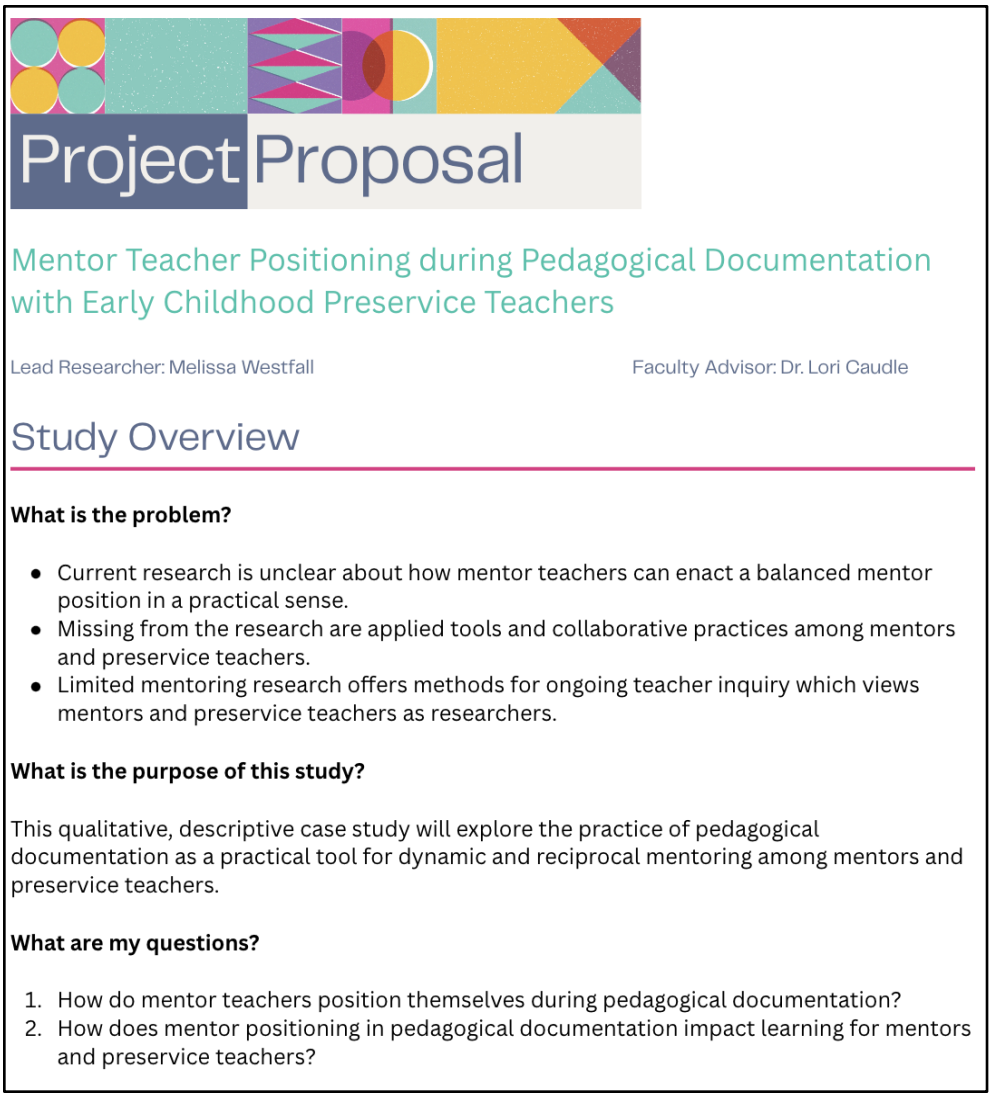


Figure 3.1

Project Proposal Description Provided to Center Director (Part One)



Proposed Timeline

On-site at both center locations of the from May 22 - July 7, 2023.

Refer to the Project Workflow and Dialogic Tool for specific details and ongoing dialogue.

PHASE 1: PLANNING April 11 – May 19	PHASE 2: RECRUITMENT May 22 – June 2	PHASE 3: DATA COLLECTION June 5 – July 7
Proposal Meeting with Center Director Use of the Center for Research Approval IRB Approval Communicate plan to directors via email	Weeks of May 22 – June 2 Mentor Recruitment: • Through coaches at individual meetings PT Recruitment: • Collaborate with course instructor • Attend a seminar to invite them to participate • Instructor collects informed consent	Meet with MT participants at Meeting with Mentoring Focus Proposed for June 5 (20 min) 3 Data Sources: • Mentor meeting • Reflective Journaling • Mentor Interviews

DATA SOURCES

Mentor Meeting Recording Embedded in existing practices	Reflective Journaling Additional project task	DT Interview Additional project task
Pedagogical documentation review around Video Observation discussion Melissa will assist with tech set-up and uploading as needed	Time needed: 15 mins per MT MT post-meeting prompted reflective journaling Audio, video, or written journal	Time needed: 1 hour per MT In-person video-recorded interview with Melissa Within 2 weeks of recorded mentor meeting

Figure 3.2

Project Proposal Description Provided to Center Director (Part Two)

Benefits, Risks, & Considerations

Benefits:

- Drawing attention and intention to mentoring practices and pedagogical documentation practices
- Opportunity for professional growth through documentation and structured reflection
- Potential for DTs to participate in post-study dissemination as desired

Risks:

- Participants will not experience any risks because of the study
- Job and course evaluation will not be impacted by participation
- Although protective measures will be taken, there is the risk of loss of confidentiality for participants.

Considerations:

- Alignment with goals of the center
- Time commitment for MTs and Center Directors
- Ethical considerations related to researcher's role

Figure 3.3

Project Proposal Description Provided to Center Director (Part Three)

Data Collection Methods

This study used three data collection methods to answer the research questions. All three data sources provided insight into both MT positioning and the impact their position had on learning. I gathered data from video recordings of mentor meetings where MTs met with their assigned PTs. Although several mentors sent a video recording of the entire meeting, I only focused on the time engaged in the practice of shared pedagogical documentation review around the chosen video clip. To offer MTs a timely space for reflection and interpretation, I gathered data from mentors' guided reflective journals. Following their mentor meetings, MTs spent up to 15 minutes journaling (type-written or video-recorded) about the pedagogical documentation review right after it occurred. For the final data source, I conducted semi-structured interviews with mentors where I prompted them to recall their recorded experience and speak to the nature of positioning around pedagogical documentation with PTs. These data sources offered a comprehensive portrait of mentors' positioning as evidenced within the process of shared pedagogical documentation and the intention surrounding their positioning.

Mentor Meetings

I collected video recordings of one weekly mentoring meeting when pedagogical documentation occurred. Mentor meetings occurred within the school day outside of the classroom for an allotted time. Each MT-PT dyad met one-on-one for one hour each week to discuss a variety of topics related to coursework, classroom practice, and curriculum planning. Pedagogical documentation review occurred in this setting. The meeting recordings captured the act of shared video documentation review among MTs and PTs. The documentation under review was in video form, which elicited a factual retelling of the events that took place in the classroom in a way that only video can preserve. Again, the purpose of this study was to describe

collaborative learning spaces characterized by reciprocity and shared meaning-making, not necessarily to capture instances of instruction for feedback.

MTs set up a tripod and phone camera in the meeting space in a location of their choosing. To the extent they could control, this place provided the least amount of distraction and was positioned in a corner, out of the participants' direct view. Mentors also positioned the camera in a place where the video documentation under review was not visible to the camera to protect the identities and anonymity of the children featured in the video. The meeting recordings were transcribed for analysis. Of the five stages of pedagogical documentation outlined earlier by Kang and Walsh (2018), these data focused on the process through the first three stages: *recording*, *organizing*, and *analyzing.* They did not include the final two stages of creating displays and reporting to the larger classroom community. Table 3.2 provides the necessary information to understand the contextual factors of each dyad's pedagogical documentation session.

Post-meeting Reflective Journaling

Following the recorded mentor meeting, mentor participants reflected on the process of pedagogical documentation through guided journaling. They chose between four journaling options: audio, video, handwritten, or typewritten. Participants responded to the following prompt for their reflection:

> Reflect on this experience of pedagogical documentation with your student. What learning moments took place? In what ways did you take the role of **teacher**? In what ways did you take the role of **learner**?

Table 3.2

Contextual Factors for Pedagogical Documentation with each Dyad

MT	PT	Documentation Subject	Recorded the video clip	Started/stopped the video clip
Catherine	Jen	Jen leading a small group	Jen	Jen
Ella	Alexis	Ella leading a whole group meeting	Alexis	Alexis
Leona	Sophia	Leona leading a small group	Leona	Leona
Sabrina	Cara	Cara leading a small group	Cara	Cara
Valerie	Hailey	Video 1: Valerie leading a small group	Valerie	Valerie
		Video 2: Hailey leading a small group[a]	Valerie	Valerie

[a]Both members of this dyad decided to bring video clips to share with each other from their small group the previous week.

Four mentor participants completed their reflections by typing their journals, and one mentor chose to record a video reflection. The video-recorded reflection was especially interesting since it allowed me to see this mentor's candid responses, digressions, and drawn conclusions in an unpolished form. The other four mentors, who chose type-written journaling, ranged from direct list-like responses to stream-of-consciousness reflections.

Mentor Teacher Interviews

To triangulate the data from meeting recordings and reflective journals, I conducted semi-structured follow-up interviews with each mentor teacher participant. During this interview, I learned more about mentors' perceptions of their positioning during their shared video documentation review. Because of the relationships and rapport I already had with the participants, I utilized a romantic approach to interviewing as explained by Roulston (2010). Roulston describes this theoretical and epistemological interviewing approach as one that acknowledges the interviewer's insider relationship with the interviewee and elicits a conversational and reciprocal exchange. This type of interviewing is characterized by openness, honesty, and candor, and considers the subjectivity of the interviewer a means by which the two speakers can form a connection and mutual understanding (Roulston, 2010). To actively listen to the participants and engage in interaction, the interview was video recorded. This allowed me to communicate interest in and engagement with the participant's responses and support the conversational nature of the interview. It also allowed me to attend to the nuances of body language, inflection, emotion, and tone in data analysis. I spent about one hour with each mentor teacher for their interview.

The interview protocol was created for each participant individually because it was informed by initial analyses of the content of the mentor meeting recordings and reflective journals. All interview protocols followed the same progression of broad to narrow. In the first portion, I asked broadly about their mentoring journey. In the second section, I asked about their experience with pedagogical documentation with colleagues and with preservice teachers. In the third section, I narrowed in on a specific moment or concept that occurred in their mentor meeting or was talked about in their journal. Each mentor's interview protocol is included in Appendices A through E. As the interview was semi-structured, these questions aimed to prompt conversation about mentor positioning and were meant to loosely guide the interview. As expected, the interviews evolved and deviated from these questions as new lines of thinking and questioning emerged.

Data Analysis

Data from this study were analyzed with the goal of answering the research questions examining how mentor teachers position themselves in relation to preservice teachers during the process of shared video documentation and the subsequent learning opportunities that followed. I analyzed data from three sources: mentor meeting video recordings, guided reflective journals, and mentor interviews. I transcribed all the mentor meeting videos, video reflective journals, and interviews. I uploaded written journals and transcriptions into Dedoose qualitative analysis software. The data were organized first by participant and second by data type. The timeline of data collection required analyses to begin after I collected the video recordings of mentor meetings. I continued analyses with the reflective journals. Both analyses informed my approach to the interview. I analyzed data within cases to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual

mentors but also to the ways they are situated within the larger context of the center (Miles et al., 2020).

I analyzed the video, journal, and interview data using a thematic analysis as described by Saldaña (2016) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke's method of analysis utilizes a reflexive approach. During the initial phase of analysis, I spent prolonged amounts of time engaged with the data – reading, re-reading, journaling, memoing, and utilizing data visualization tools (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the second phase of analysis, I began by open coding the data by the first research question. To answer the first question on how mentors position themselves during pedagogical documentation, I used both deductive and inductive analysis to conduct open coding within a set of conceptual categories derived from the existing literature on subject positioning and applied to the relationship between mentor and preservice teacher (Fleer, 2015; Quinones et al., 2020). The conceptual categories, defined in Table 3.3, provided a framework that guided my analyses. For the first research question on mentor positioning during pedagogical documentation, codes emerged that were categorized within each of the conceptual categories. Figure 3.4 shows the conceptual categories with emergent code examples. See Appendix F for a complete list of emergent codes and corresponding frequencies.

To answer the second research question, I utilized a contextual analytic strategy to look more deeply into coded instances. I focused on specific coded "chunks" (Miles et al., 2020), found from the first research question and analyzed the subsequent interactions, experiences, and opportunities. I wanted to know what followed instances where mentors took specific positionings. I created a data table to clarify the connected provocation and subsequent response. In the initial round, I chose 15 exchanges from the data that illustrated powerful moments of learning or noticeably missed opportunities for learning.

Table 3.3

Conceptual Categories from Subject Positioning Framework (Fleer, 2015; Quinones et al., 2020)

Conceptual Category	Definition
Above	Mentor positions themselves above the PT in a teaching stance
Below	Mentor positions themselves below the PT in a learning stance
Equal	Mentor positions themselves equal to the PT in a collegial stance
Greater-we	Mentor and PT assume a collective stance indicative of active engagement in the construction of new shared knowledge

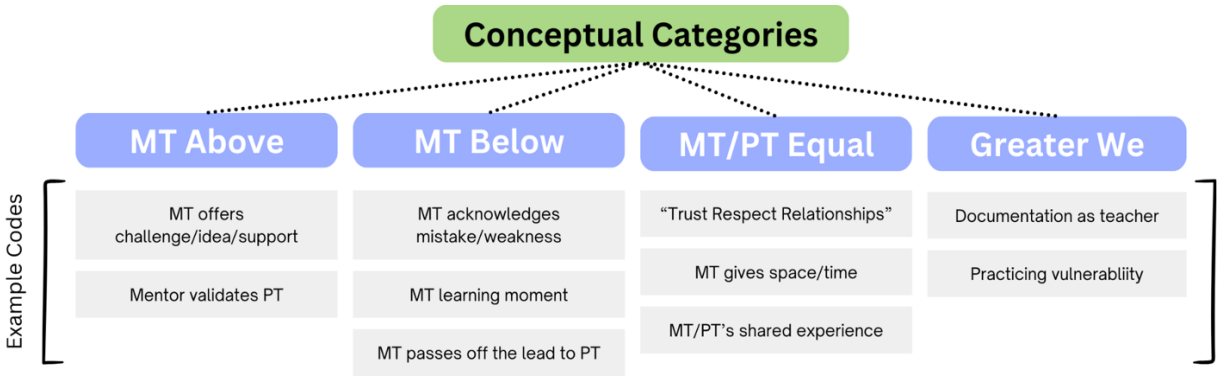


Figure 3.4

Open Coding within Conceptual Categories for Research Question One

I analyzed these 15 instances to look for themes among them. Then, I chose five of these instances of provocations and connected responses. Then, I added excerpts from other data sources to this table to see how this instance was represented across the mentor meeting, reflection, and interview as a means of triangulating my interpretation of the data. I was then able to see how it occurred, how the mentor made sense of it in their reflection, and how they re-presented their thinking to me in the interview. After adding these excerpts, I added a column to the data table where I wrote my interpretation of what happened as a result for the PT and MT individually. Separating the dyadic learning in this way gave me insight into the types of learning opportunities afforded to each member.

Once I arrived at thematic findings and illustrative vignettes, I began the fourth phase of analysis where I revisited the data to ensure that the themes and subthemes were derived from and connected to the participants' words. This process was made simple in Dedoose as I could easily revisit all the coded excerpts for one assigned code. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this step as ensuring *referential adequacy* — ensuring that all thematic conclusions are grounded in the data. Then, in the fifth phase, I finalized and defined the larger themes. This step was essential to synthesizing the thematic findings and clearly labeling what each theme meant, according to the data. At this point, I clarified the four emergent findings related to the first research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006) – one within each of the conceptual categories of the subject positioning framework. I ensured that the chosen instances of provocation and response were most representative of the dyadic experiences across the data set.

Issues of Trustworthiness

As I designed and carried out this study, I paid careful attention to issues of data quality to assert that the study's conclusions were trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al.,

2020). I used the criteria of data quality through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as described by Miles et al. (2020).

Credibility

I addressed the credibility of this research through reflexivity, spending extended time in the field, and data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020). Since the beginning stages of this research, I practiced reflexivity through consistent and frequent research journaling. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe reflexivity as a process "in which the writer engages in self-understanding about the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study" (p. 229). As a prioritized practice, each time I sat down to work on this research, I began first by journaling. Then, as I continually encountered sticking points, noticed I had an emotional response to the research, or as I needed an unfiltered outlet, I opened the journal up again to continue writing and reflecting throughout each work session. The main considerations that warranted a regular reflexive practice were my entangled relationship with this topic, the context of the study, and the participants. So, I relied heavily on research journaling as an evaluative tool to gauge my clarity of thought and illuminate biases that could be accounted for once they were written down. This practice proved to be essential as an outlet for identifying my implicit biases, beliefs, and opinions, and to situate my experience in the scope of the field of teacher education.

The extended amount of time I have spent in the field of teaching and mentoring also offered credibility to this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). I have worked as a mentor teacher for nearly six years at this early childhood center, and I hold an "insider" identity within the program (Braun & Clarke, 2013). My understanding of the pedagogical phenomenon under study led to a holistic interpretation within this specific context. As a member of the school

community, I was intricately familiar with the humanity of the people that comprise the program. My established relationship and rapport with each mentor participant provided insight indecipherable to an outside perspective. In my role as researcher, I had a different position, but I drew upon my firsthand experiences as a classroom teacher and mentor as I engaged in the research process. Lastly, data triangulation provided credibility by offering multiple means to substantiate my findings (Miles et al., 2020). I observed the MT-PT interactions through video data, then I read mentor's reflections through guided journaling, and finally, I dialogued with mentors about their practices in individual interviews.

Dependability

I addressed data dependability by keeping detailed records of the research process through a research journal, field notes, transcripts, and documents, providing an audit trail to support transparency in research design and execution (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Miles et al., 2020). These documents were preserved for the duration of the study through analysis, writing, and publication. The data collected were dependable in that they directly answered my research questions and were obtained through suitable methods for this research topic (Miles et al., 2020). Data triangulation not only provided credibility, but dependability as well. The sequence of qualitative methods and plan for data collection were viable and appropriate for providing a "thick" and meaningful description (Geertz, 1973) of the phenomenon under study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Lastly, I met with my faculty advisor weekly to discuss progress, setbacks, ongoing challenges, and learning moments. During these meetings, I invited feedback and honesty about my blind spots – which challenged me to consider alternative viewpoints (Miles et al., 2020).

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates that the findings are derived from the research rather than from the researcher's biases or subjectivity (Miles et al., 2020). Qualitative research does not claim to be objective or to have objectivity as a goal, however, identifying and accounting for researcher bias and prejudice influences how the data are interpreted and represented (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Confirmability was another purposeful outcome of my regular practice of research journaling. In this journal, I identified, evaluated, and deconstructed my subjectivities through critical reflection and reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While using qualitative data analysis software for data coding, I used research memoing to record emerging thoughts, conflicting ideas, and biases in the moment. Miles et al. (2020) describe confirmability through reflexive journaling as the researcher having self-awareness and naming one's biases and assumptions. Further, Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the process of reflexive journaling as a way to change the researcher's position from one that knows all to one who participates in the research process.

Transferability

To address transferability, I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy, information-rich descriptions, and detailed contextual information. While generalizability is not a goal of qualitative research, detailed explanation of the purposeful sampling strategy could offer helpful information about whether a similar study might be suitable for a different research setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Miles et al., 2020). I have provided detailed information about the setting, participants, and processes relevant to the study in Chapter 4 (Miles et al., 2020). This level of detail will give other researchers the insight needed to assess whether parts of this study design or methods might be transferable to another population or context (Glaser, 2005).

Ethical Commitments and Considerations

Considering my overlapping roles and connections to the study's context, I made extensive efforts to consider ethical dilemmas and potential conflicts of interest at every stage in the research process. Due to ethical considerations for conducting, interpreting, and writing this research, I chose not to participate in this study. I currently work in the same teaching position as the mentor participants held in this study, and I was intimately connected to the mentoring practice in this center. I had close relationships and rapport built with all the mentors prior to conducting this research, so it was essential that I made every effort to consider potential ethical conflicts and challenges. I took precautions to protect the integrity of this research through detailed planning conversations with the center directors to delineate paths of communication and boundaries to avoid undue influence and ethical concerns between me and the participants – my close colleagues. I consulted with researchers who had conducted studies in settings under similar circumstances to learn how to best navigate a new layer of complexity within these professional relationships.

In my partnership with the center for this research, I followed the necessary channels required by the center for conducting research with the teachers and students, including offering a research proposal, obtaining approval, and acquiring implementation support from the center – on top of the Institutional Review Board protocol necessary to approve research with human subjects. Since the center directors are my supervisors and pedagogical coaches, and I have a longstanding relationship with them, this required that I "wear different hats" during study planning and implementation. I practiced the mental exercise of approaching this research as if I were not an employee of the center to eliminate blind spots and to question assumptions I had made about the process of conducting research at the center. Being a researcher in this context

was entirely new to me, so I ensured I understood and moved through these processes accurately and thoroughly.

To establish a boundary for my overlapping roles, I took leave from work for all planning meetings with center directors and interviews with mentor participants. As conducting this research is not part of my job description, all research-related work occurred outside of my work hours as a demonstration teacher. Lastly, I maintained open lines of communication with the center directors, coaches, mentors, and preservice teachers to offer information, support, and guidance where necessary, while also maintaining the confidentiality of the participants.

During data collection, I adhered to my commitment to protect the participants' data by creating individual secure folders where data would be shared between me and each mentor. I committed to only speak of the data collection process and research-related tasks through formalized methods of communication rather than "in passing" at work. Within each interview, I intentionally allowed myself to fully embrace my insider identity while also asking mentors to delineate their beliefs and practices in a way they would with someone outside of our context. In the interview protocol, I did not rely on my own social knowledge to inform my understanding of their mentoring journey, but I asked them to narrate their experiences for me. Truthfully, I realized in these moments that I knew a lot less about my colleagues' stories than I thought. Their detailed retelling of the twists and turns of their mentoring careers gave me needed insights that I would have missed if I relied fully on my insider status and previously acquired social knowledge.

I also encountered ethical considerations in data analysis and interpretation as I read and listened to the words of mentors and PTs. I wrote extensively in my research journal about surprising findings, frustrating mental and emotional knots, and practicing slow and complete

listening instead of jumping to analytical conclusions. Prior to this work, I had ascribed fully to the ways of teaching and learning employed at this center, and this study confronted my idealized notions of our work. The data illuminated the messiness and regularity of the mentors' work with PTs – causing me to have to deconstruct some of the impressions of perfection that I held about our pedagogy and practice.

In writing this research, I considered how to maintain my ethical commitments to the participants while holding to authenticity, honesty, and directness. I committed to bring to light the entirety of the mentoring experience at this center instead of the most polished parts. I felt the tension and discomfort of writing about the failures and successes of my colleagues and sought to write their stories as a sort of truthful advocate – carrying unconditional positive regard for them while honoring my commitment to transparently reflect the data in my writing. Even after completion of this dissertation, I continued to reckon with this discomfort and tension. I believe this is indicative of my intensive connectedness to the individuals in this context and my intense commitment to growth, transparency, and candor.

Even with extensive consideration of ethical concerns, my dual role as researcher and colleague undoubtedly influenced the course of the study in ways of which I am not yet aware. This research demanded that I unravel my subjectivities for the sake of discovering nuances that might influence my ethical commitments and putting procedures and boundaries into place to maintain the highest possible level of integrity.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the suitability of qualitative methods to answer the research questions to provide a thick description of the phenomenon of mentor positioning during pedagogical documentation. I detailed the case study approach as defined by Merriam (1998) and

Stake (1995). This gave clarity to the boundaries of the study and drew focus to both the individual cases of each mentor and the collective of cases situated within the context of the university-based early childhood center. Next, I shared the study timeline from the planning phase to writing up the research. I detailed the three data collection methods: video observations, guided journals, and mentor interviews. Then, I describe how I analyzed the data using thematic analysis, iterative coding cycles, and data visualization tools. I concluded with a discussion of how I addressed issues of trustworthiness in the data by addressing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY CONTEXT

This case study was situated within a bounded context and community of practice that has a unique approach to educating young children and mentoring preservice teachers. This early childhood center is characterized by a collaborative infrastructure from school leadership to the classroom teaching teams, to the families and community that envelops the program, and even to each cohort of senior-level preservice teachers. In this chapter, I illustrate the context of this case study in detail. This in-depth depiction gives insight into the community that surrounds the mentors and preservice teachers in this study. First, I describe the physical setting, organizational structure, population, history, and mission of the program. Then, I describe the overall culture and environment of the school and their pedagogical influences – with a specific focus on the approach established for the practice of pedagogical documentation. Last, I summarize why this center, and the teams of practitioners within it, provided a unique and compelling research context for this study.

Setting and Use of Physical Spaces

I conducted this case study at a licensed and accredited university-based early childhood center with eight classrooms from birth to kindergarten. The classrooms at the center include one infant, three toddler, three preschool, and one kindergarten classroom. The center has two locations (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) within a mile of each other; five classrooms at one location (infant, toddler, and one preschool), and three classrooms at the other (two preschool and one kindergarten). At the location with five classrooms, four MT-PT classroom dyads chose to participate in this study, and at the location with three classrooms, one MT-PT dyad chose to participate.



Figure 4.1

Building Entrance of Center Location One (with Three Classrooms)



Figure 4.2

Building Entrance of Center Location Two (with Five Classrooms)

Situated on the campus of a land-grant university in the southeastern United States, the school environment is intricately connected and physically proximal to the Family Studies Department within the College of Education. At both locations, the physical spaces are designed to invite collaboration with children *inside* the classroom and collaboration with colleagues *outside* the classroom (see Figures 4.3 through 4.10). Parker and Vetter (2020) describe the importance of physical spaces as mediums for communicating our values:

> While we have spent considerable time preparing ourselves for an open mind…we also need to consider physical space. This space might be busy or serene, brightly colored or neutral in hue. It might be brimming with visual stimuli or sparsely decorated. Regardless of the physical nature of the space, a space for open minds conveys the message, "You are welcome here." The space mirrors the faces in the classroom and ensures that everyone feels that they are known and respected. (p. 89)

The indoor and outdoor spaces are utilized to capacity at both locations. Each classroom is self-contained, meaning they stay together with their teacher in their classroom for the entire day. In their classroom's indoor and outdoor spaces, the children eat snacks and lunch, have naptime, and learn together. Outdoor spaces have been carefully planned and created to capitalize on the amount of space and priorities for children's development outdoors, although they are necessarily limited by the urban landscape of the university campus. Both playgrounds are designed to encourage nature-based play, offer opportunities for children to engage in degrees of risky play, and provide a space for classrooms to come together in a shared environment.



Figure 4.3

Teacher Meeting Room at Location One



Figure 4.4

Meeting Space in Director's Office at Location One



Figure 4.5

Conference Room at Location One



Figure 4.6

Teacher Work/Rest Space at Location Two



Figure 4.7

The Infant Classroom



Figure 4.8

One Mixed-age Preschool Classroom



Figure 4.9

Outdoor Spaces at Location One



Figure 4.10

Outdoor Spaces at Location Two

Of high priority is the opportunity for families to regularly interact with teaching staff, so family members have building access and are welcomed into classroom spaces daily when they drop-off and pick-up their children from school. Since the center is a child development laboratory school, most classrooms have observation booths where college students, families, and visitors can watch classroom happenings through a one-way mirror without interrupting classroom life. Integrated into everyday life, however, is the expectation that classrooms will have visitors, students, and fellow educators passing through regularly.

Brief History and Center Mission

The university-based early childhood center in this study was founded in 1927 as a nursery school program. At the time, the center was in one of the college buildings. Soon after, in the early 1930s, a school building was constructed (Location One). Most notably, this building was one of the first buildings in the U.S. designed and constructed for young children. Over the course of nearly a century, the school has changed names, daily schedules, and spaces to accommodate growth and children's needs. The second location mentioned in the study was constructed in 2007 and later added to in 2011.

The center's mission is characterized by four core values that illuminate its commitment and obligation to serve in multiple capacities. Those values and roles include supporting and conducting research, offering support for academic programs, providing families with high-quality early childhood education, and committing to outreach and advocacy for the rights of children within and beyond the center. Because of their commitment to interdisciplinary research, my study aligned intricately with their program goals. In one of our research proposal meetings, the director described this mentoring research study as "mutually beneficial" to both my research endeavors and the program.

Current Nested Organizational Structure

The organizational structure is ever evolving and adapting to meet program and community needs. In its current iteration, the center has one director, one associate director, and one assistant director in senior leadership. In connection with the Family Studies department, directors serve as faculty for various courses while also functioning as full-time directors. For example, and most relevant to this study, the associate director was also the instructor for the senior-level practicum course during the summer term when data collection occurred. Since she works on-site at the center locations, she is available to support teachers and students in the course throughout the school day as needs arise. This, however, is not the typical experience of proximity between college coursework and practicum placements in most school settings. In this context, mentor teachers are intimately involved with curriculum decisions and assignments within the senior practicum course. In some respects, Demonstration Teachers (mentors) are viewed as quasi-instructors, although the center is working to shift this expectation to provide increased focus on situated mentoring in the classroom rather than offering assignment feedback.

Each classroom has one Demonstration Teacher (DT) and one Assistant Teacher (AT). Both the DT and AT are full-time teachers in the classroom. In addition, the senior-level practicum students work nearly full-time which often results in having at least three consistent teachers in each class for most of the day. There are eight children in the infant classroom, 12 in each of the three toddler classrooms, 18 in each of three mixed-age preschool classrooms, and about 15 children in kindergarten. This study included teaching teams from five of the eight classrooms. The kindergarten classroom, where I am the DT, was not a part of the study.

Demonstration Teachers are tasked with all formal mentoring responsibilities and leading the curriculum and assessment for their classroom. Assistant Teachers' responsibilities revolve

mostly around daily classroom life and curriculum with children, and they often adopt an informal mentoring role with PTs. Student educators also support staffing and help maintain licensing ratios. These are college students at various points in their coursework who choose to work at the school part-time across multiple classrooms as needed. Also, three program support staff members are available to step in when a teacher is absent or out of the classroom for planning or meetings. The center also has two or three Graduate Teaching Assistants to support the program with tasks and administrative details, as well as to support children through maintaining low teacher-child ratios in the classroom. Three administrative staff members and a business manager manage all financial and administrative responsibilities. The center's extensive food program is planned by the associate director and led by a chef, with a cook at each school location who prepares most foods in-house.

One point of note is the fluidity with which teachers and students move throughout different roles in the program. While the DT role experiences very low turnover, it is common for AT to pursue positions as a DT, another teaching role outside the program, or program support staff to pursue an AT role. Also, since the pool of student educators that the center employs are often referred from the Family Studies department, it is common for student educators to also complete their practicum placement at the center. In these cases, student educators move from a primary goal of supporting the classroom procedures and staying within adult-child ratios, to a more defined role as a preservice teacher who is mentored directly by a DT. Also, these PTs would no longer be paid to work since they are completing the practicum hours associated with their degree program requirements. These elements provide insight into the interconnectedness of relationships within the center and the fluidity with which college students and teachers move into and out of specific roles.

Population: Families and Teachers

The center is a tuition-based private school that serves a diverse demographic of families and children. One of the center's top priorities is to enroll children from a diverse set of identities, backgrounds, and life experiences. Situated on a university campus, the center draws many international families who have come to pursue graduate degrees, professorships, or other careers in higher education at the university. Many of the families with children enrolled at the center, are employed by, or are attending the university in some capacity. The center is highly sought after by families around the city and has an extensive waitlist for enrollment. Families regularly express the reasons they choose to send their child to the center, such as wanting their child to attend a school where many cultures, races, and backgrounds are represented, wanting their child to have extensive opportunities to engage in outdoor play experiences and project-based learning, and being able to have a close and regular relationship with their child's teacher and the program community.

Teachers come to teach at this center through multiple pathways and connections. Many of the center employees attended the university on the campus where the center is located, but not all went through the associated Family Studies program. Demonstration Teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree in education or related field, although it is preferred that DTs have a master's degree. Assistant Teachers must hold a high school diploma or GED, but it is preferred that they have an associate or bachelor's degree in education or a related field. They are required to have two to three years of experience in an early care and education program. Program Support staff are required to have a high school diploma and experience caring for young children. DTs in this study have a range of teaching and mentoring experience as is evidenced in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3. The preservice teachers in this study also come to this practicum

placement with a complex set of backgrounds and experiences. For the purposes of this study, I will focus mostly on the background information of the mentors.

Demonstration Teachers' Dual Roles: Early Childhood Teacher and PT Mentor

The mentor, in this school context, *demonstration teacher* (DT) assumes a dual role as both PT mentor and early childhood classroom teacher. DTs are responsible for facilitating learning and supporting young children's development in year-round classrooms. As an extension of their support for children, they also lead family engagement and communication – sharing daily documentation, forming teams for children's individual support needs, and meeting together with families through conferences throughout the school year.

Demonstration teachers – which I will now switch to calling *mentor teachers* or MTs, for the sake of clarity across early childhood contexts – assume a range of mentoring roles for students in different course levels in coordination with the child-development and education related departments across the university. One essential role of this teaching position is mentoring the senior-level practicum students. During the semester, MTs offer ongoing support through consistent, in-the-moment feedback and ongoing pedagogical support through weekly mentor meetings. Mentor teachers offer scaffolded, individualized support to PTs as they move into lead teaching roles in the classroom. This process requires moving along a flexible continuum of mentor-PT positioning and relationship. In this relationship, mentors model supporting practices with children, scaffolding PT professionalization, and share the processes of observation and curriculum planning. Mentors' support for PTs requires a nuanced combination of individualization and collective learning – where the mentor assumes the roles of teacher and collegial learning partner. Working with individuals with a complex set of life experiences,

varying personalities, teaching dispositions, and prior professionalization, MTs necessarily adapt their mentoring strategies to support optimal levels of autonomy and guidance.

Similar to the way teachers enact the center's philosophy in unique ways in their classrooms, MTs also approach mentoring with distinct dispositions and styles. Mentors at this center are entrusted with a high level of autonomy as to how they approach mentoring with practicum students. It follows then that MTs decide how they will support PTs with variability across classrooms. Multiple classroom factors may impact the experiences of PTs in their senior practicum placement, such as children's age and specific support needs, classroom environment, family involvement, teacher personalities, years of experience, and MTs' willingness to share leadership roles with assistants and PTs. In the same way, mentors' experiences with individual PTs varies widely even within the same cohort of students placed in their class. What is appropriate and responsive for one PT is not universal. Instead, it is situated within their professional learning trajectory and informed by their personal and professional experiences up to that point.

Senior-level Practicum Students (PTs)

As I mentioned, the primary function of the center is to provide a classroom setting for preservice teachers as they investigate children's development in context and cultivate informed teaching practices. The center serves hundreds of students in this capacity throughout a calendar year. One of the most intensive practicum experiences occurs in the semester-long, senior-level placement which counts as 12-credit hours and is the only course that is taken during that semester. Practicum students in this summer term work 30 hours per week in an assigned classroom for 12 weeks. In addition to their time in the classroom, these PTs engage on a weekly basis with seminar meetings led by their course instructor, mentoring meetings with their mentor

teacher, staff meetings with their classroom teaching teams, and three hours of weekly planning time on site. PTs in this practicum are considered full members of the teaching team, assuming leading roles in managing the daily routines of the classroom, planning for, and teaching large and small group lessons, observing and documenting children's learning and development, engaging in reflective practices, and building relationships with children and families. Because of their invested and embedded position in the classroom context, these students have insight into the nuance of classroom life in the same way a lead teacher might.

Pedagogical Context: Regular Rhythms of Collaboration

The influence of current research and innovative practice is paramount to the inner workings of the individual and collective professional learning for staff and directors. The program's infrastructure facilitates and prioritizes regular rhythms of collaboration across the program and within classroom teams. Weekly schedules are created with five hours of various collaborative meetings between lead teachers, assistant teachers, and preservice teachers. Schedules also include five hours of individual planning time for MTs, three hours for ATs, and three hours for senior practicum students (PTs). The program values and protects regular, uninterrupted time for intersubjectivity – the boundary at which individuals' beliefs and pedagogy are known and recreated (Rinaldi, 2001).

The classroom contexts at each center location are nested within the larger school culture, reflecting the overarching philosophies of the center while honoring the distinct ways teachers put these tenets into practice in daily classroom life. While the center's approach is inspired by Italian preschool pedagogy and practice, in implementation, these practices have evolved over many years of refinement and contextualization within the context of the southeastern United States. So, at a classroom level, localization of Reggio-inspired pedagogies has driven

practitioners to discover hybrid ways of teaching and learning that respond to their situated context.

Pedagogical and Practical Influences

The pedagogy and practice at this center have been influenced by a large body of work with a range of philosophies (beliefs) and methodologies (practices), while holding to the *re*-contextualization of these pedagogies into the learning context, community, and culture of the center. In this section, I discuss the influences that comprise the center's approach to teaching young children, and I offer an overview of the pedagogies that influence their approach to teacher learning and constructing a community of practice among practitioners, leaders, and practicum students.

This center's philosophy and beliefs about children align with those that have been established in the communities and public preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. There are also methods and approaches to teaching young children that this center honors and practices. Foremost to these are their beliefs about the *image of the child* (Malaguzzi, 1994). The center in this study has adopted this as a foundational tenet of their philosophy of teaching and learning alongside children. Several teams of teachers and directors have traveled to Reggio Emilia and have visited other Italian preschools to observe their school communities and gain a deeper understanding of their methods. In April of 2019, I was afforded the opportunity to participate in one such study tour at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center. While experiences like these are undoubtedly impactful, the center has been cognizant of the tendency for programs to adopt the Reggio Emilia approach in a way that Richard Johnson (1999) calls a "cargo cult." In his article, he describes the dangers of colonizing education practices by borrowing pedagogies from one

context and implementing them in another. Johnson writes of those who take the pilgrimage to Reggio Emilia:

> I am personally more interested in what critical issues they left behind while they toured, searching for yet another Utopic way of social order (Hetherington, 1997); who is left to take care of 'home' as we search afar for other, different truths; who speaks for the many many more critical issues (teacher pay, affordability of quality care, teacher turnover), right here in our own back yard? Who gets to go to Reggio to study and learn and how does the theory/practice then get transmitted back to the masses? The tradition, which pervades our profession today, is the colonial, capitalist, top-down perspective, as those who can afford the travel/tourism (i.e., the privileged, powerful experts/theoreticians who colonize our field) go to Reggio and other far-off destinations and then bring back the valuable cultural capital (the different products and goods) to share with the marginalized childcare workers. In this well refined colonial model the power base remains in the hands of those who have access and ownership of this 'new' Reggio knowledge – colonizers like me – the university professors, center directors, program administrators, and a few lucky teachers. (pp. 71–72)

This critical perspective urged the directors and program to consider the risks of decontextualized pedagogies as they explored and learned from other scholars and educators. So, over the past two decades, teachers and leaders at this center have engaged in the work of situating pedagogical influences within the particular context of their program to critically evaluate their fit with the philosophies and principles of the program at large. Some of these influences include the following bodies of work:

1. Making learning visible (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001)

2. Anti-bias early childhood programs (Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan, & Nimmo, 2015)
3. Anti-racist pedagogies and research (Kendi, I. X., 2019)
4. *The Project Approach* (Helm & Katz, 2016)
5. *Messing about with science* (Hawkins, 2002)
6. *Talking and Thinking Floorbooks* (Warden, 2012)
7. Daily documentation of young children's learning (Iorio & Parnell, 2018)

To support the ongoing learning and wellbeing of teachers, coaches, directors, and practicum students, the center has explored multiple approaches and frameworks, some of which are:

1. Collaborative action research and teacher inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cunningham, 2011)
2. Brene Brown's work on the *Power of Vulnerability* (Brown, 2011)
3. Marc Brackett's work on emotional intelligence and *The RULER Approach* (Yale University, 2023)

These theorists, researchers, and educators are only a select few of the most recent influences that have impacted the center's practices. In the past decade, several of these influential scholars and educators have visited the center personally to share their work or have collaborated with the program staff virtually – specifically Lilian Katz, Clare Warden, Will Parnell, Debbie LeeKeenan, and John Nimmo. Further, many of the center's teachers and directors have participated in study tours in Reggio Emilia, Italy and have seen these documentation practices occurring in the setting where they originated. While these are the foundational influences of the center as a whole, there remains the influences and practices that each teacher brings with them into this context. So, the landscape of pedagogies continues to shift as new teachers join the program. In sum, this center's approach with children has prioritized making children's learning

visible, investigating children's questions through emergent projects, and offering children opportunities to learn playfully through exploration. For the ongoing learning for teachers and leaders, the center has prioritized influences that emphasize collaboration, teachers as agentic researchers, the practice of vulnerability, developing emotional intelligence, and promoting teacher well-being.

A Contextualized Approach to Pedagogical Documentation

As I stated earlier, essential to the center's approach to curriculum and assessment is the foundational belief that each child is competent, capable, and has meaningful and powerful ideas. This idea is inspired by the philosophy and practices of the preschools in Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1994), but has been subsequently situated and recalibrated to fit within this context at this public university in the southeastern United States. In practice, this means that authentic observation and assessment practices propel emergent curriculum based on children's inquiry, skills, and interests. Through daily teaching and learning practices, in cooperation with in-depth knowledge of child-development, this approach offers an informed perspective of a child's unique developmental pathway in context. The process of shared pedagogical documentation is a regular rhythm of teaching at the center. Teachers are expected to continuously engage in professional learning through shared pedagogical documentation with collaborating teachers, pedagogical coaches, and practicum students. Additionally, sharing pedagogical documentation is a regular focus for program-wide meetings, classroom teaching team meetings, and mentor meetings with preservice teachers.

Across the globe, the process of pedagogical documentation has taken many forms and employs various methods as educators situate the approaches outlined above into a specific context. The model of pedagogical documentation in this study is a sort of microcosm of

collaborative action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), wherein teachers participate as members of a community of practice that seeks to inquire, analyze, and reflect on teaching and learning practices. Since this model of teacher research eliminates the top-down approach to professional development, it is ideal for use with preservice teachers, novice teachers, and veteran teachers alike. Key to this process is the willingness to interrogate one's own understandings for the sake of constructing new shared meaning through collaboration. So, even the most experienced teacher is not exempt from critically examining their preconceived notions, underlying beliefs, and long held practices. Teachers who enter this space of critical inquiry in the context of this center are encouraged to engage in critical dialogue where they are challenged to deconstruct their ways of thinking about the subject of documentation by paying attention to their assumptions and biases from a critical reflective lens – informed by the pedagogical framework of *deconstructive talk* (Lenz Taguchi, 2008).

Due to the time constraints in mentoring meetings, and the scope of the summer practicum, the cycles of inquiry in pedagogical documentation were necessarily shortened, but the cycle of observation, reflection, and transformation best describes the iterative process. In collaboration with other practitioners (colleagues, mentors and PTs, coaches and teachers), the group/dyad observes a selected piece of documentation – in this study, the documentation was a video clip. Together they dissect what they see, paying attention to the assumptions they are making about the content of the documentation and the lens through which they are viewing it. Then, they reflect on what they saw by sharing interpretive insights with each other. In this space, each member is held to a standard of transparency where they share their thought processes openly. In this phase, one's assumptions, interpretations, and new learning is layered

upon those of the others in the group – creating a multi-faceted understanding of the content under study and the pedagogical revisions that it calls to attention.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the case study context in detail to offer a contextualized understanding of the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of this university-based early childhood center. Because of the center's focus on building a community of practice characterized by collaboration, vulnerability, and critical reflection, it was a compelling research context for this case study. Also, considering the program's dual role of early childhood center and university-based practicum site for preservice teachers, this research context was suitable to investigate an in-depth practice of pedagogical documentation review situated within the context of the MT-PT relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

In these findings, I uncover how five mentor teachers at one early childhood center took a range of positions along a continuum of holding, sharing, and releasing power in their work with senior-level preservice teachers. Within the context of pedagogical documentation, I found that mentors showed a fierce commitment to the collaborative nature of the practice, while also grappling with the tension presented by PTs' need for support and their own desire to maintain the role of "teacher." In this context, mentors were offered a comfortable and familiar space to be vulnerable, remain curious, cultivate trusting relationships, and offer PTs professional and personal support.

Findings Processes and Chapter Organization

The purpose of this case study was to explore the practice of pedagogical documentation as a tool for dynamic and reciprocal mentor positioning among teams of early childhood mentor and preservice teachers. Specifically, I examined MT's positioning during pedagogical documentation with PTs and the impact that position had on learning opportunities and experiences that follow. To investigate the research questions, I collected and analyzed mentor and PT meeting video recordings, mentor reflective journals, and mentor interviews.

Analyses revealed four findings related to the first research question: (a) cognizance of the difference between dignifying and patronizing support, (b) mentors adopting a growth mindset, (c) building trust, respect, and relationships while practicing self-restraint and curiosity, and (d) shared vulnerability leading and the construction of new knowledge. The second research question examined the learning opportunities and experiences that follow certain mentor positionings. So, I focused on instances when a mentor took a certain position and examined the

experiences that followed. My analytical approach and presentation of findings reveals the significance of a mentor's positioning as a provocation for further learning opportunities. These findings were representative of the mentors' beliefs and practices that I observed in the meeting recording, how they interpreted their work in the guided journal, and how they explained their practices in their interview. In the following sections, I describe five thematic findings related to the first research question, and I illustrate the thematic findings of the second research question through five vignettes. Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 (on page 101) broadly illustrate the findings from each question.

Findings from the *Above* Positioning

In their interactions with preservice teachers, mentor participants often positioned themselves in a teaching stance – which positioned the preservice teacher below them in a learning stance. This seemed to be the default positioning that occurred within the dyad since the mentor was placed in a position of power or leadership in relation to the PT. Mentors in the *above* position offered support, guidance, and scaffolding while the preservice teacher was on the receiving end of the mentor's supportive efforts. The flow of knowledge and support was unidirectional from the veteran mentor to the novice preservice teacher. This positioning was necessary and critical to the professional development of these preservice teachers since they were paired with a more experienced mentor to learn from them. When exercising care and intentionality, mentors in the *above* position bolstered PTs' growth through modeling and conveying solid teaching practices. However, not all exchanges from the *above* positioning dignified the competencies and capabilities of the preservice teachers. To understand this distinction, I examined nuances in their language, tone, and evidence of their underlying beliefs.



Figure 5.1

RQ One Findings Concept Map

Finding 1: Dignifying versus Patronizing Support

Data revealed two distinctive patterns within the *above* positioning – where mentors took a leadership role within the MT-PT dyad. As with most elements of complex professional relationships, paying attention to nuance was key. The distinction between these two themes was subtle, yet decipherable and meaningful. Within the *above* position, the two most frequent subcodes were *mentor offers challenge/support/idea* and *mentor validating PT*. Although, there were more than twice as many instances of dignifying support than patronizing support. The mentors moved between the two in a manner that is likely imperceptible to either member of the dyad. Additionally, mentors oscillated between these distinct approaches multiple times within the same short exchange – speaking again to the nuance within their interactions.

Mentor Offering Dignifying Support. By far, the most prevalent instance of *above* positioning was when mentors offered support, a challenge, or an idea. Several mentors utilized questioning to support preservice teachers' development of critical thinking and reflective practice. Others shared the need for preservice teachers to experience a certain level of discomfort to move toward professional growth. For some mentor participants, this support practice extended beyond the pedagogical documentation process and into their overall mentoring approach. During her interview, Catherine, in her third year of formal mentoring, said:

> Another posture I think, especially in the last two years is that – it's a little cheesy, but that saying of you can give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, you can teach a man to fish… So I really had to check myself on is my first thing to offer like a critique or give an answer? Or am I asking the right questions to get them thinking?.. How do you teach someone to think reflectively?

In this excerpt, Catherine made sense of her role by focusing on the PT's continuing professional development. As a form of support, she exercised a level of self-restraint to leave space for critical reflection. The data illuminated the tension between jumping in to "fix" PTs' practices and problems and adopting a slower approach for the sake of the PT's long term teaching competencies.

Valerie shared that her approach to support prioritized growth, rather than protecting PT's feelings. She said:

> The process in itself doesn't call for me to protect your feelings the entire time, it calls for me to help you dissect whatever this is and move to a different point. Now, while we're gonna see some things that you do well, it's not, I'm not here to like, just tell you all the things you did, right. I'm going to tell you those things. But no matter what is happening before or during this process, the purpose is to find some part of that that we can grow from…I don't think that growth and change can happen unless it's uncomfortable.

She believed that it is the discomfort that motivates change – specifically within and because of the process of shared pedagogical documentation.

Another mentor, Ella, spoke of support as guiding PTs to simply find the next step and focus more narrowly on one point of growth at a time. She said:

> It's not about where you are on this continuum, it's just about taking the next step to be where you want to be to continue to grow, and that there's not this ending point, even for someone who's done it 30-something years.

In this case, Ella understood her support role as being the one who paced the adaptive change for the PT as to not overwhelm her with all the skills she must develop to be successful in the classroom all at once. In my analyses, I encountered a concept that I named "PT fragility." PT

fragility is the belief that PTs are delicate and should be protected from the full weight of teaching responsibilities until they are more prepared. PT fragility also appeared when I saw evidence of MTs believing that their role was to manage the amount of stress and pressure placed on the PT. Referring to the types of concerns and foundational practices that the PT was focused on, Ella said, "Yeah, I think that it's still very basic in nature, which is fine, because she just needs more of that." This excerpt emphasized the comparative inexperience of PTs to the more seasoned mentor in a way that positioned the mentor above the PT.

Mentor Offers Patronizing Support. In the dyadic exchanges of the mentor meetings and the post-meeting reflection, the mentors moved back and forth along the continuum of support and validation. In the findings, *dignifying support* and *patronizing support* were distinct concepts, separated by one important characteristic: exchanges of patronization were those that would have been unsuitable if they were said to a colleague. My analyses and interpretation of moments of patronizing language were undoubtedly informed and situated within the cultural context of the southeastern United States, and specifically within a community of practice comprised almost exclusively of women. Across contexts and in different cultural and geographical regions, the determination of what constitutes patronizing language would necessarily vary. In the following excerpts, I illustrate how this finding materialized in the data and my subsequent interpretation.

In the following excerpt, before reviewing a video clip of the PT teaching a small group lesson, the mentor validated the PT's efforts in a way that would not typically occur among professional colleagues and reinforces the default power dynamic which positions mentors above PTs. Mentor teacher Valerie responded to PT Hailey's resistance to watching her teaching on video and said:

> So, you made sure that every child had a hands-on experience. Okay, you did that! [*Valerie smiles and nods encouragingly.*] You gave attention to each child and what that child was doing during your experience. All right, so there you go. There's two things that I can tell you without even looking at your video.

The language and tone here could have been perceived as patronizing toward Hailey, even while she aimed to be encouraging and helpful. In her reflective journal, mentor Ella used a similar tone when sharing her surprise at PT Alexis' initiative with goal setting. She said:

> I also was very impressed that she set her own goal. And she even named it. She said that her goal was to find music- and movement-related songs. So, I thought that showed a lot of responsibility for her own learning, not waiting for me to point out what she should do necessarily, but that she was already thinking ahead about what she wanted to do. She actually asked and took her own initiative to ask if she could video me doing that [leading a whole group meeting] on the very first week of the semester, because she anticipated that she would be leading a large group assembly…which I thought was really a great strategy for her own learning her taking the initiative for her own learning.

The language here suggested that she would not expect a preservice teacher to set goals independently and was pleasantly surprised when Alexis showed initiative in this way. Again, the mental exercise of imagining that these words were said to or about a colleague quickly illuminated the difference between dignifying and patronizing support, as it would be misplaced to use this language and expression of surprise with a colleague.

Findings from the *Below* Positioning

When a mentor positioned themselves as the learner, they adopted a *below* positioning. During these moments, the mentors chose to release power within the dyad, for example, by

sharing about weaknesses, demonstrating their own need for growth, or passing off the lead to the preservice teacher. This positioning challenged the default MT/PT power dynamic, and instead, offered the opportunity for the PT to be positioned above the MT. The following theme emerged from the data when mentors were positioned below the preservice teacher.

Finding 2: Mentors Adopting a Growth Mindset

Within all data sources and across all participants, mentors periodically took the *below* positioning, demonstrating transparency, vulnerability, and humility. The primary way that mentors did this was to acknowledge their own mistakes, weaknesses, and needs for growth. Secondly, mentors shared their own learning process by verbalizing their fears, challenges, and points of growth. The mentors expressed solidarity with the PTs – making an effort to illustrate that they too have much to learn.

Acknowledging Mistakes and Weaknesses. Mentor participants released power and took a lower position by acknowledging their own mistakes and weaknesses. These admissions allowed the PT to see their mentor in a new light – humanizing them and tearing down the idea that the mentor was beyond learning. In her interview, mentor Leona shared about her own first experiences with collaborative pedagogical documentation review:

> I feel like it's hard at first, like the first seminar I was ever in…I remember starting to bring stuff based on some, like project work I was doing in the classroom, and having that was my first real experience of having a lot of people look at my work.... And it's intimidating and kind of uncomfortable in the beginning. Because you are worried. I was worried that it was getting, just like – that what I was doing was getting critiqued.

Another mentor, Catherine, shared about how the process of documentation review helped her realize the value of others' perspectives when considering her teaching practice. It even impacted

her general disposition toward asking others for input outside of structured collaborative spaces. In her interview, Catherine said:

> I think it's made all the difference outside of like the documentation sharing spaces too, that I'm just more comfortable going up to colleagues and saying, 'Did you just see that? That was so weird, right?' 'I said this, but did you see something else?' And being like, I have nothing to hide or be ashamed of, but I have everything to gain from getting somebody else's perspective and putting our heads together.

In this case, Catherine showed a willingness to be wrong in her understanding and embrace a learning stance in her professional relationships – which extended to shared pedagogical documentation review with Jen (PT).

Mentor Learning Moments. Within the *below* positioning, mentor participants narrated their own learning processes in reflection on mentoring practice and documentation review and in action with PTs. In their mentor meeting, Leona (MT) and Sophia (PT) watched a video clip of three children participating in a small group project taught by Leona. While watching and dissecting this video together with Sophia, Leona came to a new understanding about how she was limiting one child's participation by her choice in grouping him with two other more vocal children. Leona reflected on that learning moment in her interview, "How do you navigate that? Should I have paired him with other people? It makes me wonder."

In Leona's interview, I shared my own interpretation of what I observed occurring in the mentor meeting video at this moment. I noticed that Leona's body language and tone reflected genuine realization and new understanding. Subsequently, Sophia was afforded the experience of seeing how pedagogical documentation can change a teacher's understanding of children and of their practice. In reflection on the process, Leona continued:

> I'm going to notice things, and I'm going to have these eye-opening moments like realizing that every time I asked [one child] something, [the other two children] were talking over him because they're big personalities and have a lot to say all the time. And did that keep him from being able to participate more so?

Without intentionally using this as a teachable moment, Leona's transparency during an instance of emergent learning modeled the transformative potential of pedagogical documentation review. In her interview, Ella shared her learning disposition toward generational differences between her and the preservice teachers she mentors. She spoke of the things that *they* teach *her*:

> There are things that are just so different with generations. And so now I've been here long enough that I've gone through some generations of students…so I try to recognize the shifts, and then go with them or try to learn more about them. Like a recent shift, I feel like now that's really, really important to this generation is self-care and work-life balance. And so that's a way that I'm also learning through the years…Back in the day, when I first started teaching was like, 'Hey, it's supposed to be a major snowstorm tomorrow. So, we're gonna need you all to pack a bag and spend the night at school.'

Here, Ella positioned herself in a learning stance below the PTs – demonstrating that she would benefit from their approach to teaching. Furthermore, Ella shared that she was growing to be more cognizant of work-life balance because of her engagement with the current generation of PTs.

Findings from the *Equal* Position: *"It's about trust, respect, relationships." –Sabrina (MT)*

When the mentor positioned themselves in a collegial, collaborative stance with preservice teachers, they took an *equal* positioning. This position was characterized by idea sharing, reciprocity, and shared contribution. Because the default power dynamic within the dyad

placed the MT in a position of leadership over the PT, mentors had to actively choose to share power to assume an equal position. The following themes emerged within the data where MTs and PTs were positioned equally.

Finding 3: Building Trust, Respect, and Relationships

Collegial relationships among PTs and MTs were characterized by "trust, respect, and relationships." Sabrina, a decades-long mentor, shared this phrase as a sort of mantra that guided her overall mentoring philosophy and practice. From her perspective, trust was demonstrated by PT autonomy, accountability, and shared confidence in the other's contribution to the team. Respect materialized as a holistic (not just professional) regard for the humanity of the other individual. Relationships were evidenced by personal connection, listening, and sharing openly.

Prioritizing Each Other's Personhood. The mentors in this study demonstrated a consistent commitment to remember and respect the humanity of the preservice teacher as a means for enacting a balanced, equal positioning. When talking about the importance of connecting personally with PTs, Sabrina said:

> So, I think taking the time to get to know someone. I start out every meeting, I have the tendency to jump in. But I've made a note at the top of our meeting notes for us to talk about one positive thing – it can be classroom; it can be personal. One positive thing that happened during this week, and if that takes 15 minutes to hear about everyone's fourth of July...

While sharing about your weekend may not have seemed to be relevant to practices in shared documentation review, the human connection that resulted from sharing other facets of their lives brought a level of trust necessary to this vulnerable process. She continued:

> Getting to know people is 100% worth it. I read their thing [a get-to-know-you form] and maybe if it's, you know, they appreciate 'thank you's or a treat. I mean, I'm happy to, to show you that I noticed you and I hear you as a person. Because we're all people in the classroom too.

To challenge this notion, however, mentors in this study considered what respect looks like for each individual. For example, Ella said that she had to remember that different job descriptions and teaching experience necessarily requires different expectations:

> Honestly, I think about that. To me, respect can look really different, depending on the situation, because for some people, for me to have an expectation that they would do the same job, or a very similar job as me, really seems disrespectful because I often think about in their mind, are they thinking, 'that's not part of my job description.' 'Why do you want me to do that?' So, I try to be aware that I have a certain role here, because it is expected in my position that I do that.

Thus, one important finding within the *equal* positioning was that a balanced power dynamic did not mean that everyone was held to the same expectations or standard, but that everyone was held to their highest level of contribution considering their individual professional journey.

When I asked Valerie what the collaborative nature of pedagogical documentation review adds to the process, she talked about how it facilitated relationships. For her, the practice of sharing documentation functioned as a medium for connection among professionals – both PTs and MTs. She described it this way:

> So, I think it [documentation review] builds relationship. But then I think the biggest part of it being a collaborative process is the perspective of being able to have somebody challenge something that they notice…So I describe a situation to you. I set up for you

> what we're about to watch that I've just recorded. And then we watch it. And then you're able to say, 'Okay, what you said was this, but what I saw was this.' So, the relationship, the perspective, and then the challenge.

In this sense, for Valerie, pedagogical documentation was an invitation into a collaborative relationship, bringing a new perspective to the table and achieving *intersubjectivity* (Rinaldi, 2000) as discussed in Chapter 2.

Practicing Self-Restraint and Curiosity. In exchanges among the PT-MT dyad, the space was always filled by someone. Within the default "above" position, mentors filled most of the space with talking, telling, and teaching. The *equal* positioning, however, was characterized by mentors' self-restraint, questioning, and waiting. If a mentor did not fill the entire conversational space, PTs were afforded room to actively contribute to the conversation.

Mentoring as Listening. Self-restraint in conversation meant assuming the role of listener instead of talker – seeking to understand rather than be understood. By listening, mentor participants brought about PTs' engagement and contribution. Sabrina discussed the risk of jumping in to talk instead of pausing and listening. "So, it was even more important that I keep my mouth shut. Because if I say something, it's going to be the gospel," and in her reflection, she added, "[Mentor] teachers should not be the only ones to talk but rather a back and forth through the observation [pedagogical documentation]." Ella, too, found that she had a pattern of rushing the learning and growing process for Alexis (PT). She explained in her video journal:

> I intentionally take some pauses in there because I didn't want to jump in and overtake the next thought that she had. So, I intentionally left a little bit of space. Goals for me are I try to find ways to talk less since I am such a talker and to allow space for both thinking and talking for everyone to be collaborative. And so there at the end, I started asking a lot

> of questions. So that allowed space for her to think through and elaborate more, as opposed to me just continuing to fill her with ideas and strategies.

Here, Ella made a concerted effort to pause and remain open to other paths of thinking introduced by Alexis, and in turn, Alexis filled the conversational space with her own insights.

Posture of Patient Curiosity. In the ideal scenario, PTs would have the opportunity to develop at their own pace with the support of a mentor, however, the practicum in this program was limited to a 12-week placement. With the barrier of limited time, several of the mentor participants communicated the tension of allowing the learning process to occur organically and telling PTs all they may need to know too quickly. It took more time to ask questions, offer time for thought and interpretation, and listen genuinely for the contribution of another person.

In her meeting with PT Jen, mentor Catherine prepared herself for engaging in this type of questioning to maintain a disposition of curiosity. She explained how her approach to documentation review was different with PTs than with colleagues:

> With the students, I have to actively not give them the answers. I have to instead think of what questions will I ask like, 'How did that feel? What do you think went well? What would you like to see go better? Tell me about each individual child? What were some specific goals you had? Do you feel like you met them? Why or why not?'

She discussed how she had to evaluate her tendency to offer input too quickly:

> I really had to check myself on is my first thing to offer like a critique and give an answer? Or am I asking the right questions to get them thinking? And so that has been something I've had to like personally work on and have been evolving…how do you teach someone to think reflectively? So, they can then find the answers themselves?

Asking prompting questions was a common practice among all the mentors within the context of pedagogical documentation review and their larger approach to mentoring. Questioning, however, was a nuanced practice as mentors' questions easily shifted from authentic curiosity to asking questions to which they already knew the answer. This was no longer an *equal* positioning but moved back to the default *above* position. To remain in the *equal* positioning, mentors had to demonstrate genuine desire for a new perspective or interpretation.

Findings from the *Greater We* Positioning: *"It's okay to be vulnerable"* –Catherine (MT)

The *greater we* positioning was characterized by a collective stance among the PT-MT dyad. In these types of exchanges, there was evidence of the construction of new shared knowledge. At times, mentors and PTs in this position went beyond idea sharing to emergent knowledge that was previously unknown to the MT and PT before interacting within the space of shared pedagogical documentation review. Within the *greater we* position, I noticed two prevalent themes.

Finding 4: Shared Vulnerability and the Construction of New Knowledge

Documentation as the Teacher. One enlightening finding was revealed during analysis of Leona's reflection and was further clarified in her interview. When asked in her reflection how she took the role of learner, she wrote about how the documentation itself taught both her and PT Sophia something new:

> I took on a learner role as I noticed while watching the video that (two children) were both jumping in to answer or talk whenever I would ask (another child) a question before he could respond. This was something that I did not realize or notice while I was facilitating the small group. This was such a good reminder to me of the benefits of

> recording and watching back times in the classroom because when you are leading things you often miss stuff that could help guide your teaching decisions.

In a sense, the video documentation functioned as a third participant in the shared review process. Valerie shared a similar sentiment when she spoke of video documentation as a way to preserve the true telling of what occurred in the classroom. In her interview, Valerie (MT) said:

> Documentation review is being able to look back at something exactly and accurately as it happened – to dissect it and pull some piece of that to work on improving your teaching practice, so pulling the whole into pieces. Not just looking at the overall thing but stopping and looking at very specific parts of what's happening. And then really picking that to figure out what I could have done differently. What are children trying to tell me? What would it have looked like if?…You're never going to be able to see the story accurately without looking at a preserved piece of documentation and video.

Vulnerability Required in Pedagogical Documentation. Pedagogical documentation demanded a level of transparency and vulnerability of the MT-PT dyad that is uncommon within the standard teaching practice. Participating in regular rhythms of sharing documentation with others required a willingness to engage with discomfort for the sake of gaining new insight. Sabrina explained the outcomes that resulted from practicing vulnerability, "Even just having everyone be vulnerable enough to share something whether they thought it was great or they're like 'this is awful, I need help' is just that different level of keeping your practice fresh, right? Like not becoming stagnant." Admitting that they needed the perspectives of others was a freeing disposition for several mentor participants. Catherine shared about the value of pedagogical documentation and the permission it gave her to be vulnerable. In her interview, she talked about her first experiences hearing others engage in pedagogical documentation review:

> That was my first buy into the process and valuing it. It helps so much to actually just observe other people going through the process, to really, one, demonstrate how it worked and the value in it, and also that it's okay to be vulnerable. So, it's made all the difference for me.

Furthermore, this collaborative space was one where each person stood on equal footing and all members practiced vulnerability without passing judgment about the content of the video. Leona explained:

> You get to sit in a space where, like, everybody gets a turn being vulnerable. You know, and, and practicing language, like 'I notice' or 'I'm wondering about or curious about', you know, in a way that's like a judgment free zone.

Having been in collaborative spaces where they observed and reflected on their own and others' teaching practice, the mentors brought this attitude into pedagogical documentation with preservice teachers – demonstrating the value of sharing your practice with others to grow professionally.

Findings for Research Question Two: Dyadic Learning Experiences and Opportunities

The second research question sought to explain how mentor positioning impacted dyadic learning experiences and opportunities for both mentors and preservice teachers. Since the recent literature holds that varied positioning affords distinct learning opportunities for PTs and MTs (Quinones et al., 2020), this question examined dyadic positioning more closely to find what happened when a mentor positioned themselves in different stances. The following section contains five vignettes that illustrate the connection between the initial positioning (provocation) to the experiences that follow (response). The first vignette shows how passing off the conversational lead to the PT resulted in the PT being emotionally vulnerable by sharing her

fears about teaching. The second vignette elucidates the significance of questioning styles and intentions in collaboration with PTs. The third vignette shows how the mentor's judgment-free language fostered the PT's in-depth reflection and new insight. The fourth demonstrates how a mentor's restraint, by not dominating the conversation, led to the PT's comprehensive reflection, and eventually building new interpretative insights together with the mentor. Lastly, the fifth vignette illustrates how a PT's question sparked the MT to revisit the documentation, notice something she missed, and engage in professional growth alongside the PT. Figure 5.2 offers a visual representation of the findings from research question two.

Vignette 1: "I intentionally left a little bit of space." –Ella (MT)

In their mentoring meeting, PT Alexis brought video documentation of Ella leading a whole group meeting that she had recorded the week before. Alexis took this video because she wanted to begin to familiarize herself with the practices she would need to teach a whole group lesson. Ella and Alexis decided beforehand that this would be the video documentation for their meeting. Ella prompted Alexis to bring the video and be prepared to share why she chose this video and what she hoped to learn from reviewing this video as a team. So, Alexis played the video on her computer and was responsible for pausing the video for discussion at specific moments.

Provocation. This vignette narrows in on Ella's actions and the subsequent response and opportunity it afforded Alexis. Ella described her intention with leaving space for Alexis to participate and guide the conversation. She said in her post-meeting reflection, "And then I intentionally take some pauses in there, because I didn't want to jump in and overtake the next thought that she had. So, I intentionally left a little bit of space." Giving the PT space and time was one way Ella enacted an *equal* mentor positioning.



Figure 5.2

RQ Two Findings Concept Map

Response. Following Ella's prompting actions, Alexis' role in the meeting changed. Ella's willingness to practice self-restraint in this interaction invited Alexis to take a leading role. The subsequent exchanges continued to be indicative of an equal positioning. Ella described what happened next, "And that's when she started talking about her emotions related to teaching. And she was talking about being worried. And in another section she talks about being scared." Because of Ella's decision to pass off the lead, Alexis opened up and shared transparently about the emotions she felt about leading her own whole group lesson. In this experience, Alexis had permission and space to guide the conversation wherever she wanted or needed. She determined the path of inquiry and the resulting sharing of ideas. Additionally, the learning opportunity clearly extended to Ella, since she wrote about what she learned from the interaction in her meeting reflection. She learned the value of pausing, listening, and allowing Alexis to steer the conversation in a direction she could not have predicted. This dyadic exchange demonstrated the power of a mentor relinquishing control to foster a PT's increased engagement.

Vignette 2: Valerie (MT) Asked a Question with an Intended Answer

In their mentor meeting, Valerie (MT) and Hailey (PT) each brought a short video to share of them teaching the same lesson with different children. They watched Valerie's video first and discussed it as they went through it. Then, they watched and discussed Hailey's video next.

Provocation. In this vignette, they discussed environmental decisions that could have better supported Hailey's lesson. Valerie asked questions that she already seemed to know the answer to, and she guided Hailey to engage in mentor-guided reflection. Valerie said, "So space wise, do you feel like you were more comfortable here or do you feel like doing it over in the couch space has been – has felt better to you space wise?" After seeing from the video that

teaching the lesson was challenging for Hailey, Valerie guides her to think about why it did not go as she planned, adopting an *above* mentoring position. In this case, Valerie asked Hailey a question that had an intended answer; Valerie guided her to see that the environment of the lesson was unsupportive of the children's engagement.

Response. After Valerie asked this question, Hailey answered in an expected manner – agreeing with Valerie's assessment and intended suggestion. She said:

> Um, space wise I think the couch is better because it also gives them space like to flash the flashlight more. Like when I was over at the couch, they would move the pillows and then shine the light in between the pillows and so it was dark, and then they would light it up. The only thing with this was like it being a darker corner you could see more, but space wise by the couch was definitely probably more beneficial for them to be able to explore what their lights could shine on.

In this exchange, the question was somewhat closed ended, leading to a specific conclusion. This resulted in Hailey offering a defined answer that aligned with Valerie's interpretation. Valerie seemed to be pleased with Hailey's assessment of the environment; she nodded and smiled in satisfaction that Hailey was coming to this conclusion too. The learning in this case was unidirectional, coming from Valerie and ending with Hailey – placing the mentor in the position of teacher and the PT in the position of learner.

Vignette 3: Commitment to Listen and Use Judgment-Free Language

This vignette illustrates the result of using judgment-free language when interacting with PTs during pedagogical documentation. In their mentor meeting, Cara (PT) brought video documentation of herself teaching a small group lesson. Sabrina (MT) did not see this lesson in person and was watching it for the first time during this meeting. First, Sabrina guided Cara to

explain specific aspects of the video, such as why she chose it and what she wanted to focus on for the documentation review. Of note in Sabrina's actions was the length of time that she spent listening and asking clarifying questions. Also, when she did talk, Sabrina used language such as "I notice" and "I wonder" which communicated a disposition of curiosity rather than judgment.

Provocation and Response Interwoven. In the mentor meeting video, Cara described why she chose the video and her lived experience of teaching the small group in the face of some environmental distractions:

> Cara: I chose this video specifically out of all the other ones because in other groups, they would get more distracted.
>
> Sabrina: Okay.
>
> Cara: Or there'd be different things every day and especially if it's outside, you're more likely to get distracted. But with this specific group, I don't think there was much for them to really get distracted by.
>
> Sabrina: Okay.
>
> Cara: They were also the ones that were like, really like they had a funny reaction to tongue twisters too. And it's not like today – they had a good reaction to tongue twisters too. But they were also like, 'I can't see. Oh, I'm gonna go sit on a bike' and I was like, 'Do we want to sit on a bike?' And I was like, 'because you're gonna have to drag it all the way over here. And you're gonna sit and then some people still aren't gonna be able to see each other or see things.' But we were able to get through a lot with this group.

Here, Sabrina did not fill the space with input or suggestions. When she said, "okay" several times, her words carried an air of "tell me more" or "I'm listening." Cara responded with more interpretation and filled the conversational space. Later in the meeting, Sabrina posed an open-

ended prompt for Cara to consider, “So tell me what you would change or do differently, and what you would keep, and how you would plan for this very last group, based on the three days teaching it so far.” Cara responded by reflecting on multiple teaching decisions she made. She rethought how she might introduce the lesson more clearly, and she considered the potential use of advanced vocabulary that could have challenged the children to learn a new concept. Cara also thought of how she could prepare the physical environment differently to think proactively about potential distractions, and she decided that next time she would offer the children more time to think before expecting them to answer her questions. Sabrina’s initial prompt from an *above* positioning, moved into an *equal* positioning as Cara contributed her perspective, and continued to evolve into a *below* position as Cara offered Sabrina new insight.

Vignette 4: “First, I wanna hear from you.” –Catherine (MT)

The following vignette illustrates another instance of a mentor withholding input to bring about PT participation and engagement. In their mentoring meeting, Jen (PT) brought a video of herself teaching children in a small group to share with Catherine. Catherine offered guidance about the process of video documentation review and passed the leading role off to Jen.

Provocation. After watching the video excerpt together, Jen paused the video. Catherine almost began to give her interpretation, but then paused and narrated, “Yeah, no, I thought it went pretty well. Yeah, okay. I had a few little thoughts in my head. But um, I don't know – first I wanna hear from you.” As the video ended and the time for interpretation began, Jen immediately expected Catherine to begin talking. At this moment, Catherine realized this and resisted the default conversation dynamic to prioritize Jen’s interpretation. Catherine described her pedagogical intention in her written reflection:

> Through documentation sharing processes, it is important to me not to dominate the conversation or to be talking at my mentee. Instead, I try to reassure them that I too am approaching this experience with vulnerability and have things to learn too. My goal is always to offer guidance and further reflection, without telling them what to do. I made a conscious effort not to stop the video or react first. I wanted to see Jen's reflections, what drew her attention, and then provide feedback. In this case, our initial reflections lined up. The pieces Jen noticed, I noticed as well.

Response. As she was inviting Jen into collaboration, she was still in an *above* positioning. It was Jen's response to the invitation that changed the dyadic positioning – moving Catherine into a *below* positioning as Jen contributed her own thoughts without Catherine's leading:

> Jen: Okay. Um, so when I first did it, I was like, 'Oh, that was not good.' Like they did not like that. Just because it didn't –
>
> Catherine: You felt like they didn't like it?
>
> Jen: it didn't like – they weren't interested, as interested. I also think it had something to do with – they knew all of their friends were outside.
>
> Catherine: Oh, for sure.
>
> Jen: And so they were, like, really itching to get outside.
>
> Catherine: Okay.
>
> Jen: so that definitely had something to do with it.

Jen went on to describe multiple challenging aspects of teaching her lesson and how she would have done it differently. She initiated back-and-forth discussion with Catherine about material choices, the developmental level of the children, and evaluating her own expectations for the

toddlers in the group. Then, Catherine offered some big-picture perspective in a way that encouraged Jen to reconsider her self-critique.

Continuing the changing dynamic of the conversation, the mentor positioning moved into a *greater-we* position as they engaged in layered and new interpretation together. Catherine described it in her reflection, "However, the value of this experience was layering our reflections together, and me offering my own experiences and successes/failures for her to also learn from. We also paired together our knowledge of the children for a deeper understanding." Within the back-and-forth layering of ideas, the dyad arrived at a new level of thought that would not have been reached individually.

Vignette 5: "I didn't pick up on that when it was happening." –Leona (MT)

In their mentoring meeting, Leona and Sophia (PT) reviewed a video recorded by Leona of her small group earlier that week. Sophia watched the video prior to the meeting to come prepared with thoughts and questions. Leona, however, had not watched the video back yet. In this vignette, after Leona paused the video for discussion, Sophia asked a question about how Leona engaged every child in the small group lesson, especially those who were not as vocal as other children. Leona replied by explaining her typical approach with those children, but then her curiosity was sparked. She went back to watch the same video excerpt again, and this time, she noticed something new that she had missed in the moment.

Provocation. The prompt for this vignette was a seemingly simple comment on what Sophia (PT) noticed in the video and a question about Leona's practice. Sophia shared her observation by saying:

> He's very quiet – which he was very quiet in my small group too. So, I guess that that wasn't surprising to me. I guess I'm just kind of wondering how you get someone like that to engage like the more quiet, like [child]?

Leona responded, sharing her overall approach:

> I don't ever want to put the words into his mouth, I want to – I want it to be his authentic, his words and his contribution to the small group. And that's why at like that point when I knew he had lost his, his attention span and that he had kind of hit his limit of attending to the small group, that I let him go on and go because he did participate as much as I wanted him to, and as much as what's capable for him.

Response. Then, she felt prompted to rewatch the video excerpt. She responded to Sophia in their mentor meeting:

> Yeah. So, the other thing – backtracking a little bit – that I noticed that I didn't notice in the moment. And it's fascinating to watch this now because I didn't even, like you talked about how quiet he was. But almost every time I asked [the child] questions about his work, [other vocal children] would chime in and start offering words and thoughts like they almost over-talked him…so that he didn't really get to answer much, which is interesting. I didn't pick up on that when it was happening.

This illustrated a surprising finding about the role of video documentation – *documentation as the teacher*. In this case, Leona and Sophia were both positioned as learners, while the documentation was positioned above as the teacher. The video illuminated what both Leona and Sophia missed, and new thinking emerged within the context of pedagogical documentation review. Additionally, Leona verbalized an authentic learning moment to Sophia, so Sophia had the opportunity to participate in Leona's learning as it emerged. The distinction here was

Leona's willingness to let the documentation teach her and be transparent enough to verbalize her learning with Sophia. As a result, Leona reconsidered her line of thinking about supporting this child, and Sophia was brought into a conversation about Leona's new awareness.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the significant findings for each research question. The first question investigated mentors' positioning during pedagogical documentation review with preservice teachers. The data showed the distinct positions mentors took in this study as well as the specific actions and dispositions that mentors enacted within the dyadic interactions. Findings revealed that mentors in an *above* position moved between dignifying and patronizing support, mentors in a *below* position modeled a growth mindset, and mentors adopting an *equal* position with PTs prioritized PTs' personhood through establishing trust, respect, and relationships. Lastly, in the *greater-we* position, the dyad practiced shared vulnerability which elevated the documentation to the position of teacher – positioning both members of the dyad in a learning stance. I also described the findings for the second research question through illustrative vignettes which connect a provocation and the response that followed. These stories demonstrated the connectedness of one member's choices to the potential learning for the other. In sum, the vignettes demonstrated how mentors' decisions about leadership, questioning, language, self-restraint, and transparency impacted the subsequent learning opportunities and experiences for the MT and PT dyad.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to explore the practice of pedagogical documentation as a tool for dynamic and reciprocal mentor positioning among teams of mentor and preservice teachers. This study investigated these questions:

1. How do mentor teachers position themselves during pedagogical documentation?
2. How does mentor positioning impact dyadic learning experiences and opportunities?

This research sought to address a gap in the mentoring literature by providing a research-based approach and practical tool for mentors to utilize with preservice teachers to facilitate a reciprocal mentoring relationship. Considering the findings of this study, and the supporting literature, pedagogical documentation is one such tool.

This discussion situates the experiences of the five MT-PT dyads from this case study into the preservice-teacher mentoring literature and seminal theoretical frameworks that underpin mentoring practices and the practice of pedagogical documentation. First, I present the conflicting goals of PT independence and PTs development of collaborative competencies. I discuss the surrounding literature that illuminates the downfall of high levels of teacher independence in the field, and I suggest an alternative approach that prioritizes collaborative learning practices. Then, I illustrate how mentors in this study practiced a *pedagogy of listening* with preservice teachers in a way that paralleled how they listened to the children in pedagogical documentation. This connection calls mentors to evaluate their *image of the preservice teacher* in the same way they are challenged to interrogate their *image of the child*.

Juxtaposing PT Independence and Collaborative Competencies

Success in mentoring is often measured by a preservice teacher's level of independence. The mentoring literature, from an apprenticeship perspective, holds to a gradual release of PTs by slowly increasing their independence until they are fully autonomous (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017; Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). The findings of this study, however, challenge this measure of success – placing collaborative competencies and the co-construction of knowledge (Collins & Ting, 2017) as the goal. This claim is bolstered by the literature on pedagogical documentation as a transformative professional development tool (Rintakorpi, 2016; Sousa, 2019) and further supported by the literature on learning communities as contexts for growth (Collins & Ting, 2017). The practice of pedagogical documentation creates a collective space for professional support that is lacking in the field (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikhahmadi, 2016). Situated within an increasingly isolated teaching field, pedagogical documentation offers PTs and MTs an opportunity to grow comfortable with the negotiated nature of learning, rather than seeing learning as a process that occurs in isolation (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006).

In one prevalent mentoring model, the apprenticeship model, the culminating goal for PTs is independence (Andreasen et al., 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017; Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). The role of the mentor along this continuum is to begin with high support and steadily phase out – relinquishing the duties of curriculum, observation, and assessment, along with classroom management, into the hands of the preservice teacher (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Clarke et al., 2014). On the other hand, in an integrated mentoring model (Puroila et al., 2021), the measure of PT success is knowing how to collaborate as a member of a teaching team. The mentoring literature describes the integrated mentoring model of co-teaching that positions MTs and PTs as collaborators where PTs are immediately invited into critical pedagogical and

practical conversations (Soslau et al., 2019). In her interview, Valerie (MT) said, “I think the biggest part of it being a collaborative process is the perspective of being able to have [one member of the dyad] challenge something that they notice.” Through this lens, PTs hold valuable knowledge and input to help mentors that strengthen the team’s capabilities and guides mentors to critically evaluate their beliefs and practices.

As preservice teachers enter the workforce, they will move from an environment of mentoring support to an independent classroom setting. In my experience as an early childhood teacher, I have encountered a high level of isolation among teachers siloed in their own classrooms. My experience is corroborated by scholars, Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi (2016), who have studied teacher isolation and its effects. They describe teacher isolation as a multi-layered phenomenon, physical and psychological, which has been shown to be a prominent risk factor for teacher burnout (Garwood, 2023) – an occurrence that continues to plague the field of education. To combat isolation, a shift toward collaboration is necessary. Building strong professional networks and collaborative spaces could be an antidote to teacher isolation (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikhahmadi, 2016). The practice of pedagogical documentation, and the connected space it creates, is one tool for teacher collaboration and professional support. In this study, Leona (MT) discussed the rarity of such spaces where she could be vulnerable with others without fear:

> You get to sit in a space where, like, everybody gets a turn being vulnerable. You know, and, and practicing language, like ‘I notice’ or ‘I'm wondering about or curious about’, you know, in a way that's like a judgment-free zone.

Another mentor, Catherine, described her process of destigmatizing asking for help through pedagogical documentation, “I have nothing to hide or be ashamed of, but I have everything to

gain from getting somebody else's perspective and putting our heads together." Especially with preservice teachers who enter practicum placements poised to learn, this vulnerable practice has potential to create an expectation of collaboration for novice teachers as they enter the workforce. Knowing the grave consequences that isolation has for teacher retention, it is essential to explore a pathway toward shared professional learning experiences.

A Paralleled Pedagogy of Listening

In the context of pedagogical documentation as practiced within the Reggio Emilia approach, practitioners exercise the *pedagogy of listening* to carefully see and understand the perceptions of children (Clark & Moss, 2001; Rinaldi, 2006; Sousa, 2019). In this study, mentors and preservice teachers considered video documentation while enacting a pedagogy of listening in a joint venture of observation, reflection, and interpretation. Extending this concept a step further, the practice of listening was not only directed toward the documentation but was also mirrored with the dyadic exchanges during documentation review. The dyad's disposition toward the documentation paralleled the dyad's disposition toward each other in this space. Considering the tenets of the pedagogy of listening, this study illustrated how practitioners' approach to reciprocal listening with preservice teachers was a natural extension of the way they practiced listening to children through pedagogical documentation.

We can trace theoretical and practice-based attention to emergent patterns of listening back to Dewey's seminal work, *Democracy in Education* (1916/1944). Dewey described listening in the context of shared communication, characterized by "participation in a common understanding…which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions–like ways of responding" (1916/1944, p. 3). Through a critical lens, some scholars posit that a methodology of listening eliminates social barriers and facilitates shared meaning-making (Smith-Gilman, 2018).

Through the practices of *multiple listening* and *emergent listening*, practitioners suspend judgment on what they see to engage with the documentation with a willingness to consider conflicting perspectives and acknowledge potential biases and blind spots (Davies, 2014; Rinaldi, 2006).

In this study, patterns of listening were ubiquitous among the data and crystallized in the findings. In her interview, when Catherine (MT) described her posture toward listening to PTs in collaboration, she spoke of it as "stepping back." Instead of being one who offers answers or critiques, she wanted to be "curious alongside" the PT – a disposition that prioritized the exchange of perspectives without judgment. In this study, mentors' choice to listen *first*, perpetuated the flow of learning and created ample space for PTs to guide the conversation. In the case of Ella (MT) and Alexis (PT) during their mentor meeting, Alexis steered the discussion toward topics that were personally relevant to her current professional focus. She continued in transparency by sharing her honest emotions about the challenges of finding her authentic teaching identity and not simply emulating Ella's practices. In a sense, MTs released control of the path of the conversation and risked spending more time on a topic than they had planned. These findings align with what mentoring researchers have found – holding that the practice of listening invites unplanned and predictable paths of inquiry and discussion (Parker & Vetter, 2020).

These findings are consistent with the literature that describes the act of listening as both an intrapersonal and interpersonal endeavor (Bowne et al., 2010; Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Guidici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Rinaldi, 2006). The pedagogy of listening involves identifying and communicating one's own beliefs (both professional and personal) and then sharing them with others – all while respecting interpretive differences of what knowledge is considered

"important" or "legitimate" (Smith-Gilman, 2018). In the listening space of pedagogical documentation with PTs, the effort is less about figuring out the correct interpretation and more about gaining clarity from each other about what is known, the process of coming to know, and being willing to reconsider that knowledge when confronted with another way of knowing (Parker & Vetter, 2020).

When sharing, analyzing, and interpreting video documentation of young children in context, teachers draw upon the *image of the child* (Malaguzzi, 1994) to inform a new understanding of what the children know and are coming to know through a perspective that positions the child as the protagonist in the documented story. In a parallel practice, mentors in this study drew upon their *image of the preservice teacher*, to identify what PTs knew and were coming to know while ascribing to a belief in the PT's capability, strength, and intelligence. This approach to understanding and supporting PTs is largely unexplored in the mentoring literature but was illuminated repeatedly in the practice of pedagogical documentation with PTs in this study. With this approach, mentors utilized a pedagogy of listening to gain insight into where PTs are in their professional learning and areas where they might support continued learning. With children in the context of pedagogical documentation, this concept is named and explored in the literature as *rilanci*, where teachers explore how they might mirror children's thinking back to them in a way that promotes further exploration without interrupting their learning processes (Landi & Pintus, 2022). Employing this same approach with preservice teachers means that mentors simultaneously act as co-constructor of new shared knowledge while attending to pivotal moments where they might relaunch PTs' thinking.

Limitations

This research was conducted with a small group of five mentors and five preservice teachers in a bounded case study at one early childhood center nested within a particular context. This sample is not necessarily a representative sample of professionals outside of this bounded context in several ways. Nine out of ten participants in this study identify as White women. They represented diversity in age, years of experience, and pathways to becoming mentor teachers, yet three out of the five mentors have mentored almost exclusively in the context of this center, and one mentor had taught at the center for her entire career in other roles. This meant that only one mentor had the perspective of mentoring for an extended time outside of the case study context. This aspect contributed to the study through deep familiarity with practice of pedagogical documentation and comfort with mentoring but may have limited the range of teaching philosophies and approaches represented by the mentors in the data. Also, the mentoring practices in this study are uniquely and particularly situated in the context of this center. Applying this research to other contexts could present challenges since the infrastructural supports, which make pedagogical documentation possible, may not exist in many school settings.

This study was limited by time constraints and the timing of data collection. Although the center is a year-round program, the challenges of summer staffing and teachers' vacation time created a barrier for observing "mentoring as usual." Further, the summer term was only twelve weeks, rather than the 15-week placement in the fall and spring semesters. The mentors in this study who had grown accustomed to the 15-week placement, encountered the pressure of time during the summer term. Mentors may have rushed the process of pedagogical documentation because of the shortened timeline and need to support the PTs in developing a range of

competencies. Also, by only collecting one instance of pedagogical documentation, I was not able to see how the dynamics among mentors and PTs changed over time. It was beyond the scope of this study to collect longitudinal data around the practice of pedagogical documentation, but this would have offered insight into how the dyadic positioning and rapport changes based on the length of time spent working together.

Liminality: Living in the *Nepantla*

A point of meaningful realization occurred in my understanding of who I was within this work. I conducted this study in a context with which I was intimately familiar and where I had not conducted research before. Considering my insider role in the research context and my role as a researcher gathering data *about* this context, I walked (wandered) in the liminal space between. Anzaldúa (2002) calls the space between *nepantla* and those who tread between worlds *nepantleras*. It is of significant note that Anzaldua's work is applied to the borderlands between intersecting ethnic and ancestral identities and navigating the colonization and revision of those identities. However, I was able to better understand and interrogate my positioning in this research by applying, with caution, Anzaldúa's theoretical lens and that of liminality as described by Victor Turner (1969). Holding a liminal identity or being a "threshold person," Turner posits, is the state of being "betwixt and between the positions assigned" and is "necessarily ambiguous" (1969, p. 359) and precarious since it does not fit within the binary of *us* and *them* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2015). In this work, I stood at the threshold of practice and research, operating as a sort of translator between the two. I worked to speak both the language of the community of practice – my native language, and that of academia – an acquired language.

At the time of data collection and analysis, I was also an acting mentor to a preservice teacher in my classroom. As I explored mentoring practice among teams of my colleagues and the preservice teacher cohort, I was simultaneously afforded the opportunity to investigate my own mentoring practice within pedagogical documentation – reckoning with my own mentor identity. Furthermore, my analyses were informed by my personal experiences with the activity of documentation review in my own MT-PT dyad. I connected to many of the challenges, barriers, and strategies employed by the mentors in the study because I had experienced them firsthand. I also learned directly from their expertise and practice. In a sense, I was privileged to utilize their videoed mentoring practice as a type of pedagogical documentation for my own professional development. I practiced the same type of listening while watching the video recordings, reading the journals, and participating in the interviews that I saw mirrored in the mentoring relationships and within the classroom documentation practice.

The liminal space within these two positions was a consistent point of awareness and tension throughout the planning, implementation, and writing of this research. Within this unique, and often uncomfortable, positioning, I maintained an intimate closeness to the participant experience while also being imbued with a sense of power that is present when one can disconnect from being the subject of study. I realize that less vulnerability is demanded of you when you are in a position of power as I experienced in being the narrator of the research story. In this space grew my cognizance of how difficult it can be to open yourself up to critique and allow someone else to hear and interpret your work and an awareness of the privilege inherent to the role of researcher.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The findings of this study have implications for mentors on the ground working with preservice teachers, and for administrators and teacher educators at a macro level through systemic approaches for teacher learning. This study contributed to a deepened understanding of the role that positioning plays within the mentoring relationship. If mentors become keenly aware of positioning dynamics in interactions with preservice teachers, they can practice in-the-moment self-evaluation and adjust their mentoring approach to better support PTs' learning and growth. Also, acknowledging the power mentors hold is the first step to deconstructing the default dynamic among the dyad. Only then can they interrogate the fixed leadership role that some mentoring approaches create.

Mentors who wish to change their approach to one that provides space for reciprocal mentoring must first question their beliefs about preservice teachers by examining their *image of the preservice teacher*. Changes in applied practices will only be sustainable long term if there has been an underlying shift in beliefs. In response to mentor teachers who are hesitant to add "one more thing" to the ever-growing list of things to do, this study simply advocates for mentors' honest assessment of the ways they interact in conversation and collaborative spaces with PTs.

On a macro level, this study urges an evaluation of systemic approaches for teacher education from a lens that considers *how* and *where* mentors and PTs learn. In the intimate space of pedagogical documentation, both MTs and PTs in this study participated in situated professional development that was personally relevant and, in some cases, transformative. These findings challenge the practice of prescriptive professional development where teachers (MTs and PTs) are told what teacher knowledge is "legitimate" (Meidl, Vanorsdale, Mahony, & Ritter,

2023). The practice of pedagogical documentation, when implemented systemically, offers teachers agency to choose the focus of their professional learning by adjusting the subject of the documentation and the path of the interpretive discussion.

One direction for future research is to investigate and seek to describe the particular activity of pedagogical documentation at this center, and in other similar contexts, through the framework of activity theory (Anderson et al., 2000). This distinct lens could illuminate the specific approaches employed by mentors in this space and the ways these materialize in collaboration with preservice teachers. As a means for professional learning, pedagogical documentation is an activity in which teachers actively participate where knowledge is socially constructed in a particular pedagogical and physical setting (Anderson et al., 2000) The findings of this study provoked more questions about the activity of pedagogical documentation as it occurs within teams of teachers, not only with the MT-PT dyad.

In this study, contextual factors in pedagogical documentation emerged as a focus of my analyses. An aspect that warrants more in-depth study is the influence of contextual factors such as who brought the documentation, whose device it was playing on, who paused and played the video, and the subject of the documentation, on the dynamics of the pedagogical conversation. Conversational dynamics and paths undoubtedly changed based on the proximity of the content to the person sharing – whether it was a video of themselves, the other person, or of a third party such as the children. This aspect deserves further study and focused analysis – exploring a different research question on the role of contextual factors in pedagogical documentation. Additionally, future research needs to explore the practice of pedagogical documentation from the perspective of PTs. PTs come to practicum placements, and to the table of pedagogical documentation, with their own set of ideologies and ways of thinking about the role of the

teacher. Future research should be done to investigate PTs' ideological changes because of the mentoring experience and the process of pedagogical documentation.

Lastly, the highly situated nature of this case study may cause educators to ask if these principles and practices can be implemented in a different educational context. With adequate systemic support and the MTs' willingness to implement a vulnerable mentoring practice, I anticipate that this pedagogical documentation could transfer to other contexts, like public schools in this region. However, future research needs to be done to test this assertion and investigate how pedagogical documentation could be utilized as a tool of teacher development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Valerie's Interview Protocol

Your journey as a mentor:

- Tell me about the ways you've worked as a mentor over your career and in what capacities.
- How has your mentoring role evolved over time to be what it is now (even within this program)?
- What's your current overall approach to mentoring pre-service teachers, specifically senior-level students?

The process of documentation review:

- How would you describe the process of bringing and reviewing documentation to an educator who is outside of our context?

- You used the word "dissect" in your reflection when talking about demonstrating the process of how to dissect the video. Tell me more about what you mean and how this supports professional learning.

- How has collaborative documentation review with colleagues and directors influenced your teaching practice? (Prompt: Is there a specific story that sticks out in your mind?)

- Talk about the similarities and differences of documentation review with colleagues and implementing this practice with students?

Specific moment:

- I want to narrow in on one specific moment that happened that was interesting to me. As you shifted from watching your video to watching Hailey's video. As we watch, let's focus on how she responded and then your response to her.

Watch Mentor Meeting video 8:00-11:45

- Hailey was nervous and very stressed to watch her video and started with a critical perspective of her teaching. What do you think was happening for her there?

- You responded by guiding her to name some of the positive aspects of her teaching. Talk about your response and why it matters?

- Talk about the vulnerability required in documentation review, specifically when you are watching yourself teach?

Appendix B

Ella's Interview Protocol

Your journey as a mentor:

- Tell me about the ways you've worked as a mentor over your career and in what capacities.

- How has your mentoring role evolved over time to be what it is now (even within this program)?

- What's your current overall approach to mentoring pre-service teachers, specifically senior-level students?

The process of documentation review:

- How would you describe the process of bringing and reviewing documentation to an educator who is outside of our context?

- How has collaborative documentation review with colleagues and directors influenced your teaching practice? (Prompt: Is there a specific story that sticks out in your mind?)

- Talk about the similarities and differences of documentation review with colleagues and implementing this practice with students?

Specific moment:

- How do you cultivate individuality when mentoring a student who has a different personality and style from you? How do you see this come out during documentation review with students?

- When you met with Alexis (PT), you spent time validating her fears and nervousness about making mistakes and talked about the importance of this in your reflection. What have you learned over your career about making mistakes and practicing vulnerability while also being a mentor?

Appendix C

Catherine's Interview Protocol

Your journey as a mentor:

- Tell me about the ways you've worked as a mentor over your career and in what capacities.

- How has your mentoring role evolved over time to be what it is now (even within this program)?

- What's your current overall approach to mentoring pre-service teachers, specifically senior-level students?

The process of documentation review:

- How would you describe the process of bringing and reviewing documentation to an educator who is outside of our context?

- How has collaborative documentation review with colleagues and directors influenced your teaching practice? (Prompt: Is there a specific story that sticks out in your mind?)

- Talk about the similarities and differences of documentation review with colleagues and implementing this practice with students?

Specific moment:

- You talked with Jen (PT) about adjusting expectations and you affirmed the challenges that occur with things outside of her control.
    - How do you see students' expectations influence their experiences?
    - Do you think mentor expectations and PTs' expectations align? (These could be expectations for the practicum experience, mentor relationship, etc)

- You also had a time when you acknowledged how this lesson went differently throughout the week as she worked with other groups of children.
    - What does that shared context and shared experience in the classroom add to the process of documentation review?
    - How does it differ from when we do this with colleagues in action research seminar, for example?

Appendix D

Sabrina's Interview Protocol

Your journey as a mentor:

- Tell me about the ways you've worked as a mentor over your career and in what capacities.

- How has your mentoring role evolved over time to be what it is now (even within this program)?

- What's your current overall approach to mentoring pre-service teachers, specifically senior-level students?

The process of documentation review:

- How would you describe the process of bringing and reviewing documentation to an educator who is outside of our context?

- How has collaborative documentation review with colleagues and directors influenced your teaching practice? (Prompt: Is there a specific story that sticks out in your mind?)

- Can you talk about the concept and practice of a "critical friend" like you described in your meeting with Cara? How does this fit into the practice of documentation review? Why is that a helpful position to take when participating in this process?

- Talk about the similarities and differences of documentation review with colleagues and implementing this practice with students?

Specific moment:

- In your reflection you talk about the importance of listening during this practice. It made me wonder about this idea of "listening as mentoring" or "mentoring as listening."
    - How have you seen this take shape in your mentoring relationships?

- What have you noticed about the opportunities that open up when you engage in listening with students?

Appendix E

Leona's Interview Protocol

Your journey as a mentor:

- Tell me about the ways you've worked as a mentor either formally or informally over your career and in what capacities.

- How has your mentoring style evolved over time to be what it is now (even within this program)?

- What's your current overall approach to mentoring or working with pre-service teachers, specifically senior-level students?

The process of documentation review:

- How would you describe the process of bringing and reviewing documentation to an educator who is outside of our context?

- How has collaborative documentation review with colleagues and directors influenced your teaching practice? (Prompt: Is there a specific story that sticks out in your mind?)

- Talk about the similarities and differences of documentation review with colleagues and implementing this practice with students?

Specific moment:

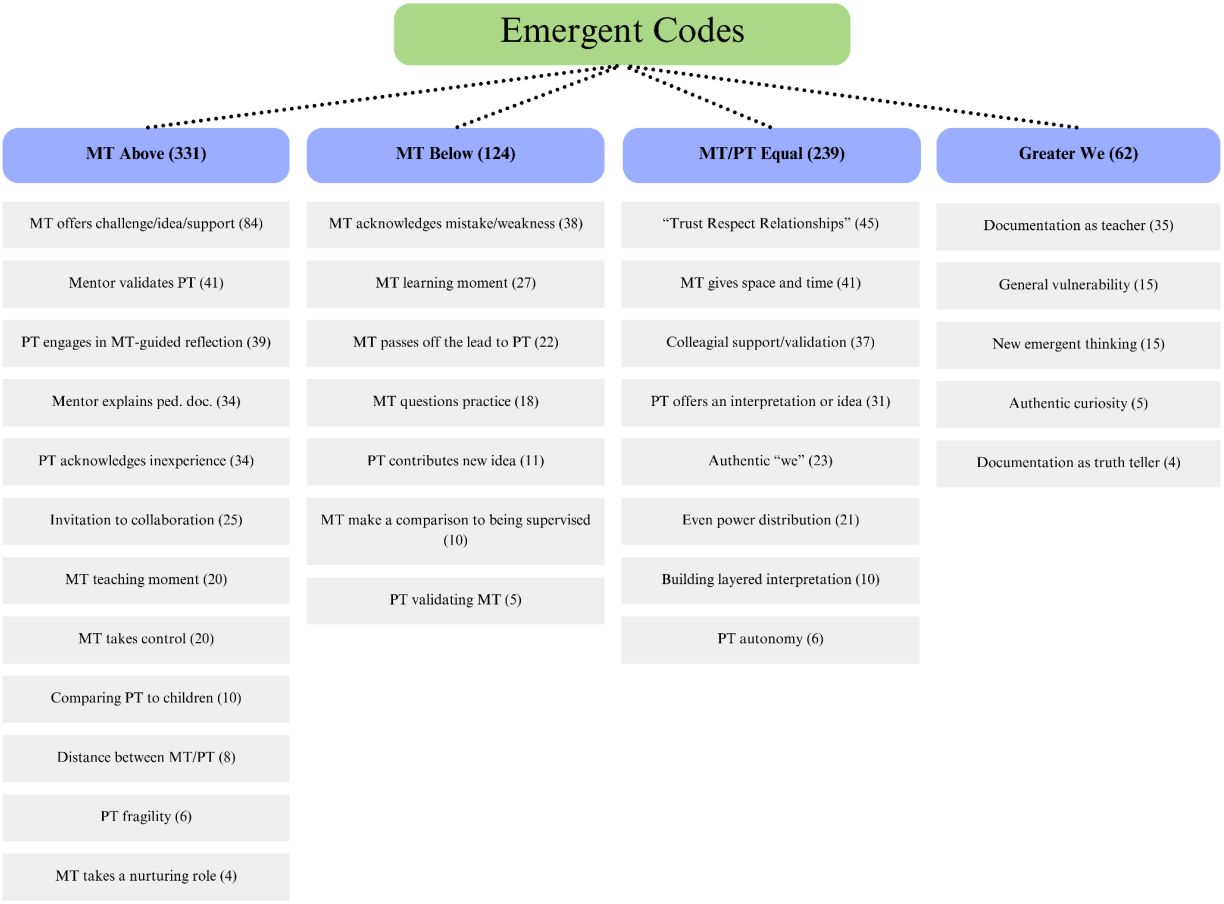
- I want to narrow in on one specific part of the video and your reflection that was super interesting to me. In the second reflection prompt about when you took the position of learner, you talked about how you learned from the documentation (documentation as a teacher).

- Why do you think that happens? What do you think is happening that makes documentation a way of learning?

- Sophia seemed engaged but also did not offer up her thoughts and reflections until you prompted her. What did that feel like to you as you were in it or as you reflected on the experience

Appendix F

Figure of Emergent Codes



VITA

Melissa Renee Westfall completed her bachelor's degree in mathematics with a minor in Education in 2011 and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching in 2012 from Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. She obtained K-6 teacher licensure in the state of Tennessee. During her Master's year, she completed an internship teaching kindergarten and sixth grade math and science. Upon graduating, she continued her career as a practitioner at an international school in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. She taught kindergarten and first grade for four years, then moved back to the United States to Knoxville, Tennessee to teach first grade at Emerald Charter School. After a year characterized by isolation, a lack of support, and impossible expectations, she then decided to apply for a role as an Assistant Teacher at the Early Learning Center for Research and Practice on the campus of the University of Tennessee. In this role, she was afforded the opportunity to observe children to reorient her focus and passion toward the purpose for her chosen career. This work, and the support of a community of practice that values collaboration, teacher support, and sees teachers as researchers, spurred Melissa on to pursue a doctorate in Child and Family Studies while working full-time at the Early Learning Center. The shift from a focus on curriculum and assessment from a teacher's perspective to a focus on child development situated within families and communities opened up unexplored paths of inquiry and ignited her passion for teacher research.

Now, she works as a Demonstration Teacher in the kindergarten classroom of the Early Learning Center where she participates firsthand in the co-construction of knowledge alongside children while mentoring preservice teachers. Her pre-doctoral research explored the temporal environment in kindergarten – exploring the patterns of the daily schedule, pace, and classroom climate from teachers' perspectives. While working in a lab school context where mentoring

practice is a fundamental responsibility for teachers, she developed new interests and questions around meaningful and effective mentoring practices. These questions led to the design and implementation of this dissertation study. Beyond mentoring practices, her other research interests include teacher action research, emergent curriculum, and social emotional development, and play-based learning.