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## Considering the Mentoring Dyad through the Lens of Relational Trust

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**Considering the Mentoring Dyad Through the Lens of Relational Trust**

### **Abstract**

Research suggests that relational trust is important for teacher collaboration and shared learning. This study examines relational trust with a new population: teacher candidates and classroom mentor teachers (CMT). Our results suggest participants' (n=16) perceptions of trust in mentoring relationships align with Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2000) facets of trust. Further, we found candidates expressed trust in two distinct ways. Participants primarily expressed trustworthy behaviors by judging CMTs' trustworthiness and were less likely to express demonstrations of trustworthy behaviors to CMTs. Candidates' orientation toward judging may be useful to teacher preparers who want to help candidates self-direct positive field experiences.

Keywords: mentoring, teacher candidates, trust

## **Considering the Mentoring Dyad Through the Lens of Relational Trust**

### **Introduction**

Field experiences are a critical component of teacher preparation (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Duffield, 2006; Hoffman, Wetzel, Maloch, Greeter, Taylor, DeJulio, & Vlach, 2015; Lee, Tice, Collins, Brown, Smith, & Fox, 2012; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). In 2010, the publication of the Blue Ribbon Panel report on clinical practice emphasized the need for a major shift in teacher preparation to place clinical practice at the center of teacher preparation (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). In 2012, the Council of Chief State School Officers released *Our Responsibility, Our Promise*, a report which emphasized the importance of clinical practices in teacher preparation. And in recent years, policy makers have established Clinical Partnerships and Practice as Standard #2 in national teacher preparation program accreditation (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013). Classroom mentor teachers (CMT) play a central role in candidates' field experiences (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Clarke et al., 2014; Lawley, Moore, & Smajic, 2014) because their position as daily guide for teacher candidates affords them a great deal of influence in the development of candidates (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). Now, with an increased emphasis on field experiences in teacher preparation programs, CMTs have the potential to be even more influential contributors to candidates' preparation (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001).

Recent reviews by Clarke et al. (2014) and Lawson, Cakmak, Gunduz, and Busher (2015) suggest the majority of research on mentoring of teacher candidates during field experiences has tended to focus on the role of the CMT. When studies have focused on both CMTs and

candidates, they have primarily examined candidates' perceptions of CMTs (e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2010). Several studies have examined the relationship between the CMT and the candidate (e.g., Aderibigbe, 2013; Bullock 2017; Izadinia, 2016; Margolis, 2007; Nguyen, 2008; Stanulis & Russell, 2000). For example, Izadinia (2016) explored the way candidates and CMTs conceptualized the mentoring relationship and the ways in which the mentoring relationship helped to shape candidates' identities as teachers.

There is, however, limited research that specifically examines the role of the teacher candidate as a mentee (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001). For instance, some studies have addressed how candidates acquire instructional skills from the CMT (e.g., Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000; Frank, 2017), but do not examine candidates' specific responsibilities within the mentoring relationship. One way to explore candidates' responsibilities within the mentoring relationship is through the lens of relational trust. Candidates, as guest learners and teachers in CMTs' classrooms, must depend on CMTs for guidance (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007). CMTs, in turn, depend on candidates to behave professionally and contribute to the class environment, because CMTs' primary responsibility is to their K-12 students (Jaspers, Meijer, Prins, & Wubbels, 2014). As such, relational trust offers a framework to explore how candidates and CMTs are an example of interdependent parties, working together toward shared goals (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The current study examines mentorship from the perspective of the mentee and uses the framework of trust to explore mentees' roles and responsibilities in the mentoring dyad. Trust plays a central role in schools (Romero & Mitchell, 2018) because schools are social networks in

which people within one group (e.g., students, parents, teachers, leaders) form interdependent relationships with people in other groups (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust is critical for successful schools because it helps reduce vulnerabilities between interdependent parties trying to accomplish shared educational objectives (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). For example, recent reviews suggest that reflective practice should be a central feature of the mentoring relationship (Clarke et al., 2014; Hoffman et al., 2015). Yet reflective practice may be impossible without the presence of trust because vulnerability inhibits shared reflection (Benade, 2018).

In this way, interdependent parties' vulnerability creates an opportunity for trust to develop (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Trust grows between parties when, over time, expectations for positive behavior are met (Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Specifically, when parties are found to be benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open, trust develops (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)

Because we asked preservice teachers to share their perceptions of their CMTs, the framework of trust is a useful lens through which to view candidates' responses. Candidates engage in field experiences so that they are better prepared to enter the workforce; the tacit assumption on display in this arrangement is that the CMT/candidate dyads function effectively. Shortages of cooperating teachers, however, mean there is no guarantee mentors will be competent (Clarke et al., 2014). In this way, candidates working with CMTs are vulnerable (a precondition for trust). Given that evidence suggests trusting relationships between and among colleagues may be important for reaching educational goals, and there is little evidence for preservice teachers' perceptions of their relationships with CMTs, we chose the framework of trust as a way to explore candidates' feedback on this key relationship.

### **Literature Review**

We first review relevant research on the framework of trust as applied to the school setting, focusing on collegial trust and power dynamics within relational trust. Then, we briefly introduce literature related to trust in the mentoring relationship, perspective taking, and candidates' identity development.

### *Functions of relational trust in schools*

Early research about trust in schools defined the construct of trust and developed reliable instruments with which to measure it (e.g., Hoy & Kupersmith, 1985; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The next wave of school trust research included studies that explored the relation between trust and other variables that predict school effectiveness, for example: (a) organizational health (Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001), (b) organizational climate (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002), (c) organizational climate and justice (DiPaola & Guy, 2009), and (d) teacher professionalism (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Evidence also suggests trust has a positive relation with student achievement in mathematics and reading, even when controlling for socioeconomic factors and school context (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) even in schools that defied the odds to make student achievement gains beyond expectations (Lawson, Durand, Wilcox, Gregory, Schiller, & Zukerman, 2017).

Trust's potential influence on school outcomes may be rooted in its ability to both facilitate and cement connectedness among leaders, teachers, parents, and students (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). In this way, trust among colleagues is a foundation for the shared work of teachers (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Ford, 2015). Specifically, trust engenders effective communication and cooperation in schools, which allows for multiple benefits such as quality

teaching, positive school climate, school capacity, and organizational learning (Cosner, 2009; Goddard, et al., 2009; Louis & Lee, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997, 2000).

Trust among teachers yields multiple benefits. Teachers who trust their colleagues are likely to demonstrate pride in their school, dedication to students, and willingness to work together (Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss & Hoy, 1994; Hoy et al., 2002; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989). Collegial trust also seems to help inoculate teachers against teacher burnout (Dworkin & Tobe, 2015) and toxic school cultures (Hallam, Dulaney, Hite & Smith, 2015). In a 2009 study by Tschannen-Moran, collegial trust made an independent, significant contribution to *teacher professionalism*, defined as teachers' willingness to extend beyond minimum expectations, work collaboratively with one another, and demonstrate their commitment to teaching. These findings are supported in other studies: faculty trust in colleagues is a significant predictor of commitment to students (Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011) and readiness for change (Zayim & Kondacki, 2015) as well as a critical component of successful professional learning communities (Gray, Mitchell, & Tarter, 2014).

It is important to note that trust between teachers is *symmetrical*, as both parties in the relationship hold similar power within a school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Other role group relationships (e.g., teacher/leader, teacher/student) are *asymmetrical*, as one party holds more power than the other party in the relationship. While all role groups in schools experience some degree of vulnerability with each other, power dynamics influence behavioral expectations and obligations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). For example, Bryk and Schneider explain that it is the responsibility of school professionals to ease parents' vulnerability through their actions because they have the power to do so (2002). In the case of symmetrical trust between teachers, both parties may share responsibility to ease each other's vulnerability.



### *Trust in mentoring relationships*

Mentoring teacher candidates by practicing teachers is a socially constructed process (Butler & Cuenca, 2012); the mentoring dyad may be a school-based relationship in which relational trust has an important function. Indeed, the way in which Butler and Cuenca (2012, p. 298) frame mentoring “produced and reproduced” interactions aligns with Hoy and Tschannen-Moran’s assertion that trust is based on judgements of repeated behaviors over time (1999).

Situating the mentoring dyad as an example of relational trust within schools may broaden our understanding of the potential impacts of field experiences, both on candidate and on CMTs. Relational trust may support mentoring relationships because teaching and learning are at the heart of mentoring. Therefore, trust—or lack of trust—between candidates and CMTs is worthy of investigation. Specifically, research is needed to examine whether, and how, the candidate/CMT relationship aligns to previous research about relational trust in school settings.

### *Perspective taking and trust*

Understanding another party’s perspective is a prelude to the benevolence and respect that are building blocks of a trusting relationship; as such, perspective taking is integral to relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Perspective taking is the ability to see oneself *as another person* and imagine how *that person* would respond in the situation if he or she had the power to do so (Warren, 2018). Warren (2018) distinguishes between *imagine other* (IO) perspective taking and *imagine self* (IS) perspective taking, in which one simply puts oneself in the other person’s shoes.

Warren (2018) used IO in a study on culturally responsive pedagogy as a way to classify teachers’ perspective taking. Warren (2018) argues that a teacher who uses IO “...looks at her or his own failures in the initial response to the academic interaction with the student, and the role

of the institution for contributing to the student's academic vulnerability" and goes on to say that these teachers are "...likely willing to inconvenience [themselves] to try multiple options in hopes of adequately responding to the student's dilemma" (p. 174). As Warren (2018) illustrates, taking the perspective of another person means understanding the context in which that person's vulnerability exists, and this understanding paves the way for action on the part of the IO perspective taker. Park and Raile (2010) agree that it is important for teachers to perspective take with students, but they also point out that perspective taking can be helpful when teachers work with colleagues. As such, it may be important to examine perspective taking in mentoring relationships.

### ***Mentors and teacher identity development***

The mentor relationship may make a special contribution to candidates' identity formation (Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010; Izadinia, 2016). In a review of research on teachers' professional identity, Beijaar, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) found that the process of student teachers' professional identity formation was informed by complex sources of knowledge, including candidates' professional relationships. Similarly, Gaudelli and Ousley (2009) assert that it may be the tension candidates feel between the dual roles of student and teacher that fuels candidates' identity development. Relational trust between candidates and CMTs could, therefore, be an important source of knowledge for candidates as they form their professional identities, and the way in which candidates are able to manage their shifting roles (i.e., from student to colleague) may support candidates' professional identity development.

### **Methods**

The current study is a qualitative exploration of trust between teacher candidates and CMTs during early field placements from the perspective of candidates. The research comes

from a larger study about preservice teacher emotion socialization, and when participants shared stories about emotion socialization from CMTs, they were frequently in the larger context of their relationship with CMTs. Because of this, we were able to examine relationships between candidates and CMTs, focusing on perceptions of trust from candidates during early field placements. We asked the following research questions:

RQ1: What are candidates' perceptions of trust between candidates and CMTs?

RQ2: How do candidates perceive vulnerability between candidates and CMTs?

### *Participants and context of study*

Participants in this ongoing study are undergraduate candidates working toward Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, or Adolescent/Young Adult teaching licensure at a mid-sized, public midwestern university. All licensure program students at the University were invited during the spring 2018 semester, via email, to participate in this study. Email invitations were issued from a master list of approximately 400 students from all three programs.

We secured 16 participants including eight first-year students, six second-year students, and two third-year students; there were six males and 10 females. Participants were drawn from each of the three licensure program areas. None of the participants had reached their professional year (i.e., methods and student teaching); participants were all in early field experiences. While there are variations in terms of the specific number of field experience hours required across licensure programs, all candidates are assigned to a specific CMT (i.e., they are not dropping into multiple classrooms). The progression of field experiences includes: (a) first-year, approximately 50-hours in which candidates apprentice (e.g., prepare materials, grade papers) under a teacher in their discipline; (b) second-year, approximately 100-hours in which candidates tutor and instruct small groups of students within the classroom setting; and (c) third-

year, approximately 100-hours in which candidates are responsible for designing and delivering individual lessons (i.e., not full units of instruction).

### *Data sources*

Because our primary aim was to understand candidates' perceptions of their relationship with CMTs, we chose to conduct individual interviews. We wanted to hear participants' views in their own words, and other methods of data collection (e.g., observation) would have been less informative at this stage. The research team collaboratively developed a semi-structured protocol for individual interviews (see Appendix A). We asked open-ended questions to probe participants' emotional and relational experiences with CMTs and prompted candidates to give examples and tell stories rather than general statements. Next, three graduate student members of the research team piloted the interview protocol with a teacher, or teacher candidate, with whom they had a personal connection. We revised the questions, as well as the question order/flow of the protocol based on these pilots. The questions in the interview protocol prompted candidates to reflect on specific experiences, and targeted perceptions around emotional displays. These questions did not focus explicitly on the facets of trust (i.e., competence, benevolence, openness, reliability, and honesty), but instead allowed candidates to reflect on CMTs' demonstration, or lack of demonstration, around these constructs. Only after asking candidates to share their perceptions more broadly did we focus on trust explicitly. This structure helped us avoid "leading" candidates' responses.

### *Data collection*

The research team for this study included two faculty members and several doctoral students. We arranged interviews with participants via email. The participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in various teacher preparation programs. No members of the

research team are involved in teaching any courses for these undergraduate students (the faculty on the team both teach graduate courses). Thus, relationships with research team members was not a factor in participants' willingness to engage in this study. Interviews lasted approximately one hour each and took place at locations of the participants' choosing. Interviews were face to face in private spaces (e.g., office space, library meeting room). To acknowledge the value of the participants' time, we offered remuneration in the form of a \$10 check. This small amount served as an incentive to participate but was not enough to be coercive for our target population. By offering this remuneration, we aimed to increase the number of participants as well as the diversity of views and experiences in the participant pool, such as those with both positive and negative field experiences. We audio recorded the interviews and used a transcription service to transcribe interviews. Data collection took place in spring 2018.

### *Data analysis*

Our first step in data analysis was data reduction (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008). Using verbatim transcripts, we bound candidates' responses into segments about the mentoring relationship. Segments in which candidates referred to relationships with teachers who were not their CMT were excluded.

We then used Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2000) definitions of facets of trust to create a literature-based codebook and applied literature-based codes (Saldaña, 2016) to explore ways in which candidates' interview responses reflected facets of trust. We noticed that candidates frequently shared their observations of CMTs' teaching and interactions with classroom students; in these expressions, candidates described what they saw and heard. Other times candidates described exchanges between candidates and CMTs directly; in these expressions, candidates expressed how they felt or what they said. We did not differentiate between these types of

perceptions; rather, we grouped comments by trust facet regardless of the context. This allowed us to examine trust in mentoring relationships with a wide lens that encompassed many experiences that contributed to candidates' perceptions.

Next, we examined candidates' perceptions of trust using pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to group language patterns in transcribed interviews from teacher candidates. We noticed candidates' pronoun usage (i.e., "*she* said to *me*" vs. "*I* offered to *her*") might indicate patterns of candidates' perceptions. Those patterns allowed us to see that pronouns often signaled what the candidate was doing when talking about a particular trust facet. For example, when a candidate shared, "...*my* heart really went out to *her*..." it signaled to us that she was describing a situation in which she was showing benevolence toward her CMT. This differed from another candidate's language (e.g., "I think *they* could nicely say, "You're doing a good job.") which indicated a desire for benevolence to be shown to her.

This pattern coding led us to further investigate how candidates' language might function as a signal to their behavior. We used process coding (Saldaña, 2016), a method in which gerunds are used to describe actions of participants. Process codes helped us label how candidates expressed their orientation to trust in terms of their position of vulnerability. Vulnerability sets the conditions for trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997) because when one party is unable to fulfill a desired outcome alone, a shift to interdependency tends to be accompanied by a sense of vulnerability (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997). Our coding divided candidates' statements into two groups: (a) when candidates were feeling vulnerable and deciding if CMTs were trustworthy, and (b) when candidates understood CMTs were feeling vulnerable and tried to be trustworthy to CMTs.

Our final codebook included both literature-based codes and process codes since each candidate statement had the potential to contain: (a) facets of trust, and (b) an orientation to trust as defined by candidates' position of vulnerability. The first and second author practiced coding independently to identify both trust facets and orientation for each candidate segment and discussed the codebook's definitions of trust facets. We used Dedoose, a mixed methods data analysis platform, to test coding agreement of the lead and second authors and achieve high interrater reliability (Cohen's Kappa = .81). The research team also engaged in a process of peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014) as a way to validate our findings. Specifically, during the data analysis phase we met with a group of faculty and graduate students who were not involved with this project over a brown-bag discussion, and sought feedback on our analytic strategy, selection of theoretical framework, and developing interpretations of findings.

## **Findings**

### ***Candidates' expressions of trust facets***

We focused our first research question on candidates' perceptions of trust between candidates and CMTs and found Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) facets of trust to be a useful lens with which to examine candidate/CMT relationships. Candidates' perceptions aligned with facets of trust and signaled that the candidate/CMT relationship is likely another example of a school-based relationship context in which relational trust plays an important role.

Candidates described mentoring relationships in terms of CMTs' demonstrations of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness to candidates. When we tallied the prevalence of comments by trust facet, 36% of candidates' comments were about CMT competence, 21% were about openness, 18% were about benevolence, 15% were about honesty, and 9% were about reliability. Seven comments reflected participants' general appreciation for

trust between CMTs and candidates and were not classified by a trust facet. We share definitions of trust facets and discuss candidates' perceptions of how each facet operates in the candidate/CMT relationship below, in order of prevalence within this data set. All names are pseudonyms.

**Competence.** A party who possesses the skills needed to fulfill another party's expectations is termed competent (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Those who want to cultivate judgments of competence can choose to offer support in areas that align with their skills, so they are not in a position of skill building while trying to initiate trust. It's important to maintain honesty and admit a lack of skill when trying to demonstrate competence. Confessing ignorance is preferable to inflating competence (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Candidates primarily framed judgements of competence by evaluating CMTs' lessons and classroom management: 14 out of 24 competence-related comments were based on candidates' evaluation of CMTs' classroom management skills (e.g., discipline of individual student) and eight out of 24 were evaluations of either the CMTs' or candidates' own instructional skills. Sometimes these expressions were positive, as when first-year candidate, Renita, saw her CMT demonstrate a style of classroom management that was new to Renita. She shared, "I was like, that was something I've never seen, but it was so smart. I was like, that should be how it is." Other candidates, such as third-year candidate Allison, described her CMT's lack of competence that caused Allison to be reluctant to trust her CMT. She shared, "The way she uses sarcasm, it's almost mocking the student, or making fun of them in a way for not doing the homework. In my opinion, that's not professional." A few candidates spoke of their own instructional competence or ability to connect with students.

**Openness.** The degree to which two parties are able to share information suggests openness (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). To demonstrate openness, a trustworthy party



shares appropriate, relevant information and maintains benevolence to another party. This ensures that openness remains rooted in the trustworthy party's good will toward the dependent party. Openness also includes behavior that orients one party toward acceptance of others' ideas; this indicates a willingness to accept help and advice, not just give it (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Candidates shared their respect for CMTs who revealed only appropriate emotions to their students: 10 of 15 comments about openness expressed appreciation for CMTs' ability to hide emotions from students or expressed contempt when CMTs did not hide emotions from students. When candidates felt CMTs shared emotions that were non-relevant to the classroom context, they often found it unprofessional. A second-year candidate, Elise, recounted a time when her CMT "... brought those emotions into the classroom and was very, very grumpy and proceeded to tell her students why..." and labeled that behavior "...pretty bogus." In contrast, Renita shared how impressed she was when her CMT was able to conceal the grief she felt when her brother-in-law died saying, "...when she was teaching, you couldn't really tell."

Further, candidates appreciated CMTs who revealed hidden feelings to candidates; they viewed this as appropriate openness because the information was relevant to their learning. Renita told how she admired a teacher she observed at a prior field placement who could keep emotional control with students,

So, I could tell there were many times where she was ready to just lay into these children and just go off on them, but she didn't, and afterwards, she would turn to me and she'd be like, "That was so hard to just sit there..."

Second-year candidate Cameron echoed Renita's sense that CMTs revealing emotions to students was not okay, but being open with candidates was okay, perhaps because Cameron saw himself as a fellow adult in the classroom:

You can see when they're frustrated and then when the class wraps up, he can definitely tell us, "Oh, that was rough" or

“I didn't have a good ... I wasn't doing a very good job there.”  
So, it's very easy to see when they're frustrated. But, it's  
always once the kids leave.

Candidates appreciated openness that helped them understand CMTs' struggles, such as when Braden's CMT helped him to understand what he was observing:

So the field placement teacher will be like "Oh so I yelled at this kid, because he's always like this. I just don't know what to do." Or the teacher's like "Okay, I'm being nice to this kid 'cause he always gets his work done." So sometimes, I will see a teacher do something and go "Okay, I guess I see why they're doing that."

Candidates viewed openness that allowed them access to CMTs' inner thoughts as both appropriate and relevant, helping candidates make sense of teachers' perspectives in classrooms.

***Benevolence.*** Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) define benevolence as the way one party puts the needs of another before his or her own needs. Benevolent behavior (e.g., taking time to listen, choosing to help when it's not convenient, expressing thanks) demonstrates a sense of caring or good will toward another party. It's also important to note that benevolent actions do not exploit another, even when it's possible to do so (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The majority of comments (12 out of 15) about benevolence reflected candidates' perceptions of CMTs' caring for candidates, frequently framed in terms of what CMTs do or don't do to protect and support candidates. Brenna, a second-year candidate, shared how lucky she felt to have benevolent CMTs who expressed their care by taking the time to share instructional advice with her.

Because like you need to know that they're not like attacking you or being down on you; they're just trying to help you. Like mine...and I actually have two teachers there that I work with...and like both of them have said, "When methods comes around, we want you." So like, yeah! I know! It's exciting. So like, I know both of them are there to help me...like the eighth grade one that I haven't talked about. I've only been there for the semester with her. She's always

like, she'll like explain something and when she gets the time she'll be like, "Well, here are these Keeley probes that I use. Have you seen these?" So she'll give me little tidbits and kind of like my other sixth grade one that I have too, she'll give me tidbits throughout the day. Or like just things that are help. So you know kind of what to do.

A few candidates expressed appreciation of CMTs' benevolence toward classroom students.

Matthew, a second-year candidate, noted this kind of benevolence from his CMT who was:

more of a caring, mother figure because, like, she had a fridge in the back like a cabinet in the back that was full of food. Because, like, a lot of the students, I think it was like 97%, like needed help with lunches and like stuff.

Largely, however, candidates were more focused on their own need to feel care from CMTs.

Katie, a first-year candidate, saw a need for her CMT to help her with her new role as caregiver to students noting, "I just think that my mentor teacher can just be a person there for me...like they can tend to you for once and not you tending to your kids."

**Honesty.** A person's authentic integrity, characterized by an alignment of word and deed, demonstrates honesty to another party (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In this way, honesty encompasses both a sense that trustworthy party will report facts truthfully to another party and make promises that he or she can keep. Honesty also includes behavior that demonstrates a sense of personal accountability, signaled by a willingness to accept responsibility for mistakes (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

In terms of honesty, candidates expressed a desire for real feedback: five of the 10 honesty-related comments focused on candidates' appreciation of CMTs' authentic evaluation of candidates' teaching performance.

Holly, a first-year candidate, shared:

You wouldn't want a teacher to lie to you and tell you you're doing great if you're really not, because you're not learning anything from that. You need to trust them that they're

giving you the right advice to being a good teacher, and they are not lying to you about how you are doing as a teacher. Because it's better to hear about it while you're still learning about it then when you're actually a teacher and you're kind of useless.

Four of the 10 honesty-related comments focused on taking responsibility for mistakes, and these comments included both candidates' ability to honestly discuss their missteps and CMTs' willingness to admit their mistakes to candidates. Lydia, a first-year candidate, offered one of the few observations of CMTs' interactions with colleagues, noting that her CMT demonstrated honesty by being:

...very good about talking to other teachers as well, and letting other teachers know, "My classroom's not doing this. How can I better improve my classroom? My kids aren't listening. What can I do to get them to listen?"

Robert, a second-year candidate, said he liked a CMT who he could tell "Hey, I'm sorry. I tried this lesson. It didn't work out." Braden, a first-year candidate, framed his need for honesty in terms of accountability, noting that when he felt he couldn't manage his responsibilities, he could admit it to his CMT.

But I find that if the situation's out of my control or if I just don't feel comfortable, the best course of action is just to go to the professional. Because they're trained, they're experienced. They could handle it better than I could. And I won't get in any sort of trouble.

**Reliability.** The predictable consistency of a person's behavior over time communicates reliability to another party. Reliability can be signaled when one party makes his or her intentions explicit to promote another party's recognition of reliability.

Candidates expressed perceptions of reliability in terms of knowing the CMT is there for them as a safety net: five of the six reliability-related comments reflected candidates' perception of CMTs as faithful guides. Charlotte, a first-year candidate shared, "You have the teacher

support for you, if you do mess up and if stuff doesn't go right, if you have the teacher there to kind of pick up the pieces.” Brenna shared her experience with her CMT serving as a reliable back up when Brenna was teaching lessons:

And then she'll be like, she'll just kind of jump in and like help me and or she'll like look at me, she'll be like "Ask them about this." Or kind of like help me so I don't like totally like flounder...

Next, we examined candidates' expressions of trustworthy behaviors, paying special attention to candidates' and CMTs' vulnerability.

### ***Candidates' trust orientation***

To answer our second research question, we examined how candidates perceive vulnerability between candidates and CMTs. When candidates talked about their own vulnerability during field placements, they oriented toward *judging* CMTs' trustworthy behaviors. A judging candidate decides whether a CMTs is worthy of the candidate's trust. When candidates recognized CMTs' vulnerability, they oriented toward *demonstrating* trustworthy behaviors to CMTs. A demonstrating candidate displays trustworthy behaviors to be judged by CMTs.

***Judging.*** There were 77 total comments from participants that reflected their perceptions of trust. Comments from candidates in which they described themselves judging CMTs comprised 66% of all comments from candidates. When candidates were judging, they saw themselves in a position of vulnerability in which they hoped CMTs would prove to be trustworthy mentors. For instance, Cameron expressed judging when he observed his CMT's management of student behavior noting, "...he doesn't have a very good control of his classroom.” In this way, Cameron was suggesting he may not be inclined to extend trust to his CMT because he judged a lack of competence in the CMT.

Sometimes candidates shared trust facets that were displayed by the CMT directly to the candidate. Brenna's comments began with a distinction between CMTs who are benevolent and one who was not.

It's that they care enough to explain what they're doing. Because I've had one where he was like [frowns] because he didn't explain anything...

Brenna then focused on the connection between the CMT's lack of benevolence and lack of competence. She recounted his inability to share teaching strategies with her (judging benevolence) and his inability to have good teaching strategies (judging competence).

Because I don't think he knew...I had to explain to him that there's vacuoles in both cells... like I had to explain that to him... and he's teaching people that. So like I didn't have a good relationship with him because like I had no idea what he's doing I don't think he knew what he was doing.

Brenna and Cameron's judging are examples of candidates who withhold trust from CMTs, protecting their vulnerability. Because CMTs have the power to validate candidates as teachers (Frank, 2017) candidates may feel especially vulnerable. While candidates wait for CMTs' approval, they may be judging if they trust CMTs' appraisal of their work.

***Demonstrating.*** When candidates have a demonstrating orientation, they may reciprocate trustworthiness in response to CMTs' trustworthy behaviors or they can demonstrate trustworthiness directly to CMTs (e.g., be reliably punctual). Only 33% of candidates' comments reflected candidates' demonstrating and every candidate who shared stories of demonstrating also shared stories of judging (i.e., there were no candidates who only shared demonstrating stories). This may suggest that candidates in early field placements are primarily oriented toward judging rather than demonstrating. And yet, candidates' demonstrations of

trustworthiness suggest candidates' ability to recognize vulnerability CMTs might feel when they share their classrooms with candidates.

Candidates' demonstrating behaviors were sometimes general expressions of the shared nature of trust as when Braden shared "...because if we trust each other, then we'll work better together and we'll learn more...." These general statements captured candidates' demonstrating orientation because they showed an understanding of the reciprocal nature of trust. Other candidates shared that they took responsibility to act in trustworthy way with CMTs.

...like if she's like writing an email to a parent even and she'll be like, "Does this sound like I'm trying..." Like 'cause she knows that I know what she's trying to say. So she'll be like, "Is this what... Is this what I'm meaning...? Or she trusts me to edit these things or help with a lesson plan, or she's like, "Is that going to be like the best way?" Or she's like, "Do you..." because she knows that I know she's kind of mean, and I'm like I'm like "No, no, say this instead!" And she's like, "That's what I meant."

Here, Brenna felt comfortable demonstrating competence and honesty to her CMT when her CMT depended on her (i.e., was vulnerable). Moreover, Brenna perceives her demonstrating as appreciated by her CMT, which may indicate a trusting mentoring relationship.

### ***Making a shift toward collegiality***

While candidates' tendency to judge trustworthiness of their CMTs may suggest candidates' perception of themselves in a student-like power position, stories from candidates who demonstrated their trustworthiness to CMTs indicates candidates' ability to shift toward collegiality. Indeed, candidates such as Brenna shared stories in which she acted as a colleague, demonstrating competence and benevolence to her CMT while giving advice about how to best phrase a parent email. Braden, a first-year candidate shared general appreciation for trust when he said,

Trust, well, as a factor between field teacher and the student, like me, is huge, because if we trust each other, then we'll work better together and we'll learn more.

Braden uses first-person, plural pronouns (i.e., “we trust,” “we’ll work,” “we’ll learn”) that indicate he may perceive parallelism between roles of candidates and CMTs. These pronouns could signal that Braden’s relationship with his CMT is symmetrical, approaching a collegial construct in which vulnerability in each party is mitigated by trust demonstrated by both parties and which results in benefits enjoyed by both parties.

Ari offers an example of perspective taking when she says,

I think the trust is a huge factor and you're giving someone your classroom and giving someone your students that probably have to take state tests that end up going back on you. And if you don't trust them that's like scary.

First, Ari’s pronoun use shows that she is speaking from the CMT’s perspective in second person. In this way, Ari may move beyond IS perspective taking (Warren, 2018) in which she might have phrased her comments with first-person pronouns (i.e., “*I* give someone *my* classroom), to IO perspective taking, imagining the situation from the perspective of the CMT. It could be that candidates who demonstrate trustworthy behaviors are engaging in IO perspective taking in which they recognize CMTs’ vulnerability and demonstrate trustworthy behaviors to remedy that vulnerability.

Second, Ari’s comments reflect her multilayered understanding of CMTs’ vulnerability. She notes that CMTs are giving—both their classrooms and their students—which points to the way in which Ari perceives CMTs extending themselves for the candidates they host. Ari also understands that this giving doesn’t come lightly; as CMTs’ students are evaluated on annual state tests, candidates’ teaching may well impact students’ scores on high-stakes tests. And Ari says those scores might “end up going back on you...” showing her understanding that teachers’



individual performance evaluations are based in part on the growth students make during the year they are assigned to a teacher. Ari even uses the word “scary” as she expresses her understanding of CMTs’ vulnerability in the face of dependency on candidates. For Ari, a trusting relationship with her CMT offered an opportunity for her to understand her CMT’s vulnerability through IO perspective taking. This may also signal a progression in Ari’s professional identity development as she tries on (i.e., Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009) the role of practicing teacher and feels the stresses that come with that role.

Candidates may need to demonstrate trustworthiness to CMTs in order to shift to a mentoring relationship that approximates collegial trust. For example, one third-year student interviewed in this study, Allison, expressed only judging behaviors. This candidate stood out because she talked about multiple field experiences in which she framed her comments as an observer (e.g., “I always felt like I was just not important at all and I had nothing to give to the students or gain any experience”). Allison seemed to recognize that trust played a part in her frustration when she shared,

I definitely think trust is a big aspect of the mentoring program because you need to have that relationship with the teacher. I don't think it's fair that I go into this field experience super hyped to get to work with students and see this experience, but I feel, like not marginalized, but I feel not accepted.

Allison uses only first-person language in her comments, speaking only from her viewpoint. She does not perspective take (i.e., Warren, 2018) in her comments, situating stories about her CMT relationships only as they affect her alone. When we examine Allison’s lack of demonstrating comments, two potential explanations emerge. First, it is possible that she was placed in poor field experiences, perhaps with CMTs who did not demonstrate trustworthy behaviors or extend any invitation of trust to which Allison could reciprocate. Alternatively, we wonder if Allison is

not making progress toward a shift from a student/teacher to teacher/teacher mentoring relationship as part of her professional identity formation.

### **Discussion**

Taken together, expressions from candidates suggest they perceive that their mentoring relationships rest on a foundation of the facets of trust. A person's vulnerability in the face of dependence on another sets the stage for trust to evolve (Tschannen-Moran, 2004) by providing psychological safety to mitigate vulnerability that accompanies risk (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2009; DiPaola & Guy, 2009). We expected candidates in early field placements to share stories about CMTs' trustworthiness; protocol questions we asked were meant to solicit candidates' perceptions of their vulnerability and corresponding actions of CMTs. It was interesting to us, however, that some candidates shared stories about ways in which they showed trustworthiness to CMTs.

The location of vulnerability (i.e., with candidates or CMT) is central to candidates' expression of judging or demonstrating. When candidates are vulnerable, they orient toward judging CMTs' trustworthy behaviors and decide whether CMTs are worthy of their trust. Judging orients candidates to a passive role in which they "take in" the actions of CMTs. Sometimes candidates are judging from a distance, (e.g., observing competence of CMTs' lessons), and sometimes the judging is personal, (e.g., CMTs share their feelings with candidates). In contrast, when candidates recognize CMTs' vulnerability, they orient toward demonstrating trustworthiness in an effort to earn CMTs' trust (i.e., mitigate the vulnerability of CMTs). Demonstrating is a more active practice for candidates, and the majority of comments in which candidates were demonstrating centered on displays of competence.

In this way, candidates' trust behaviors may function as markers of candidates' shift from their role as student to their role as teacher. Once we acknowledge candidate/CMT relationships as an example of relational trust in schools (i.e., Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), we can begin to explore the way in which candidates and CMTs' trust relationships are both asymmetrical and symmetrical (i.e., Bryk & Schneider, 2002), and may, in fact, transition from asymmetry to symmetry. This transition toward symmetry may emerge from candidates' orientation to vulnerability (i.e., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2009; DiPaola & Guy, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) that may be evidenced through IO perspective taking (i.e., Warren, 2018) and lead to demonstrations of trustworthiness to CMTs. Candidates' ability to demonstrate trustworthiness could signal a shift to a more collegial mentoring relationship and may support candidates' identity development as they envision themselves as practicing teachers (i.e., Beijaar, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009). In fact, Bryk and Schneider note that teacher/student trust relationships shift as students mature and accept "mutual obligations for learning," a process "closely paralleling adolescents' self-identity development" (2002, p. 32). Because of this, candidates' demonstrations of trustworthiness to CMTs may be viewed as evidence of a shift from mentoring relationships akin to student/teacher to relationships more closely akin to teacher/teacher.

We suggest that in order for candidates to shift from a student/teacher to a more collegial mentoring relationship, candidates' judging CMTs' trustworthiness is necessary but not sufficient. Students like Allison, who may view the trust relationship primarily from their own perspective and fail to perspective-take, might benefit from preparation programs that include building awareness of candidates' actions in mentoring relationships. Making the shift from student/teacher mentoring relationships to collegial mentoring relationships may offer benefits to

candidates beyond supporting teacher identity formation. The data presented here offer insights for how we might help teacher candidates in their professional identity development – both positionally (i.e., move from student to colleague) and relationally (i.e., shift from judging to demonstrating trust). If candidates experience mentoring relationships that are akin to collegial trust, it is possible that they (and their CMTs) may enjoy the benefits correlated with collegial trust as evidenced from 30 years of research on trust in schools (e.g., Lee et al., 2011; Tarter et al., 1989; Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

### *Limitations and future research*

Future research is needed to understand specific strategies that may promote candidates' demonstrations of trustworthiness. We also need studies focused on understanding which individual traits and abilities may be associated with candidates' readiness to demonstrate trustworthiness. For example, perhaps students in this sample who were engaged in demonstrations of trust also possess stronger self-efficacy for teaching. Too little is known at this point about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes candidates may need for strengthening their ability to engage in, and benefit from, trusting candidate-CMT relationships.

A limitation of this study is that we only talked with candidates; perspectives of teacher preparers and examination of teacher preparation course content could be helpful resources to better understand the usefulness of relational trust for teacher candidates and CMTs. Future research may similarly benefit from the inclusion of CMT perspectives; ideally this research might include development of an instrument to measure CMT/candidate trust that is aligned with validated faculty trust scales (e.g., Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Moreover, since all of our participants were in early field placements, future research should consider the degree to which candidates' ability to demonstrate trustworthy behaviors develops over the course of their

preparation. Longitudinal studies could help explore if candidates' ability to demonstrate trustworthiness develops during their preparation program, how trust develops between candidates and CMTs during extended field placements (i.e., methods and student teaching), and if candidate/CMT trust predicts entry year success.

These findings do not allow us to be prescriptive, but they open the door for more conversation. Still, results of this study suggest that candidates' trust orientation may be a useful way to examine mentoring relationships. Further, using perspective taking as a complement to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) facets of trust allowed us to push deeper on an exploration of teacher candidates' experiences as mentees. Ideally, future research will continue to couple these frameworks and include CMTs' perspectives as we unpack the mentor/mentee relationship. As teacher preparation continues to prioritize field experiences and mentoring (CAEP, 2013), relational trust along with perspective taking may be one way to help understand how to better prepare teacher candidates for the collaboration required in teaching.

### ***Conclusion and implications***

The purpose of this study was to examine whether, and how, the candidate/CMT relationship aligns to previous research about relational trust in school settings. Because participants' responses map on to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) five facets of trust, we assert that candidates and CMTs' relationships are another example of a school-based relationship context in which relational trust operates in schools. But our findings about candidates' orientation to vulnerability (i.e., judging and demonstrating) may suggest this relationship differs from other role relationships within schools (i.e., teacher/leader, teacher/student, teacher/teacher) because, ideally, it shifts from an asymmetrical student/teacher relationship to a more symmetrical teacher/teacher relationship.

In order to include relational trust as part of teacher preparation, teacher preparers could explore the constructs of trust with candidates as a way to situate field experience in a context of trustworthiness. For instance, candidates are already likely encouraged to demonstrate helpful, professional behaviors (e.g., punctuality, offers of assistance; being responsible) in field placements. But if candidates were able to understand facets of trust, they might appreciate the way in which punctuality demonstrates reliability, offers of help demonstrate benevolence, and taking responsibility for mistakes demonstrates honesty. Similarly, discussions about CMTs' vulnerability and perspective taking may prime candidates toward demonstrating and help them ease into their role as an almost-colleague. As such, programs of teacher preparation may want to consider ways to support candidates' shift toward more collegial mentoring relationships.

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## Appendix A

## Protocol Questions

The following are protocol items most relevant to the relationship between mentors and CMTs included in this study.

1. First, could you please tell me a little about yourself and how you ended up your current program here at BGSU? How has it been going so far? (Remember, this interview is confidential!)
2. What type of experiences and opportunities have you had inside classrooms as part of your program?
3. While in a school setting, have you ever had to make decisions about how to manage your emotions (for example, deciding whether to express how you really felt)? If so, think of one experience that stands out. What were the circumstances, what emotion were you feeling?
  - a. What choices did you have in that moment?
  - b. How did you decide what the “best” choice would be?
  - c. How did the situation play out?
4. While in a school setting, do you think you understand what the teachers are feeling and the choices they are making about expressing those emotions? (If yes: all the time, or just sometimes?)
5. Can you think of an example where you noticed something about a teacher’s emotional state or emotional expression? If so, can you tell the story of what was going on and how the situation played out?
  - a. Do you think the teacher made the right decision about how to handle his/her emotions?
6. Have you ever had a conversation with a professor, a classroom teacher, or even your fellow students about the emotions felt in the classroom? If so, what did you talk about?
7. How will you feel if you don’t always “get things right” during field placements?
8. What are some things a mentor teacher (CMT) could do so that you might feel comfortable if things don’t go as planned?
9. How do you see trust as a factor in this?