Elementary Teacher Candidates’ Lived Experiences Of edTPA Mathematics Assessment Task

Tiffany Jacobs

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/ece_diss

Recommended Citation
doi: https://doi.org/10.57709/12614288
ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, ELEMENTARY TEACHER CANDIDATES’ LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EDTPA MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT TASK, by TIFFANY JACOBS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student’s Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

________________________________________
Susan Swars Auslander, Ph.D.
Committee Co-Chair

________________________________________
Stephanie Z. Smith, Ph.D.                          Marvin Smith Ph.D.
Committee Co-Chair                                Committee Member

________________________________________
Sarah Bridges-Rhoads Ph.D.
Committee Member

________________________________________
Date

________________________________________
Lynn C. Hart, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Early
Childhood and Elementary Education

________________________________________
Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education and
Human Development
AUTHOR’S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education and Human Development’s Director of Graduate Studies, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

________________________________________

TIFFANY G. JACOBS
NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Tiffany Gale Jacobs
Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Susan Swars Auslander and Stephanie Z. Smith
Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303
CURRICULUM VITAE

Tiffany Gale Jacobs

ADDRESS: 8980 Saddle Trail
          Ball Ground, GA 30028

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. 2018  Georgia State University
      Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Masters Degree 2011  Georgia State University
                 Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Bachelors Degree 2009  Georgia State University Early Childhood and Elementary Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2012-Present  GRA/GTA
              Georgia State University
              Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education

2012-Present  Elementary Mathematics Consultant
              Independent Contractor

2009-2012  Elementary Teacher
            Dawson County School System

PUBLICATIONS:


PRESENTATIONS:


PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

2018 National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

2018 Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators
ABSTRACT

Teacher performance assessments such as edTPA are increasing in use during teacher preparation programs as a means of evaluating teacher candidates’ instructional effectiveness and readiness for their own classrooms. This study was conducted in one of a growing number of states in the United States requiring successful completion of edTPA for initial teacher certification. Given edTPA’s recent implementation and high stakes nature, along with uncertainty about expectations for completion and success, careful scrutiny of the effects of the assessment on teacher candidates is warranted. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates completing Elementary Education edTPA: Assessing Students’ Mathematics Learning (i.e., Math Task 4) during their student teaching semester. The study took place at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States in an Elementary Education teacher preparation program. Six teacher candidates were selected to participate in the study. Data were collected across the student teaching semester via a series of individual, phenomenological interviews during specific phases of the completion of Math Task 4 (during planning, implementation, and submission; and after receiving the score). The findings
of this phenomenological study suggest teacher candidates found themselves in a state of elusiveness as they prepared for and completed Math Task 4. Whole-Part-Whole analysis was used to illuminate three themes as the structure for elusiveness: (a) struggling to stabilize Math Task 4, (b) trying to find their fit in a dismantled hierarchy, and (c) teaching on demand. Each of these themes yielded associated characteristics contributing to the teacher candidates’ experiences of elusiveness during Math Task 4. The findings provide insights into ways of supporting teacher candidates as they navigate edTPA completion.

INDEX WORDS: Elementary Teacher Preparation, Teacher Performance Assessments, Math Task 4, High-Stakes Assessment, Phenomenology
DEDICATION

“My cup overflows with blessing” ~ Psalm 23:5

This work is dedicated to the village supporting me through the journey of life. To my husband, Ryan Jacobs, you are my best friend and life partner. I have made it this far because of your love, support, and insistence that, “I just go to class.” To my children, Isabella and Schaffer, being your mother has taught me so many valuable lessons about considering a perspective that is different from my own. I pray that you always live a life full of compassion and joy. To my grandparents, George and Charlene Denney, it is because of you that I know what it means to love unconditionally without fault. Your willingness to always be involved in my life no matter the cost has created the woman I am today. To my mother, Sarah Golden, your strength and perseverance in your own life was an exemplar for me in knowing that I could complete this part of my journey. To Russell, my Guncle, your efforts behind the scenes to support me along this journey have not gone unnoticed. Our bond is something so special to me, God knew what he was doing when he put us in the same family.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many family members and friends offering support through nutrition, humor, and therapy.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

~Maya Angelou

It is with deep gratitude that I recognize and express my appreciation for the individuals that have supported my path to becoming a PhD. Thank you to my co-advisors, Dr. Stephanie Smith and Dr. Susan Swars Auslander, for supporting me since an undergraduate student. Your unwavering support of my work and the opportunities you have offered are immeasurable. Dr. Sarah Bridges-Rhoads, thanks for introducing me to the messy world of research. I am grateful for your patience and support in helping me to craft phenomenological research. Dr. Marvin Smith, thank you for your time and efforts across many research experiences. Your expertise and attention to detail has been extremely useful in my work. Dr. Lynn Hart thank you for being a mentor and teaching me to navigate conferences, internationally as well as locally. I have always enjoyed our time together. Dr. Stacey French-Lee, thank you for picking me up during this PhD journey and pushing me when I thought I had run out of steam. You always knew when and how to offer your support and for that I am forever grateful. Zehra Ozturk, I am grateful for our friendship that we fostered along this PhD journey. Your empathy and comfort throughout this process has only encouraged me to become more. Mimicking the words of Maya Angelou, thank you for helping me to know better, so that I can do better.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vii

LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................... viii

ABBREVIATIONS ...................................................................................................... ix

1 INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................... 1

Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................... 3

Need for the Study ................................................................................................... 5

Locating Myself as a Researcher ........................................................................... 5

Research Question .................................................................................................. 10

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ........................................................................ 11

Teacher Preparation and the Induction Process ................................................... 11

Practice-Based Teacher Preparation ................................................................... 12

Mathematics Teacher Preparation ...................................................................... 15

*Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching (MKT).* .............................................. 17

*Practice in Mathematics Teacher Preparation* .................................................. 18

*Affective Factors* ............................................................................................... 19

Reform Agenda ..................................................................................................... 21

Teacher Performance Assessments ..................................................................... 23

edTPA: A National TPA ....................................................................................... 25

edTPA and Teacher Preparation ...................................................................... 29

Math Task 4 and Teacher Preparation ................................................................. 33

3 METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................. 38
Rebecca .............................................................................................................................................. 78

Stacey .................................................................................................................................................. 78

Struggling to Stabilize Math Task 4........................................................................................................ 79

Being caught in a one-sided conversation.............................................................................................. 80

Uncertainty found in not being able to converse................................................................................... 85

Responding to self..................................................................................................................................... 92

Trying to Find Their Fit in a Dismantled Hierarchy ................................................................................. 98

Finding support during Math Task 4 introduction................................................................................. 99

Grasping for support during Math Task 4 implementation...................................................................... 102

Exercising authority to find their fit........................................................................................................ 108

Instability of their fit................................................................................................................................ 112

Teaching on Demand............................................................................................................................. 119

Constrained by the timeline..................................................................................................................... 120

The façade of understanding .................................................................................................................. 124

Conclusion............................................................................................................................................... 128

5 DISCUSSION....................................................................................................................................... 130

Revelation of Elusiveness......................................................................................................................... 131

Interpretation of the Findings................................................................................................................ 132

Math Task 4 as the priority in a new hierarchical structure ................................................................. 132

Inferring meaning from the top.............................................................................................................. 135

Establishing fit to complete Math Task 4.............................................................................................. 140
Not knowing the scoring and feedback procedures .......................... 143

Implications ................................................................................................. 145

Recommendations for Future Research .................................................. 147

Limitations of the Study ........................................................................... 148

REFERENCES .............................................................................................. 149

APPENDICES ............................................................................................... 165
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Data Collection Timeline .................................................................................. 61
Table 2: Whole-Part-Whole description applied to data analysis ......................................... 69
Table 3: Three Themes and Associated Characteristics ..................................................... 75
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Copyright © 2016 Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All
rights reserved. .................................................................................................................... 26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACTE</td>
<td>American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td>Common Core State Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGI</td>
<td>Cognitively Guided Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT(s)</td>
<td>Cooperating Teacher(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edTPA</td>
<td>Educative Teacher Performance Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InTASC</td>
<td>The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC</td>
<td>Mathematics Assessment Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKT</td>
<td>Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>Nationally Board Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS</td>
<td>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCTE</td>
<td>National Council of Teacher of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCTM</td>
<td>National Council of Teachers of Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMAP</td>
<td>National Mathematics Advisory Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACT</td>
<td>Performance Assessment for California Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSM</td>
<td>Principles and Standards for School Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PtA</td>
<td><em>Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTTP</td>
<td>Race to the Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCALE</td>
<td>The Stanford Center for Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPA(s)</td>
<td>Teacher Performance Assessment(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

Learning to teach mathematics effectively during teacher preparation is a complex endeavor (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, NCTM, 2014; National Mathematics Advisory Panel, NMAP, 2008; National Research Council, NRC, 2001). Much research parsing out this complexity focuses on teacher candidates’ mathematical knowledge, instructional practices, and beliefs (e.g., Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Lampert, Franke, Kazemi, Ghousseini, Turrou, Beasley, Cunard, & Crowe, 2013; Fives & Buehl, 2012), with some focusing on the effects of policy on mathematics teacher preparation (e.g., Lerman, 2014). An important aim of this research should be to understand the supports a teacher candidate needs to navigate the induction process, which is the process of moving from a teacher candidate enrolled in a teacher preparation program to a credentialed teacher who is responsible for classroom instruction, in order to become an effective teacher of mathematics (Lin & Hsu, 2018).

When considering teacher preparation, affective factors (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, and emotions) have proven to shape teacher candidates’ experiences with learning to teach mathematics, particularly those studying to be elementary teachers (Gresham, 2017; Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, & Thornberg, 2017; Philip, 2007). Di Martino and Zan assert, “Emotional and cognitive aspects deeply interact, and are therefore important factors in mathematics learning process” (2011, p. 472). According to Philippou and Christou (2002), affective factors can be characterized as linear, beginning with feelings, transitioning to emotions, and ending with beliefs. Research suggests within the complex process of learning to teach elementary mathematics, affective factors shape teacher candidates’ instructional decisions (e.g., Liljedahl, 2005; Stoehr, 2017) and should be addressed during teacher preparation (Hart, 2002; Swars, Smith, Smith & Hart, 2009).
Other issues related to teacher preparation in mathematics are what makes for teacher effectiveness and the evaluation of it. Teacher effectiveness is of increasing interest to educational stakeholders and policymakers, though the complexity of the profession makes effectiveness neither easy nor simple to define and measure (Au, 2013). Some states in the United States (U.S.) are mandating successful completion of teacher performance assessments (TPAs) during the student teaching experience to qualify for initial certification, with the aim of assuring teacher effectiveness (The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, AACTE, 2018). TPAs are intended to measure teacher effectiveness via practice-based assessments, determining if teacher candidates are ready to enter the field of teaching (Adkins, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). The use of TPAs as a tool for professionalization (Cochran-Smith, Stern, Sánchez, Miller, Keefe, Fernández, Chang, Carney, Burton, & Baker, 2016) has the concurrent goal of enacting a system of gatekeeping into the teaching profession (Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; Greenblatt, 2015).

One particular TPA, edTPA, is nationally marketed to and utilized by institutions of higher education across the U.S. edTPA is modeled after Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), which is used in the state of California. edTPA requires that teacher candidates use knowledge of teaching and content to plan, implement, and assess instruction through a variety of tasks in order to demonstrate their effectiveness as future teachers (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning & Equity, SCALE, 2016a). In order for edTPA to be attractive to institutions across the U.S., the developers aligned edTPA’s practice-based teaching tasks with the teaching standards from the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC). This alignment allowed edTPA to gain national popularity and be endorsed by several prominent educational organizations, such as AACTE, Council for the Accreditation of Educator
Preparation (CAEP), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Presently, 17 states in the U.S. have policies in place that include edTPA as a part of initial certification in some way (SCALE, 2017). While edTPA has been tested as a high-stakes measure, as its developers have gathered evidence to prove the assessment’s validity and reliability in measuring teacher candidates’ effectiveness (Pecheone, Shear, Whittaker, & Darling-Hammond, 2013), many concerns have been raised about the use of the assessment (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Dover & Schultz, 2016). Some teacher educators believe that aligning teacher preparation curriculum to performance measures could enhance teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Adamson, & Abedi, 2010), but this view has its opponents. For example, Dover and Schultz (2016) argue high-stakes measures reduce the impact of enhancing teachers’ effectiveness due to remote scoring of teaching events not accurately predicting teacher candidates’ abilities. Moreover, Olson and Rao (2017) encourage researchers to remain vigilant in studying the impact of edTPA as a high-stakes assessment on teacher preparation programs as well as teacher candidates. edTPA’s problematic issues, coupled with its high-stakes consequences and recent implementation, provide warrants for careful scrutiny of the effects of this assessment on teacher candidates (Au, 2013; Blazar & Pollard, 2017; Olson & Rao, 2017).

**Statement of the Problem**

Policymakers are urging for education reform that requires accountability measures in teacher preparation programs in anticipation that the measures will assure the effectiveness of teacher candidates (Bastian, Henry, Pan, & Lys, 2016). Specifically, Race to the Top (RTTP) pushes the policymakers’ agenda by defining highly effective teachers as “those individuals that can increase student learning” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). As a response to national
policy, successful completion of edTPA has been a stipulation of initial certification in the state in which this study was conducted since September 2015 (GaPSC, n.d.). That is, teacher candidates who fail to successfully complete edTPA are not granted a teaching certificate from the state, though they can receive a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education (Grades K-5) from their respective institutions of higher education. The recent implementation and high-stakes nature of edTPA, along with uncertainty about expectations for completion and success, have contributed to a pervading sense of anxiety in teacher candidates and program faculty (Berlak, 2010; Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2016).

Challenges found to be associated with meeting edTPA requirements during student teaching compound the concerns associated with elementary teacher preparation in mathematics, such as negative affect (Blazar & Pollard, 2017; Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018). Lindqvist et al. (2017) found that when teacher candidates are submerged into distressful situations during student teaching, such as edTPA, there is a decline in their teaching performance. They attributed the rise of stress during student teaching to teacher candidates lack of control within field placement contexts. Relatedly, Berlak (2010) reported teacher candidates sharing negative feelings about the pressures of completing a TPA during student teaching. These findings related to edTPA are concerning in mathematics, particularly when coupled with the view that elementary teachers too often lack a positive sense of self as a teacher of mathematics (Sowder, 2007). Many have mathematics anxiety as well as procedural beliefs about how mathematics should be taught and learned; both of these affective factors contribute to difficulties in preparing teacher candidates to be effective mathematics teachers (Philipp, 2007; Mudaly, 2015; Stohlmann, Moore, Cramer, & Majorca, 2015; Stoehr, 2017). The challenges associated with elementary teacher preparation in mathematics juxtaposed with the issues associated with edTPA are troubling.
Need for the Study

Limited but increasing research has been conducted on edTPA, and even fewer studies exist focusing on the content specific task related to elementary mathematics, referred to as Math Task 4. Some mathematics researchers are recommending studies that expand the interrelated connection between mathematics and the practice of teaching mathematics in order to better understand how to best prepare teacher candidates (Adler, Ball, Krainer, Lin, & Novotna, 2005). Yet, the introduction of a high-stakes assessment as an additional demand during the student teaching semester warrants scrutiny (Blazar & Pollard, 2017).

Studying the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates can provide the research community and teacher educators’ insights into some of the issues and challenges associated with Math Task 4. The goal of this dissertation study was to understand the phenomenon of interest (POI). Notably, Meuwissen et al. (2015) call on researchers to study teacher candidates’ experiences of completing edTPA as part of the policy agenda’s impact on teacher preparation. Concerns abound in the extant literature surrounding this new national assessment and the need for careful examination (Meuwissen, Choppin, Shang-Butler, & Cloonan, 2015; Reagan, Schram, McCurdy, Chang, & Evans, 2016; Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018). I chose to address these calls using a phenomenological inquiry to study the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates completing Math Task 4 in order to build understanding in a local teacher preparation program encountering demands from Math Task 4.

Locating Myself as a Researcher

At first glance, in my role as a parent of children enrolled in a public school system, the induction process seems foolproof: there are requirements in place that serve to ensure that well-prepared educators will educate my children. As a parent, I may not have further questions about
the requirements of the induction process. However, upon closer examination through the lens of my role as a mathematics teacher educator of elementary teacher candidates, and as a former elementary school teacher, many questions arise about what the induction process actually means in terms of teacher preparation. As a teacher educator, my questions about induction are primarily centered on the use of TPAs with teacher candidates, with these assessments not in place at the time I received initial teacher certification.

Retrospectively examining my own lived experiences of my teacher preparation program, I recall having to navigate the connection between university learning and field-based experiences. Early on, I agreed to participate in a research study where I completed four elementary mathematics content courses offered in the evenings. These courses were required as part of my undergraduate degree; however, they were unique in that an elementary mathematics teacher educator was the instructor. Typically, elementary mathematics content courses at the university are taught by faculty in the mathematics department and not by mathematics teacher educators. During these course experiences, I learned elementary mathematics content through a problem-based curriculum. Learning the content in this way assisted me in considering ways of teaching elementary mathematics, even though these courses were not intended to be about teaching methods. Trying to infuse mathematics instruction that was problem based into my field experiences as a teacher candidate was challenging. Specifically, I recall one of my field placements being a fifth-grade inclusion classroom, meaning both special education and general education children were taught in the same setting. Within the inclusion setting two classroom teachers co-taught, a general education and special education teacher, the entire school day together. When I had to implement a mathematics lesson, I naturally wanted to try out a task I had just learned from my university coursework. However, the special education teacher was unsure of the
problem-based approach. Typically, mathematics instruction was taught using a gradual release model, a model that depicts the teacher’s solution path for solving mathematics and allows the children to practice. I negotiated implementing problem-based mathematics for a lesson during an observation. Similar to the phenomenon in this study, as a teacher candidate I experienced the POI when having to navigate the transition from university learning to field-based experiences, coupled with being supervised for a grade, which was stress inducing. Yet, the success of implementing university coursework in my field placement independently was satisfying.

As a current instructor of two sequential elementary mathematics methods courses, I provide mathematics instruction that is reform-oriented and centered on children’s mathematical thinking (Carpenter, Fennema & Franke, 1996; Hiebert, 2003). Additionally, I introduce teacher candidates to the language and format of Math Task 4 during the semester preceding their student teaching experience. Student teaching provides teacher candidates opportunities to work in K-12 classrooms to practice what they have learned in their university coursework (Soslau & Raths, 2017). Recent policy requiring teacher candidates to complete edTPA during their student teaching experience has caused changes to my coursework similar to what others have reported in the literature (Chung, 2008; Greenblatt, 2015; Noel, 2014). One of the major changes was the creation and implementation of a simulated Math Task 4 assignment that is described in greater detail here: Jacobs, Smith, Auslander, Smith, and Myers, 2017. The simulated task offers teacher candidates a rehearsal for Math Task 4 through an opportunity to plan, implement, and assess elementary mathematics instruction prior to their student teaching experience.

Given that I am a novice in my career as a university instructor, along with the relatively new requirement in the state of edTPA, I have not taught, as a university instructor, a semester without some sort of impression on my teaching from Math Task 4. This impression is the
impetus for this study. Initially, my exposure to Math Task 4 was through informal conversations I had in passing within the department with professors, program coordinators, and doctoral students. Eventually the conversation turned to action as the department asked faculty to consider how to embed edTPA signature assignments into coursework experiences. Following this call to action, I began to introduce the format and academic language of edTPA in my mathematics methods courses. Therefore, as I repeatedly reflected on course experiences I began to realize “something” occurring, among the teacher candidates, when I introduced the simulated Math Task 4. This “something” was difficult to articulate. The teacher candidates’ responses and the presence the assessment created in the classroom space were unlike anything else in my course. In fact, it was unlike anything that I had experienced in my own induction experience. As edTPA transitioned from the pilot stage to a certification requirement, I noticed this presence to be stronger. My fascination, coupled with my concern, about this presence grew into wondering about what was occurring for the teacher candidates as they were introduced to the simulated Math Task 4. I could not fully conceptualize what was happening, and I struggled to name the presence that remained in my coursework after the introduction of Math Task 4.

Teacher candidates enrolled in my courses hold strong beliefs about mathematics teaching and learning (Pajares, 1992; NCTM, 2014). Therefore, I typically spend part of the time in course experiences contrasting various instructional approaches to teaching mathematics with priority given to standards-based learning described in Principles to Action: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All (NCTM, 2014), which is also one of course texts used during the second mathematics methods course. I then engage teacher candidates by presenting a simulated Math Task 4 in the second mathematics methods course, which brings a strong and unspoken presence into the classroom. This presence was noticeable via teacher candidates’ responses to questions I
asked during the simulated Math Task 4 assignment. The assignment first involved an overview presentation of the requirements in the simulated Math Task 4. I explained the assignment expectations would be to prepare two sequential lessons, assess the lessons, analyze whole class mathematical thinking, then choose children to re-engage in a small group lesson, and finally reflect on the implementation of mathematics instruction. At the onset of this introduction, teacher candidates were engaged by facing toward the front of the room, taking notes, and actively responding when I asked questions to engage them in the presentation. However, I noticed once I presented the edTPA documents and expectations, teacher candidates began to shift their bodies away from the front of the classroom, becoming distracted by personal technological devices, and fewer teacher candidates answered the questions I was asking. This initial distracted presence did not seem to fade as teacher candidates began to move through the assignment. My observations have been that as teacher candidates prepare and work through this assignment, they begin to shift their attention from the learning in the course to what they need to know for successful completion of Math Task 4. During this shift, I frequently have to remind teacher candidates of effective mathematics instructional strategies and content covered throughout the two semesters. For example, in course sessions redirecting teacher candidates’ attention from surviving the simulated assignment to using information (e.g., establishing mathematical learning goals, facilitating mathematical discourse, or preparing purposeful questions) found in their course text, *PtA* (NCTM, 2014). This strategy helped them to engage in conversation about the simulated Math Task 4. However, still I was left with the troubling presence that I could not quite articulate.

As an instructor of mathematics methods courses for elementary teacher candidates, I was interested in understanding what this presence, similar to the emergent phenomenon in this
study, and what it was like for teacher candidates in real time during their student teaching semester. Teacher candidates shift in attention from effective teaching practices to surviving the simulated Math Task 4 assignment has left me wondering (van Manen, 2014), and also concerned, about teacher candidates’ navigation of Math Task 4 and their sense of persevering through this high-stakes assessment during student teaching. Consequently, I had a need to uncover the complexity of the POI that appeared through teacher candidates’ lived experiences with Math Task 4. I wanted to know how to support teacher candidates with the introduction of a TPA during their university coursework to prepare them for student teaching. I wanted to know what the POI is like for teacher candidates completing edTPA during their student teaching experience.

**Research Question**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine teacher candidates’ lived experiences of Math Task 4 during their student teaching semester. These teacher candidates were enrolled in a 2-year teacher preparation program at a large, urban university in the Southeastern United States. My research question is: What are the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates when engaging in the processes of edTPA Math Task 4 during the student teaching semester?
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teacher preparation within the U.S. is currently addressing the demands of policy initiatives, which has caused reform within the programs of preparation (Cochran-Smith et al. 2016; Bastian, Lys, & Pan, 2018). Some stakeholders, such as teacher educators, have proceeded with caution as they begin to recognize the impact of a national performance assessment on both preparation programs and teacher candidates alike (Au, 2013; Berlak, 2010; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). Policymakers are hoping that this assessment will ensure effective teachers in classrooms across the U.S. (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016; Reagan et al., 2016). This review is of the extant literature on teacher preparation, the reform policy agenda aimed at teacher preparations, and TPAs. Within each of these broad sections, specific contexts related to this study will be discussed. Teacher preparation will include a focus on practiced-based teacher preparation and mathematics teacher preparation. The reformed policy agenda will describe the political context related to teacher licensure as well as policy documents within mathematics teacher preparation. Next, a detailed account of how TPAs have been introduced into the teacher preparation landscape specifically discussing the edTPA as a national TPA and in particular Math Task 4. Concluding this chapter is an explanation of the theoretical framework for this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry.

Teacher Preparation and the Induction Process

Traditional routes into the teaching workforce have been proven to produce more effective teachers than alternative routes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez Heilig, 2005; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). The traditional route into teacher preparation, leading to teacher licensure, as described by Roth and Swail (2000):

• Bachelor’s or higher degree (master’s and/or fifth year of study)
• Completed state approved teacher preparation program
• Major or minor in education (if elementary candidate)
• Major in the subject area they plan to teach (if secondary candidate)
• Assessment of competency (state-developed or vendor-developed tests)
• Completion of special coursework in state recommended subject areas (p. 9).

In addition to these general requirements teacher preparation programs may include additional criteria to meet state requirements. For example where this study took place, teacher candidates must pass an entrance exam to enter their teacher preparation program (GaPSC, n.d.). Moreover, traditional teacher preparation requirements include some type of field base requirement, a typical requirement being a student teaching experience (Imig, Koziol, Pilato, & Imig, 2009). In the sections below I discuss, what Allen (2003) calls one of the most heated debates in teacher preparation, which is about the instructional content used in teacher preparation programs. Specifically focusing on the argument by some teacher educators who are demanding for the enactment of practiced based teacher preparation instruction.

**Practice-Based Teacher Preparation**

Reformed education, as defined by Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015), describes a movement that considers individual learning within a problem-based context, which is aimed at extending or changing the individual’s previous understandings. This type of instruction requires the teacher to know about their children and anticipate their thinking (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Therefore, in teacher preparation, teacher educators and teacher candidates alike must know the content and pedagogy well enough to anticipate the understandings and/or misconceptions of the children in their class (Anthony, Hunter, & Hunter, 2015; Philipp, 2007). One way to build this deep understanding of the pedagogy alongside the content while shifting teacher
candidates’ previous understandings is through practice-based instruction (Ball & Bass, 2002; Crespo, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Forzani, 2014; Lampert et al, 2013; Lynch, Chin, & Blazar, 2017).

Currently, some teacher preparation programs are using core practices, also known as high-leverage practices, as the routines underpinning the practice-based instruction (Teaching Works, 2018). Forzani (2014) describes the core practices with three central tenets:

One is that instruction should be aimed at ambitious learning goals that are grounded in the expectation that all students will develop high-level thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. A second is that teaching that will help students learn content for these purposes is a partially improvisational practice, contingent on the ideas and contributions that are offered in the classroom, and that novices must be trained to manage the uncertainty that arises as a result. A third is that this kind of teaching requires making the subject matter of instruction a critical component of the goals and activities that constitute the professional curriculum. (p. 359)

For example, Lampert et al. (2013) focused on teacher candidates during teaching scenarios using pedagogical practices to supporting children’s’ learning and the kinds of support needing to be offered by the teacher educators. Specifically, the focus was on the ambitious teaching as it related to rehearsals with children’s mathematics thinking (Lampert et al., 2013). The researchers found some types of rehearsal require minimal support from the teacher educator while other rehearsals, such as eliciting and responding to children’s mathematical thinking, teacher candidates needed significant support from the teacher educator (Lampert et al., 2013). This finding suggests eliciting children’s mathematical thinking for instructional use is complex and involves a level of proficiency of the mathematical content being used. Interestingly, Lampert and
colleagues conducted this study within the context of the university classroom. Some researchers suggest that this simulated practice across the duration of teacher candidates’ university coursework could support teacher candidates’ implementation of ambitious teaching via core practices in their field-based teaching experiences (Anthony et al., 2015). Supporting practice-based teacher preparation through routines has been claimed by some researchers as a means to enhance teacher effectiveness (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Additionally, when routines are consistently practiced through a teacher candidates’ teacher preparation program the teacher candidates’ understanding of these routines can be measured (Adkins, 2016; Choppin & Meuwissen, 2017). In order to evaluate teacher candidates’ teacher effectiveness their teacher preparation program needs to offer opportunities to practice pedagogical skills (Zeichner, 2010).

Therefore, fostering the university to field experience partnership is one way to support teacher candidates’ success using practice-based teacher preparation (Crespo, 2000; Soslau & Raths, 2017; Zeichner, 2010, 2014). However, the disconnect between university coursework transferring to the context of teacher candidates’ field experiences to support teacher candidates’ conceptions of reform-based instruction has existed for quite some time (Zeichner, 2010). Further, the reform movement has magnified the disconnect between the university and field base experiences as teacher preparation continues to support practice-based instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Practice based teacher preparation is the result of many years of efforts across policymakers and educational stakeholders alike in producing more effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Researchers have argued that the routines of practice-based teacher preparation instruction allows teacher candidates to build an understanding of the pedagogy regardless of the context (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Field experiences offer teacher candidates a space where they will eventually perform as a professional. Zeichner (2010) suggests teacher educators need to
recognize this connection and facilitate support through a *hybrid space* in teacher preparation. This hybrid space is defined as one that combines academic and practitioner knowledge and draws from the understanding of the teacher educator as well as the cooperating teacher (CT) to facilitate the teacher candidates’ learning (Zeichner, 2010). This model relies on educational professionals to maintain the knowledge and understanding of reformed practice-based teaching and learning in order to support and build the teacher candidates’ understanding. Yet, the fine grain at which the teacher candidates need to understand the routines of teaching is challenging. Being limited to the university classroom and expectations to transfer the context of the routine to the field is even more challenging (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). In an attempt to overcome some of the challenges, Hiebert and Morris (2012) argue for the focus to shift from the responsibility residing on an individual teacher educator to artifacts that support teaching. Meaning that if teacher preparation programs compile artifacts to be used by teacher candidates the knowledge resides in the artifact and is not bound to an experts’ mind. More broadly the field of teacher preparation has begun parsing out the practices needed to define an effective teacher.

**Mathematics Teacher Preparation**

Historically, NCTM has led mathematics educational reform efforts since the organization’s origination in 1920 (Stanic & Kilpatrick, 1992). Further “competing visions—that is, competing answers to the questions of what we should teach, why we should teach one thing rather than another, and who should have access to what knowledge—can be healthy, but only if they are recognized and dealt with” (Stanic & Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 24). More recently, NCTM (2014) has published the *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All (PtA)*. The intent of this document is to recognize the complexity of effective mathematics teaching while simultaneously identifying actions to facilitate teaching. The field of mathematics teacher preparation
has unpacked these thought-provoking questions in a variety of ways spanning almost a century. For instance, some have focused on the knowledge mathematics teachers need (e.g., Ball et al., 2008; Hill, Blunk, Charalambous, Lewis, Phelps, Sleep, & Ball, 2008), others have focused on the pedagogical practices (e.g., Hiebert, Miller, & Berk, 2017; Lampert et al., 2013; Lin & Hsu, 2018) and some have focused on overcoming the obstacles of affective factors (Charalambous, Panaoura, & Philippou, 2009; Di Martino & Zan, 2011; Gresham, 2017). A goal of this research has been to uncover the best way to equip the teaching workforce with the supports needed to develop mathematically proficient individuals (NRC, 2001; NCTM, 2014). As consideration for preparing teacher candidates, specifically in learning the mathematical concepts they will teach, most teacher preparation programs in the U.S. require teacher candidates to complete mathematics content courses (Ma, 1999). Masingila and colleagues (2012) conducted an expansive survey of colleges across the U.S. and found that the mathematics department typically teaches elementary mathematics content courses. Moreover, the dilemma of a mathematician providing course offerings to elementary teacher candidates, resides in the lack of consideration for the complexity of the elementary mathematics curriculum as well as the pedagogy (Masingila, Olanoff, & Kwaka, 2012). Additionally, this study supported the work of Ma (1999) which proliferated on the complexity of the elementary mathematics curriculum and the need for specialized instruction focusing on the pedagogy of elementary mathematics. The recommendation to focus on the complexity of the mathematics content as well as the approach to the teaching of mathematics has been the focus of many conversations in the field of mathematics teacher preparation about the teaching and learning mathematics (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Ball, Hill, &Bass, 2005; Ball et al., 2008; Hill, 2010; Morris & Hiebert, 2017; Rowland, Huckstep, & Thwaites, 2005).
Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching (MKT). Upon Shulman’s (1986) findings that pedagogical content knowledge is critical knowledge in becoming a teacher, mathematics educational researchers proliferated on this work to determine the specialized knowledge needed to be a teacher of mathematics (Bass & Ball; 2002; Ball, Hill, & Bass, 2005; Ball et al., 2008). Given the complexity of learning about the mathematics content in juxtaposition to learning about the practices to teach effectively it is important that teacher candidates are provided with opportunities to “[unpack] familiar mathematical ideas, procedures, and principles” (Ball & Bass, 2002, p. 13). Furthermore, effective teachers understand mathematical content and are able to make pedagogical decisions to facilitate students’ mathematical understandings or misconceptions (Ball, Hill, & Bass, 2005).

More recent research has focused on describing mathematical knowledge needed for teaching. Ball, Thames, & Phelps (2008) subcategorized Shulman’s bimodal concept of knowledge. Ball and colleagues subdivided subject matter knowledge into: common content knowledge (CCK) and specialized content knowledge (SCK). SCK is specific to the teaching of mathematics. The identification of this type of knowledge as specific to the content of mathematics but also including pedagogical features provided a lens to examine mathematics teaching. This knowledge is not relevant to the work of mathematics or to learners of mathematics; rather, SCK is useful for teachers to develop in order to plan instruction focusing on students’ mathematical understandings as well as the anticipation of common misconceptions that may occur with the mathematical content (Ball et al., 2008; SCALE, 2015). For instance, Hill and colleagues (2008) found that teachers with higher levels of MKT provided effective mathematics instruction in the classroom. Understanding MKT is believed by some researchers to support effective teaching of elementary mathematics (NCTM, 2014). MKT is arguably a unique type of
mathematical knowledge in that it is comprised of an understanding of how to help others understanding of the content in mathematics (Thames & Ball, 2010). Moreover, research continues to suggest a strong correlation between levels of MKT and the quality of mathematics instruction enacted (Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018). In order to better understand the complexity of acquiring MKT some have studied the practices used in implementing effective mathematics teaching (Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Lampert et al., 2013; Lin & Hsu, 2018).

**Practice in Mathematics Teacher Preparation.** Specifically, the *PtA* includes descriptors for mathematics teaching practices, “which represent a core set of high-leverage practices and essential teaching skills necessary to promote deep learning of mathematics” (NCTM, 2014, p. 9). These practices are aligned to the core practices defined by Ball and Forzani (2011) for the larger context of teacher preparation. Hiebert and colleagues (2017) longitudinally studied teacher candidates’ learning about effective mathematics teaching through their transition to becoming a credentialed teacher and implementing effective mathematics instruction. Interestingly, the researchers found the teachers were able to effectively implement mathematics instruction that was studied in their teacher preparation program (Hiebert et al., 2017). Therefore, uncovering the practices most useful for effective mathematics teachers and using those practices during teacher preparation could be promising (Forzani, 2014). A wealth of research related to children’s mathematical thinking (e.g., Carpenter et al., 1996; Fennema, Carpenter, Franke, Levi, Jacobs & Empson, 1996; Kazemi, Gibbons, Lomax & Franke, 2016) has underpinned the practices effective mathematics teachers need to learn (Anthon et al., 2015; Crespo, 2000; Moscardini, 2014).

Learning to listen to children’s mathematical thinking is not intuitive and teacher candidates need multiple opportunities to understand how to proceed with instruction based on this
thinking (Anthony et al., 2015; Crespo, 2000; Lampert et al., 2013). For instance, Crespo (2000) used a letter exchange system between teacher candidates enrolled in her methods course and elementary school children. Teacher candidates prepared mathematics problems and sent them to elementary children. The children solved the problems and returned their solution paths. Several factors facilitated teacher candidates’ growth in reading and analyzing children’s strategies: (a) responses were conducted via letters the immediate pressure of responding was alleviated, (b) teacher candidates were able to incorporate coursework knowledge into their responses across time, and (c) teacher candidates’ responses transitioned from affirming or correcting children’s responses to having a genuine interest in the root of children’s mathematical knowledge (Crespo, 2000).

Rehearsals have been another strategy mathematics teacher educators have used to support teacher candidates understanding of children’s mathematical thinking (Anthony et al., 2015; Lampert et al., 2013). Rehearsals are a simulated practice scenario allowing teacher candidates opportunities to learn about the practice of teaching with the support of a teacher educator (Ghousseini, 2017). Consistent across the literature researchers agree that rehearsals, when used across multiple learning opportunities, support teacher candidates in noticing children’s mathematical thinking as well as developing a deeper understanding of the mathematical concepts to be taught (Lampert et al., 2013; Anthony et al., 2015; Ghousseini, 2017).

Affective Factors. Feelings teachers harbor as a learner of mathematics follow them into teachers of mathematics, which influences how they view mathematics (Philipp, 2007). Motivating teacher candidates to become effective teachers of mathematics requires careful consideration of the affective factors influencing their experiences with mathematics. Philipp (2007)
describes how to motivate teacher candidates who are learning about the practicalities of teaching and offers five principles, the fifth one is quoted here:

“We best help a learner by starting where he or she is and building upon his or her current understanding. This fifth principle applies not only to elementary school children but also to prospective elementary school teachers” (p. 23).

Philipp suggests teacher educators should confront the obstacles inhibiting teacher candidates’ motivation of becoming an effective teacher by beginning at the onset of their teacher preparation program.

The affective domain refers to emotions, attitudes, and beliefs (McLeod, 1992). Emotions are the least stable but Liljedahl (2005) found that when teacher candidates find success in solving a single mathematical problem the positive emotion was enough to impact teacher candidates’ attitudes and beliefs. This finding was unique in that Liljedahl was focused on one moment in time and not the repeated emotion. It is asserted if emotions continue to repeat themselves then they become automatic towards the experience in which they occurred and become an attitude (Di Martino & Zan, 2015). Attitudes are slightly more stable and are cognitive. Stoehr (2017) describes a cyclical effect of mathematical anxiety and diminishing confidence levels in female elementary teacher candidates. Stoehr (2017) revealed teacher candidates’ mathematical anxiety occurs beyond the context of formal assessments and encompasses all interactions with mathematics. Finally, Teacher beliefs are the most deeply rooted in shaping teacher candidates’ ideas about mathematics (Parajes, 1992). Beliefs tend to be cognitively rooted and more stable than emotions (Di Martino & Zan, 2015). Further teacher’s beliefs towards mathematics and about effective mathematics instruction have proven to impact teacher’s instructional decisions (Fennema et al., 1996, Polly, McGee, Wang, Lambert, Pugalee & Johnson, 2013). For instance,
Polly and Colleagues (2013) studied the link between teacher’s beliefs and children learning. They found teachers using skill-based teacher–centered instruction had smaller gains in children learning than their counterpart, teachers using a standards-based student-centered approach (Polly et al. 2013). *PtA* also addresses the importance of beliefs by pairing their effective teaching practices with examples of productive and unproductive beliefs. One reason for *PtA* to present beliefs in this manner could be in part to previous studies in mathematics teacher preparation demonstrating a correlation between teacher candidates increased MKT and positive change in beliefs (Swarz et al., 2009; Smith, Swars, Smith, Hart, & Haardörfer, 2012). Overall, mathematics teacher educators need to consider the MKT as well as the affective factors teacher candidates bring with them into teacher preparation.

**Reform Agenda**

Educational policy is a complex multilevel system involving multiple stakeholders with varying points of view (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013). The enactment of policy ripples through the national, state, and local levels impacting teachers and children in the classroom (Sowder, 2007). Recently policies, such as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) of 2001 and *Race to the Top* (RTTP) of 2009 have led to significant changes in K-12 education as well as higher education. NCLB and RTTP have called for effective teachers to implement a rigorous curriculum that will increase children’s mathematical learning. Policymakers have defined what a ‘well-trained teacher’ is in each of the policy documents above. NCLB defined the following criteria for determining a *highly qualified teacher*: “1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). RTTP defined an effective teacher as “a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates…of student growth” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 12). RTTP also included a...
definition to distinguish a highly effective teacher as those teachers whose students “achieve high rates” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 12). An acceptable rate of growth is one grade level, and a high rate of growth is 1 ½ grade levels or more of growth (Us. Department of Education, 2009). NCLB and RTTP provide definitions of a ‘well trained teacher’ in their policy. However, defining what a ‘well-trained’ teacher does in the classroom and how it is measured is a well-debated issue within teacher preparation research (Forzani, 2014; Hiebert & Morris; 2012; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). Moreover, the former secretary of education, Arne Duncan, claimed “By almost any standard, many if not most of the nation’s 1,450 schools, colleges and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Recent policy implementation as well as statements made by policy makers has turned the focus to teacher preparation in the U.S.

Mathematics teacher preparation, specifically, has had similar issues in agreeing on the defining characteristics of effective teachers and how to measure the impact of those characteristics. In the early 2000s, Adding It Up defined effective mathematics teaching as “teaching that fosters the development of mathematical proficiency over time-can take a variety of forms” (NRC, 2001, p. 424). More recently, NCTM’s publication of the PtA (2014) depicts its purpose in providing a description of “the conditions, structures, and policies that must exist for all students to learn” (NCTM, 2014, p. vii). The PtA, defined eight teaching principles that constitute an effective teacher. Further, this document is intended to facilitate the enactment of policy initiatives. Across these two documents, while similarities exist in defining an effective mathematics teacher, the use of varying language can cause ambiguity in interpretation. Likewise, the final report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (NMAP, 2008) made a recommendation, to policymakers, for mathematics teacher preparation programs to improve the teacher
effectiveness of elementary and middle school teacher candidates through “ample opportunities to learn mathematics for teaching” (p. 38). Producing effective mathematics teachers has always been a goal of mathematics teacher educators, however, building an assessment to measure effectiveness, in response to policy, applies pressure for teacher candidates and teacher educators alike.

Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2013) suggest five criteria that should be considered when creating high-quality measures. Assessments need to include higher-order tasks for students learning mathematics to use the content standards and practices they have learned. These criteria provide guidance in developing such an assessment (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013). “The United States stands at a crossroads with regard to mathematics education, with assessment playing a major role as a potential lever for change” (Schoenfeld, 2015). The assessments that are created should not only measure how much the individual has learned but also focus on their thinking and the root of their misconceptions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). The alignment to teacher professional standards allows for edTPA to be an accountability factor for initial teacher preparation programs in preparing effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

**Teacher Performance Assessments**

Some teacher preparation programs are currently undergoing programmatic changes in reaction to policies demanding assessments of teacher candidates’ teaching effectiveness (Adkins, 2016; Barron, 2015; Bastian et al., 2018; Noel, 2014). Research has fueled this conversation, by confirming in the early 1990s teacher’s skills impact children’s mathematical growth (Hanushek, 1992) as well as prominent teacher educators arguing for the need of professionalization in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). Further, position
statements by prominent educational organizations on teacher evaluations have confirmed the need for evaluative measures determining teachers are well equipped in content and pedagogy (Cook, Jeffries, Smith, Sterrett, & Snodgress, 2012; NCTE, 2012; NCTM, 2011). Naturally, the conversation has evolved towards accountability for teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). One source of accountability measure being used by some teacher preparation programs are teacher performance assessments (TPAs), such as edTPA.

TPAs are an approach gaining in popularity, as a response to policymakers urging for effective teachers, and assessing teacher candidates’ preparedness to teach (AACTE, 2018; Au, 2013; Bastian et al., 2016; Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016). The pathway that led to a national TPA began with an organization, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which developed a national teacher evaluation assessment aligned to teaching standards. The first group of teachers to become Nationally Board Certified (NBC) was in 1994. It is important to mention that this assessment is embedded in the everyday work of veteran teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). Teachers created a portfolio demonstrating their effective teaching in their own classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). Once teachers had successfully completed a minimum of three years of teaching they could then prepare and submit a portfolio to become NBC (Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008). This set the scene for performance assessment measures to be considered for teacher candidates seeking initial certification. Some teacher preparation programs have used a portfolio-based measure to predict teacher candidates’ readiness to enter the profession for quite some time. However, pressure from policy makers and stakeholders alike have pushed for a more uniform national measure of teacher candidates’ readiness to teach (Sato, 2014). For example, in 1998 California passed a bill (SB 2042) requiring teacher candidates to successfully complete a TPA in order to be eligible for initial certification.
The result of this policy led to the birth of the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) and the piloting of it in 2003 (Chung, 2008). The portfolio-based measure was appealing to teacher educators in that it provides evidence of teacher candidates’ instruction as well as a reflection on this instruction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). PACT is scored by a trained reader using multiple rubrics to analyze teacher candidates’ responses to guided questions with scores reported at the guided question level as well as an aggregate score (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE), located in California and a developer of PACT, believe a “performance assessment system should be designed to be educative for students, teachers, and schools” (SCALE 2018).

**edTPA: A National TPA**

The use of PACT in California caught the attention of stakeholders and led to SCALE opting to create a national TPA (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). In elevating the local TPA, PACT, to a nationwide TPA, SCALE aligned a TPA to correlate with national teaching and learning standards for teachers (e.g., InTASC) and elementary students (e.g., CCSS) (Darling-Hammond, 2010). With this alignment edTPA was born, a national TPA measuring teacher candidates’ readiness to enter the profession as scored by an expert in teaching (Sato, 2014). A major supporter of edTPA, AACTE, describes edTPA, currently on their website, as:

"edTPA is a performance-based, subject-specific assessment and support system used by more than 600 teacher preparation programs in some 40 states to emphasize measure and support the skills and knowledge that all teachers need from Day 1 in the classroom. Developed by educators for educators, edTPA is the first such standards-based assessment to become nationally available in the United States. It builds on decades of work on assessments of teacher performance and research regarding teaching skills that improve"
children’s learning. It is transforming the preparation and certification of new teachers by complementing subject-area assessments with a rigorous process that requires teacher candidates to demonstrate that they have the classroom skills necessary to ensure children are learning (AACTE, 2018).

Further SCALE created an infographic explaining the cycle of teaching assessed in edTPA:

![Image of edTPA cycle](https://example.com/edTPA_cycle.png)

**Figure 1** Copyright © 2016 Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All rights reserved.

This graphic illustrates the conception of teaching used in edTPA (SCALE, 2016a). edTPA consists of a series of tasks; each of these tasks demonstrates teacher candidates’ comprehension of the content and pedagogy through the teacher candidates’ selection of evidence and responses to guided questions. Founded on a strong research base, edTPA is a performance-based, high-stakes, standardized assessment (Au, 2013, Sato, 2014). The series of tasks are intended to span across teacher candidates’ student teaching semester with the intention of allowing them time to reflect, edit, and possibly seek advice from others (Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018).

One version of edTPA, Elementary Education, consists of four tasks that allow teacher candidates to demonstrate their effectiveness in teaching literacy and mathematics (SCALE, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the edTPA Elementary Education
assessment and will be referred to as edTPA. edTPA’s four teaching tasks consist of planning, instructing, and assessing students’ learning in literacy and mathematics. Teacher candidates are also required to reflect on their instruction in each of these areas. The edTPA Handbook states: Based on findings [from research and theory] successful teachers:

- Develop knowledge of subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy
- Develop and apply knowledge of varied students’ needs
- Consider research and theory about how students learn
- Reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on student learning (SCALE, 2016a, p. 2)

Once teacher candidates have completed their written responses to the edTPA templates, they are uploaded to a website and scored by a trained scorer. The edTPA Handbook provides 18 rubrics the scorer will use across the four tasks. The website and scoring professionals are managed by Pearson ePortfolio System. This study is primarily concerned with the fourth edTPA task, Math Task 4.

The goal of Math Task 4 is for teacher candidates to demonstrate their ability to assess elementary students’ mathematical understandings. SCALE (2017), suggests the mathematics instruction in Math Task 4 needs to be aligned to the Principles and Standards for School Mathematics (PSSM) (NCTM, 2000). The PSSM consists of three main parts: (a) six principles for school mathematics, which are commitments to be upheld by the schooling body, (b) content standards for P-12 mathematics, what mathematics should be taught at each grade level and (c) process standards, how the mathematics should be taught. This standards document presented an instructional approach that was different from the traditional approaches to mathematics teaching and learning, focusing on procedural skill development (Stanic & Kilpatrick, 1992). The PSSM proposed a standards-based approach to instruction, which is inclusive of conceptual understanding as well as processes for understanding and applying mathematics learning (Hiebert, 2003).
Specifically, Math Task 4 allows teacher candidates to prove their ability in analyzing and assessing students’ mathematical thinking, which is a complex task (Anthony et al., 2015; Ball & Bass, 2002; Carpenter et al., 1996; Fennema, Carpenter et al., 1996). This task begins with the teacher candidate completing a template provided by edTPA to describe contextual factors about the school and the classroom in which the mathematics instruction will occur. Next, teacher candidates develop a learning segment that consists of 3-5 lessons and are aligned to a central focus. The central focus is written by defining evaluation criteria in terms of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and mathematical reasoning/problem-solving skills (SCALE, 2016a). During planning of the learning segment, teacher candidates develop an assessment that will evaluate the learning segments criteria in the central focus. The teacher candidate then proceeds to implement the mathematics instruction during their student teaching in their field placement. The teacher candidate will conclude their learning segment by administering their assessment. Once the assessment data is collected the teacher candidate spends time analyzing the student work and searching for learning patterns of student strengths and weakness across the evaluation criteria. Once the analysis is complete, the teacher candidate is expected to select one evaluation criterion to focus on to re-engage a small group of students. The teacher candidate plans and implements a re-engagement lesson. The final step is to reflect on the effectiveness of the re-engagement lesson. Teacher candidates must complete three assessment documents provided by edTPA for Math Task 4. The Mathematics Assessment Commentary (MAC) is one of these documents. The MAC requires teacher candidates to reflect on the analysis of their assessing and analyzing of students’ mathematical thinking. Teacher candidates are then prompted to describe students’ mathematical understanding during the re-engagement lesson. The MAC concludes with teacher candidates having to describe and justify the effectiveness of their re-engagement
lesson. Overall, Math Task 4 is seeking to see if teacher candidates can show evidence of their teacher effectiveness by analyzing, assessing and re-engaging students in standards-based instruction. In order to prepare teacher candidates for the implementation of standards-based instruction teacher educators have argued for teacher preparation that is embedded in purposeful practice in university coursework as well as field-based experiences (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Forzani, 2014; Hiebert & Morris, 2013; Zeichner, 2010)

edTPA and Teacher Preparation

Given the newness of edTPA as a national TPA, research is limited, however concerns about the implementation have stirred conversation within the field of teacher preparation (Denton, 2013; Dover & Schultz, 2016; Greenblatt, 2015; Olson & Rao, 2017). A major concern among teacher preparation programs is that edTPA will produce standardized test results that will be seemingly reflective of individual teacher candidates’ teaching effectiveness and overall program effectiveness. SCALE has chosen Pearson to provide the platform for teacher candidates to upload and score edTPA documents. Therefore, scoring procedures are conducted by someone outside of the teacher preparation program.

The underlying conception of edTPA is aligned to a balanced approach to instruction (SCALE, 2016a), interpreted by some as taking up a constructivist perspective (Sato, 2014). The goal is for the performance assessment to measure teacher candidates’ teaching effectiveness. The concern is that the national assessment will turn the original focus into another standardized measure (Au, 2013; Paugh, Wendell, Power, & Gilbert, 2017). Teacher preparation programs are forced to implement this national assessment based on state policy, throwing them into a standardized system of numbers that can be compared to other teacher preparation programs. This comparison can cause conflict, resentment, and backlash if teacher preparation programs feel...
forced into assessment without having adequate time to prepare and transition to the implementation of a new assessment (Lachuk & Koellner, 2015). edTPA provides a measure to compare teacher preparation programs, within a local and/or national context, based on assessment scores (Burns, Henry, & Lindauer, 2015; Sato, 2014). Teacher educators have examined the footprint edTPA is creating by examining the use of academic language, tensions within teacher preparation programs, strategies that may support teacher candidates, and the intended outcomes of edTPA vs. the lived reality.

Implementing the kind of teacher preparation that will be assessed nationally requires some consistency in academic language (Lim, Moseley, Son, & Seelke, 2014). Common academic language has been an argued issue within content areas and, more widely, in the field of teacher preparation. Academic language that is specific to teaching and within certain content areas aligns with varying ideologies (Sato, 2014). edTPA provides a set of specific academic terms that are not clearly defined and vary among content areas which can cause confusion for novice and experts alike (Lim et al., 2014). Inconsistencies in academic language can lead to inconsistencies in test results, causing erroneous comparisons (Dover, Schultz, Smith, & Duggan, 2015).

As can be anticipated, sources of tensions have been studied as well (Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017; Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015; Reagan et al, 2016). Burns and colleagues (2015) conducted a study at a small private university. They collected survey data, using a Likert scale and open-ended questions, to look at the impact of edTPA during teacher candidates’ student teaching semester. CTs and teacher candidates completed surveys, and their data found that 87% of the teacher candidates were overwhelmed about completing edTPA. CTs reported that they could sense that their teacher candidates were overwhelmed during student teaching as well. Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) collected interview data from teacher candidates who
participated in a previous study using a survey. This study was conducted to gather a more in-depth look at the tensions associated with the implementation and impact of edTPA. Findings reported teacher candidates felt tensions surrounding edTPA due to the administrative duties. Since the assessment was new Meuwissen and Choppin, (2015) extrapolate how their teacher candidates had to navigate these tensions in order to successfully pass edTPA.

Further, the difficulties in managing the logistics of edTPA have caused some teacher educators to consider ways to facilitate exposure to edTPA prior to implementation during student teaching (Chung, 2008; Denton, 2013; Goulette & Swanson, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2017). For example, assisting teacher candidates with video recording can reduce their anxiety and limit the possibility of a technological condition code. Goulette and Swanson (2017) studied teacher candidates completing the world language edTPA. The focus of the study was on videoing their teaching as evidence in a task. Teacher candidates reported issues with causing a distraction in their field placement; ensuring technology was in working order prior to and during recording teaching, and the pressure of producing a video segment demonstrating effective teaching. The researchers recommend that teacher educators spend the time providing authentic experiences for teacher candidates to record their teaching during their program coursework. Similarly, Rosenfeld, Givner, and Tasimowicz’s (2015) focused on the use of a strategy, team teaching buddy, for teacher candidates to employ while completing the edTPA process during their student teaching experience. A team teaching buddy strategy was carried out by placing two teacher candidates in the same field placement with one CT. Rosenfeld et al. (2015) learned that this group of teacher candidates and their CTs found this strategy beneficial and helped to relieve some of the anxiety caused by completing edTPA. Another study conducted by Kissau and colleagues (2017) examined the impact of supporting CTs understanding of edTPA by implementing a professional
development workshop. Findings showed that teacher candidates benefited from CTs feedback when they had attended the edTPA workshop.

Other researchers have studied what is occurring in their teacher preparation program because of edTPA (Berlak, 2010; Chandler-Olcott, Fleming, & Nieroda, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2017; Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018). Specifically, Paugh and colleagues (2017) investigated the intended goals of edTPA and the actual outcomes of edTPA as reported by a teacher preparation program during their pilot of the TPA. The results revealed six overarching themes and provided significant depth about how programmatic changes occurred in order to adhere to the goals of edTPA as well as teacher candidates’ responses to the changes as well as edTPA. For example, teacher candidates felt that edTPA helped them to understand the connection between planning, teaching, and assessing students’ learning but they felt that the restrictions put on them by the edTPA documents, such as the learning segment, inhibited their ability to demonstrate their understanding (Paugh et al., 2017). Further, completing the context for learning offered teacher candidates a space to reflect on whom they would be teaching and in what environment, but overall the complexity within the classrooms cannot be communicated on a standardized form (Paugh et al. 2017). A third notable finding in Paugh and colleagues (2017) study, was that teacher candidates claimed that the scorer must infer the meaning of their documents in order to score their edTPA since it is handled by an outsider of the teacher preparation program. Overall, affordances, such as exposure to inquiry-based learning and reflection on teaching, as well as constraints, such as narrow lesson segments and the high-stakes summative score determined by an outside scorer, were uncovered during this three-year pilot study of edTPA at one university (Paugh et al. 2017). Another study conducted by Chandler-Olcott and colleagues (2016) explored strategies used for edTPA by various stakeholders. Teacher candidates were introduced to
edTPA during their methods course, in hopes that this initial exposure would allow them to gain exposure and familiarity to the terminology of edTPA. Teacher candidates reported in this initial exposure that they understood how to teach to the expectations of edTPA, but they were having difficulty translating their experience into writing (Chandler-Olcott et al., 2016). As teacher candidates transitioned into student teaching, they were placed in schools where teachers were also being evaluated on a scoring system. Teacher candidates became anxious and overwhelmed by the scores their mentors, CT, received and it made them question what they should include in their final portfolio (Chandler-Olcott et al., 2016). These studies have found ways that edTPA has become a part of their teacher preparation programs as well as teacher candidates accounts of working with edTPA.

In response to the naysayers, Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2013) claim, there is no need to fear edTPA; instead, this needs to be seen as an opportunity to ‘professionalize’ teaching (Adkins, 2016; Corliss, 2015). One way to measure practice-based teacher preparation is through the use of TPAs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). edTPA provides an opportunity for society to consider educators as professionals, provide a task-based assessment measure that will be representative of quality teacher characteristics, which will increase students learning, and allows teacher preparation programs to have an assessment measure for program review (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As this assessment continues to develop and become more widely used, it is important to evaluate its validity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013).

Math Task 4 and Teacher Preparation

As edTPA continues to become more widespread, so will the body of research. Currently content specific studies are limited. Below is a review of the literature related to TPAs and mathematics teacher preparation. Mathematics teacher educators have reviewed assessment materials
composed for TPAs to inform instructional practices. For example, one study used assessment materials submitted by teacher candidates to analyze their conceptions of effective mathematics teaching (van Es & Conroy, 2009). In van Es and Conroy’s study, they analyzed the teacher candidates’ descriptions from the templates provided in the PACT assessment for secondary mathematics teachers as well as video clips of teacher candidates’ mathematics teaching. Most notably, they found that teacher candidates described effective mathematics teaching using similar language across the portfolios as well using student centered approaches to instruction, regardless of high or low scoring teacher candidates. Likewise, Bunch, Aguirre, and Tellez, (2009) used mathematics teaching video clips, evidence that was submitted to PACT, as a data source. It is important to note that these video clips were the property of PACT and then later requested by the researchers. Bunch and colleagues (2009) however, examined elementary mathematics teacher candidates’ video clips in their study. They explored teacher candidates’ explanation of instructional strategies used during mathematics instruction to support English learners. This study found that teacher candidates were capable of taking new knowledge from their teacher preparation program and applying it accurately to PACT prompts. Other researchers, Santagata and Sandholtz (2018), conducted an exploratory study investigating the relationship between teacher candidates’ scores on TPAs, PACT and the Classroom Video Analysis, and their MKT assessment, Teacher Education and Development Study in Mathematics (TEDS-M). They found that individual teacher candidates’ scores varied across assessment measures that were to determine their effectiveness to teach mathematics. The researchers argue that this yields concern in using a single measure to determine a teacher’s effectiveness for licensure (Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018).
Shifting to edTPA, a study about secondary mathematics teachers found that they were too inexperienced in being able to accurately use the demand of academic language and implement instruction that correlated with the function of that language (Lim et al., 2014). While other teacher educators, Hodges and Hodge (2017), explored how teacher candidates develop their mathematics teacher identity. Particularly, the researchers focused on mathematics experiences for teacher candidates across their teacher preparation program and how this shaped their mathematics teaching identity. Hodges and Hodge (2017) concluded that the teacher candidates in their study were able to perform reform-based instruction and actually preferred this type of instruction to the traditional skills-based instruction offered in their student teaching experience. Moreover, teacher candidates described effective mathematics teaching as corresponding with reform-based instruction, learned in their university coursework (Hodges & Hodge, 2017). Another study conducted in an elementary mathematics methods course implementing Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) to support teacher candidates understanding of teaching and learning elementary mathematics examined the impact of a simulated Math Task 4 assignment (Jacobs et al., 2017). The simulated Math Task 4 served as a vehicle for teacher candidates to enact CGI in their field experience, both focusing on assessing students’ mathematical understandings. This study found that the elementary teacher candidates appreciated the exposure to Math Task 4 as well as being able to implement instruction they could use in future teaching experiences (Jacobs et al. 2017). The literature on mathematics and TPAs is still very limited and needs to continue to be explored for further understanding of the impact related to Math Task 4.

Calls have been made for additional research to be conducted related to edTPA (Okhremtchouk, Seiki, Gilliland, Ateh, Wallace, & Kato, 2009; Olson & Rao, 2017; Paugh et al., 2017; Reagan et al., 2016). Lerman (2014) encourages mathematics education researchers to
reach beyond the scope of teaching and learning in mathematics and encompass the policy effects on mathematics teacher preparation. In addition, Chandler-Olcott et al. (2016) called for ‘fine-grained’ studies of edTPA as essential, in that the ‘implementation of a performance assessment intended to promote national standards of teacher quality will be experienced variously in different contexts’ (p. 241). Employing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach will allow for a fine-grained examination of edTPA in one teacher preparation program. In addition, a call has been made in the mathematics education research community by several mathematics researchers for the work of mathematics education research to start influencing storylines about mathematics (Herbel-Eisenmann, Sinclair, Chval, Clements, Civil, Pape, Stephan, Wanko, & Wilkerson, 2016). One storyline they identify is the lack of usefulness of a large portion of mathematics education research for teachers and they urge researchers to make research more accessible (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2016). As a mathematics teacher educator, it is important to produce research about mathematics teacher preparation that is useful for other mathematics teacher educators.

Some teacher educators argue that TPAs are a rigorous way to facilitate the development and continued enactment of practice-based teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Even more so research findings suggest, educators graduating from practice-based teacher preparation programs using performance-based assessment measures are more effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010). However, given the complexity of learning to teach (Grossman & Hammerness, 2009) coupled with a high-stakes performance assessment during student teaching warrants careful scrutiny (Blazar & Pollard, 2017). We, educational researchers and teacher educators, can better understand the entanglement of the complexity of learning to teach during the student teaching semester compounded with edTPA broadly and
Math Task 4 specifically if we can consider a lived experience different from our own (van Manen, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to collect these experiences to create a shared understanding of the phenomenon.
3 METHODOLOGY

To answer the following research question, what are the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates when engaging in the processes of edTPA Math Task 4 during the student teaching semester? I utilized a phenomenological inquiry to look for and create structures of the POI. Attending to how the phenomenon appeared and manifested in elementary teacher candidates’ lived experiences of Math Task 4 and occasionally more broadly to Elementary edTPA. According to Vagle (2014), “Methodological decisions should always help us draw out the concrete ways in which phenomena are lived and not how they are represented, conceptualized, or abstracted” (p.58). In adhering to Vagle’s recommendation, methodological decisions were made to focus on the understanding of the POI as it appeared in teacher candidates’ lived experience of Math Task 4. Accordingly, I made the following methodological decisions: (a) employ a phenomenological attitude, through openness, and (b) using a bridling journal as my predominant methodological tool. These methodological tools allowed me to answer this research question: What are the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates when engaging in the processes of edTPA Math Task 4 during the student teaching semester?

In this chapter, I provide a thorough explanation of my methodological decisions, beginning with how my interest in the phenomenon under study developed. Next, I describe the study design beginning with the recruitment of the participants. Then, I include details of data collection followed by data analysis. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of validity in qualitative research broadly and in phenomenological research specifically.

Theoretical Framework

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach, philosophically and methodologically, was used for this study. The aim of phenomenology is to understand how phenomenon appear in the
world. Therefore, we, educational researchers and teacher educators, can better understand Math Task 4 specifically, and edTPA broadly, if we can consider a lived experience different from our own (van Manen, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to collect these experiences to create a shared understanding of the phenomenon.

The historicity of phenomenology, in this study, begins with Edmund Husserl’s philosophical understanding of intentionality. Husserl is most widely known as the “father of phenomenology” (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008). He took up and elaborated philosophically on the term intentionality from one of his teachers, Franz Brentano. In this study, intentionality does not have a synonymous meaning for the word intentional. Instead, the word intentionally is used as a way to describe how people are connected to other people or objects in the world (Vagle, 2014). This term defines consciousness in phenomenology. van Manen (2014) describes intentionality as, “the ways we are ‘attached’ to the world and how consciousness is always being conscious of something” (p. 62). In other words, Husserl believes that consciousness does not reside in the human mind and that humans are capable of constructing their own meanings independent of things in the world (Husserl, 1931). Therefore, intentionality, in phenomenology, provides a way to frame how people and things or other people are in a meaningful, interconnected relationship. According to Vagle (2014), he uses the term interconnectedness to provide a mental image of the intentional relation between the person and the object in phenomenological work. Further clarification of Vagle’s statement,

Therefore, in phenomenology, intentionality can be envisioned as our consciousness stretching out toward or directing itself toward some mental object in order to apprehend it in perception. Mind you, this object is not just a physical object; it can also be a mental object—a memory, an illusion, a hallucination, an emotion, a feeling, a thought—it is of
no consequence. It is our consciousness apprehending an object in perception and trying to sketch out the structures of those experiences that Husserl made the premise in his philosophy of phenomenology. (Hughes, 2011).

Since intentionality means that we are always in an intentional relationship with others and/or things in the world it is understood the phenomenon can only be made visible when it manifests, or appears, in lived experiences (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014). Meaning, “intentional relations, then, are in a constant state of interpretation” (Vagle, 2014, p. 30). Husserl’s philosophical development became noticed by researchers in the early 1900’s and was used in research to understand the world and human experiences in a new way (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

The phenomena are the focus of study for phenomenologists. Phenomena are not constructed in a human’s mind. “Phenomena are the ways in which we find ourselves being in relation to the world through our day-to-day living” (Vagle, 2014, p. 20). In this study, the POI was revealed as teacher candidates shared their experiences completing Math Task 4 during their student teaching semester. The phenomena are revealed through studying the intentional relationship. The phenomena are manifested within the lifeworld. When a phenomenologist acknowledges the manifestation of a phenomenon, then they seek reflections on the experiences that provoked that manifestation. Hermeneutic phenomenology differs from Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology in that the intentional relationship reveals the structure, manifestations, of the phenomenon.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, which will be referred to from here on out as phenomenology, which comes from one of Husserl’s students, Martin Heidegger and Heidegger’s student Hans-Georg Gadamer, affords us with the opportunity to restore what seemed to be lost in our
own internal reflection (Vagle, 2014). Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nystrom, (2008) describes phenomenology as:

Life manifests itself in experience. Phenomenology and hermeneutics seek the patterns of meanings of experience, the structures, and principles as well as unique experiences. Phenomenology and hermeneutics want to grasp the meaning of phenomena, analysing, synthesising and presenting them and their meanings as faithfully as possible (p. 95).

The manifestation of things in our natural world appears through experiences or as Heidegger claims, “wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 279). This manifestation of the phenomenon is through the lived experience in the lifeworld (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, phenomenologists are not concerned with studying the types of decisions human’s make. Phenomenologists are seeking to “contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the [life]world” (Vagle, 2014, p. 22). Reflecting on the appearance of things in the natural world provides an interest in the interconnectedness between the human and the phenomenon. Further, manifestations are how the researcher is able to put the phenomenon into structures to grasp its experiential meaning (Dahlberg et al. 2008). Overall, manifestations appear through the reflection of the intentional relationship as human’s experience the world, or as phenomenologist call it, lifeworld.

Phenomenon exists in our everyday world. In phenomenology, we call the everyday world the lifeworld. Vagle (2014) describes the lifeworld as the space humans live in consisting of all pre-reflective lived experiences. The lifeworld can also be thought of as the natural, everyday, world (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Phenomenon is studied in the human’s lifeworld primarily through varying pre-reflective experiences. Expanding on the notion of pre-reflective experiences Merleau-Ponty (1962) claimed, “the world is not what I think, but what I live through…If
one wants to study the world as lived through, one has to start with a direct description of our experience as it is” (As cited in van Manen, 2014, p. 40). Interpreting a phenomenon a researcher is collecting the lived experience from a participant that is describing the actual process of living through the experience.

Since, phenomena exist all around us in the lifeworld and are largely ignored by an individual’s natural attitude in living through life one must take on a phenomenological attitude to investigate the intentional relationship. The natural attitude is the taken for granted attitude that an individual possesses when they move through their daily routine without reflection of how they proceeded from morning to evening (Dahlberg et al., 2008). For example, most people can recall a time that they completed a daily task in life, such as driving to work, but cannot recall the exact details of the cars on the road around them or a description of people in the cars they passed. This is the taken for granted natural attitude. In contrast, the phenomenological attitude is an open attitude to the lifeworld. Meaning, “openness is the mark of a true willingness to listen, see, and understand” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 98). Therefore, in making meaning of the phenomenon the researcher must maintain an attitude that seeks the familiar and unfamiliar, is definite and indefinite while carefully interpreting the intentional relationship (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2014).

Overall, phenomenology allows for the investigation of phenomena through intentionality. Intentionality is the relationship between the individual and the things of the world. Describing this intentional relationship is by interpreting the manifestations of the phenomenon. Manifestations are the ways that the phenomenon appears in the lived experienced of individuals. A phenomenologist understands the lifeworld to be where the human’s experience life in their everyday
natural attitude. In order to study the phenomenon and identify the manifestations a phenomenologist must maintain a phenomenological open attitude focused on the intentionality

**Phenomenological Attitude**

Phenomenological Attitude, as defined by Finlay (2008):

The “phenomenological attitude” involves a radical transformation in our approach where we strive to suspend presuppositions and go beyond the natural attitude of taken-for-granted understanding. It involves the researcher engaging a certain sense of wonder and openness to the world while, at the same time, reflexively restraining pre-understandings (p.2).

Evidence of a phenomenological attitude is present when the researcher begins to wonder about the meaning of experiences (van Manen, 2014) during the everyday living of his or her life. The wondering about the meaning of lived experiences associated with a phenomenological attitude is different from typical fascination. Further, the type of wonder described by van Manen (2014) is philosophically informed and a disposition of phenomenological thinking. In contrast to the phenomenological attitude, the natural attitude does not require reflection on routines, rather it allows one to proceed through routines without hesitation. For instance, since I know what to expect when I prepare to leave home (e.g., lock the doors, turn off lights and any gadgets being used prior to leaving, put the dogs in their kennel, grab my car keys, wallet, and phone), I am able to just live through leaving by completing a checklist of duties. I do not need to reflect about each step and ensure that the interpretation is accurate. Although, when I reflect on the steps of the checklist I must transition from living in the now and think about how I was living in the moments of the past as they occurred. This reflection of my pre-reflective experience shifts me from a natural attitude to a phenomenological attitude or as Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nystrom (2008)
call it an open attitude. The type of attitude I believe required to conduct phenomenological research is most closely related to Dahlberg and colleagues (2008) description of an open attitude.

The researcher must acknowledge the shift from the natural attitude to the open attitude to conduct phenomenological research. Acknowledging the shift to an open attitude is done by orienting towards the phenomenon through wondering (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014). Orienting to the phenomenon is an important part of the researcher’s role in phenomenological inquiry. My orientation to the phenomenon is my intentionality, that is “the ways we are ‘attached’ to the world and how consciousness is always being conscious of something” (Vagle, 2014, p. 27).

Orienting toward the POI. My introduction to edTPA occurred during a doctoral teacher preparation course that I was enrolled in fall of 2012. The professor led a discussion about pre-service and in-service teacher evaluation and mentioned edTPA as an evaluation that would likely become a requirement of initial certification at our university. Later, fall semester of 2013, I learned more about edTPA when the university chose to conduct a pilot of edTPA as a type of preparation for the impending implementation. Meaning, teacher candidates would participate in completing edTPA during their student teaching semester, but it was not consequential in earning their initial certification. The purpose of the pilot was to build familiarization with the assessment that would soon be consequential for the teacher candidates. At this point, I was an instructor in a mathematics methods class but was not expected to familiarize teacher candidates with edTPA. I was becoming aware of this assessment and was concerned about the possible ramifications edTPA would have on my mathematics course in the near future. A few semesters later, fall semester of 2015, our university had to implement edTPA due to a mandate by state policy for teacher candidates’ initial licensure (GaPSC rule 505-2-.26 Certification and Licensure Assessments). edTPA was still not consequential but would be starting fall 2015. Shortly after
edTPA became a state requirement, a full professor reached out to me to collaborate on a project that would prepare our undergraduate teacher candidates for Math Task 4 in our mathematics methods course.

The first semester I introduced Math Task 4 to teacher candidates I used a PowerPoint presentation that contained information directly extracted from the edTPA Handbook. Included in the presentation were definitions and expectations of Math Task 4. I followed this introductory information with a final course assignment that would allow teacher candidates to implement a simulated Math Task 4 assignment in their field placement. At the end of this course session, the teacher candidates and I found ourselves overwhelmed with the nuances and complexity of edTPA. I attributed this reaction to it being my first time trying to work through an introduction and course assignment for Math Task 4. The following semester I decided not to include as much formal information from the edTPA Handbook during the course session as I had the previous semester. That semester, the teacher candidates read the expectations of Math Task 4 from the handbook prior to the in-class introduction. It was in this experience that I began to wonder (van Manen, 2014) and was troubled about what was occurring between the teacher candidates and Math Task 4. The next semester I began to journal about what I noticed happening after the introduction with Math Task 4 during my methods course. I felt that Math Task 4 was altering my course sessions in ways I was struggling to articulate. In the journaling, I noted how teacher candidates’ body language changed throughout the course session. They began the course with some hesitation, once I started presenting information about edTPA, and teacher candidates began attempting to complete the assignments the more they withdrew. I also found that time after time working through the simulated Math Task 4 assignment teacher candidates would focus on getting the right answer or trying to prepare and implement instructional materials in the ‘edTPA’
way. In the reactions of my teacher candidates towards Math Task 4 a phenomenon was revealing itself and at the same time concealing itself (Dahlberg et al. 2008).

As an elementary mathematics methods instructor, preparing elementary teacher candidates for Math Task 4, I needed to know more about what was happening between my teacher candidates and edTPA. My concerns about what I was noticing fueled my wonder about what was appearing. Ultimately, phenomenology was the solution I chose to understand the phenomenon. Phenomenology allows me to wonder about the phenomenon of interest in an existential way in hopes of gaining a more comprehensive understanding. I needed to understand what was happening, so I could figure out what was going on in my classroom. In conclusion, “phenomenologists love to study the things we tend to assume we know—the things we think we have settled” (Vagle, 2014, p. 58). Before edTPA was a part of my coursework materials, I believed that I had a grasp on what teacher candidates experienced in the teacher preparation program. Once edTPA became a requirement, initially, I thought I ‘knew’ what was happening for the teacher candidates. I thought that they were overwhelmed and that edTPA was too demanding at this point in their career. However, as I began to sit with teacher candidates and collect their experiential accounts of Math Task 4 I began to notice something. They were experiencing something that seemed different from overwhelmed and was more than their inexperience. This was something different, as the phenomenon was manifesting in their description of ‘their cloud’, ‘newness of the assessment’, ‘lack of a supportive network’, ‘reference materials’, and ‘edTPA as the man, their documents, and scoring’.

**Openness—maintaining the phenomenological attitude.** Along with orienting toward the phenomenon, the researcher must attempt to remain open throughout his or her phenomenological inquiry. “Openness is important because it involves becoming aware of how the phenomenon
reveals and conceals itself to the research and demands that the researcher pay attention to how she or he influences and is influenced by the phenomenon” (Vagle, 2014, p. 61). Taking an open approach allows the researcher to interpret the phenomenon from the participants’ perspective, which, is different from his or her own. By maintaining an open attitude, I was able to see how the POI was revealing itself through the teacher candidates’ lived experiences of Math Task 4. Vagle (2014) and Dahlberg et al. (2008) warn that it is easier to understand the principle of openness but quite challenging to put into practice. Heidegger (1962) describes an individual’s openness as an existential approach to the world “by the attunement of a state-of-mind” (p. 176).

Openness involves the researcher remaining curious (Heidegger, 1962) or in a state of wondering (van Manen, 2014) about the phenomenon: “In truth, remaining open is always more than an intellectual task. It demands an alert awareness of one’s entire intellectual and emotional response to the situation and to those who have let us into their lives” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 109). Remaining open to the phenomenon begins with “actively waiting” (Vagle, 2014, p. 68). Actively waiting implies that something is occurring during the process of waiting. I interpret this action to include the identification of pre-understandings as well as phenomenological nods through bridling.

**Bridling.** This is a methodological tool developed by Dahlberg et al. (2008) and is a way for the researcher to become and remain aware of his or her pre-understandings and record phenomenological nods throughout the research process. Bridling consists of two underlying principles, including that: (a) it allows the phenomenological researcher to pull out and claim his or her pre-understandings throughout the study and (b) it prevents the researcher from drawing conclusions too quickly about the phenomenon. This tool helped me to critically reflect on my own thinking, so that I could remain open to the lived experiences of the teacher candidates. Bridling
was planned for throughout a variety of aspects in this study. For example, bridling was used
during data collection to help form the subsequent interview protocols. Bridling was used
throughout data analysis to help move from initial interpretations, to tentative themes, to the final
themes and associated characteristics which will be presented in the findings chapter. Sometimes
bridling was about pushing me to stay focused on the teacher candidates’ lived experiences. For
example:

8-18-17: As I sifted through the participants’ data I continued to push myself to find mo-
mements where the thought or thinking from the teacher candidate was different from mine.
I remember, always trying to describe edTPA as overwhelming for teacher candidates
and I kept saying it is as if they are just overwhelmed. However, when I found myself
trying to circle around this through interviews 2-4 the teacher candidates specifically say
things like “no (I’m not overwhelmed) I’ve worked through that” or “I just got over i
t started working on edTPA”. This feeling of overwhelmed does not seem to be persistent
it is present at the onset of the edTPA but seems to dissipate as they begin to take on re-
sponsibilities of the task.

The previous excerpt illustrates how, I had to question and trouble why I was insisting on
overwhelmed as being part of the phenomenon. van Manen (1990) acknowledges the challenge
in phenomenological inquiry by identifying the problem as, “not always that we know too little
about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much” (p. 46). My previous
experience during the mathematics methods course caused me to recognize the experiences of
teacher candidates. Already experiencing this presence in my mathematics methods course meant
that I had to be aware of my pre-understandings as well as remain open to the potential for phe-
nomenological nods. Further, by understanding how I was influencing the phenomenon and what
I understood the phenomenon to mean allowed me to slow down and not be rushed in identifying the meaning of the POI.

Pre-understandings can be a hindrance or assistance in understanding the phenomenon. Moreover, they could take the form of: (a) prejudice, (b) preferred theory or model of thought, (c) beliefs, and/or (d) previous experiences related to the phenomenon (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Bridling pre-understandings throughout a phenomenological study is critical in order for the researcher to remain open. Prior to and during data collection I had many pre-understandings about Math Task 4. In order for me to remain open to the lived experience of the teacher candidates, I had to continue to make myself aware of my own pre-understandings. Therefore, bridling occurred prior to each interview and after each interview. I bridled as I prepared interview protocols, transcribed the interviews, analyzed the data, and in any moment that I felt myself trying to claim the meaning of the phenomenon too quickly. Dahlberg and colleagues (2008) assert, “what we learn from phenomenology and hermeneutics is that in order to be open and receptive to the world and the phenomena that are the focus of science and research, tradition and pre-understanding have to be looked at, problematized, questioned, and bridled” (p. 135). In other words, Dahlberg et al. (2008) believes the learning from phenomenological inquiry can only occur when a researcher remains open through bridling.

Phenomenological nods are deep, resonating understandings that allow an individual to draw even closer to the phenomenon. Vagle (2014) describes the purpose of a phenomenological nod as to “actively want and need to learn as much as possible about the phenomenon and through our writing, wants us to communicate the essential themes in such a way that others learn from the text and hopefully have phenomenological nods along the way” (p. 60). Maintaining a bridling journal from the origination of this study through completion, I recorded any
phenomenological nods that is, “a time when one does not need to say, “I understand,” because one already knows one understands.” (Vagle, 2014, p.11). To clarify I have included one of the phenomenological nods from my bridling journal:

1-13-2017: I had a phenomenological nod when reading through an interview transcript. Julia in interview 1 at line 539 begins describing what an ideal student teaching experience would be to her and then she circles back to how that is different from what she is experiencing now. She said that she cannot submerge herself to be a part of the teaching team because of the other responsibilities and specifically mentions edTPA. That is it!!! The phenomenon is a thing that is supposed to be assimilating teacher candidates into teachers; instead, it is only distancing them from what they imagine teaching is because of the distraction of testing, deadlines, work, and assignments.

This entry reflects that I understood the POI in a new way. Transcribing this teacher candidates’ interview script allowed me to realize that the responsibilities of Math Task 4 inhibited the teacher candidate from ‘submerging’ herself into student teaching. As I continued to bridle, transcribe interviews, and analyze data, I used this nod to remind me to look across teacher candidates’ experiences for shared meanings related to Math Task 4. Overall, bridling was a methodological tool that was planned for and used from this studies inception until the final representation of this study.

**Study Design**

This study’s research design employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research shares this common philosophical assumption: “to understand a complex phenomenon, you must consider the multiple ‘realities’ experienced by the participants themselves-the insider perspective” (Suter, 2011, p.344). Further, this study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which aims
to understand (Lather, 2007). “The purpose of doing interpretivist research (…) is to provide information that will allow the investigator to “make sense” of the world from the perspective of participants” (Eisenhart 1988, p. 103). Specifically, phenomenology is concerned with thick description and interpretation of a phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Moreover, phenomenology is the explication of an individual’s lived experiences of the world in order to understand the world (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Given that this study is seeking to better understand the POI through teacher candidates’ lived experiences, a phenomenological methodological approach was selected.

**Participant selection.** Selection of teacher candidates, to participate in this study, occurred in the semester preceding student teaching. Consideration was given to the teacher candidates who were enrolled in the third semester of their teacher preparation program and completing their second mathematics methods course. In total, 38 students met these criteria. Since I was an instructor in one of the mathematics methods course offerings for the elementary teacher candidates, I had to carefully consider consent procedures. My primary goal in obtaining consent was to alleviate, teacher candidates’ feeling coerced into participation. Therefore, as the researcher I chose not to ask for the consent of my own students. Given two sections of this course ran concurrently throughout the semester, the instructor of the other section agreed to and conducted initial consent for both sections. Another consideration taken into account was teacher candidates consenting on the sole purpose of concerns about their final grade. This consideration resulted in the other course instructor not sharing consent forms with me until the course grades were submitted. While I could not completely remove all anticipated pressure by asking students to enroll in my research project, I tried to reduce it as best as possible.
Sixteen of the teacher candidates agreed to participate in the study. Once consent forms were released to me at the end of the semester, I used random sampling to recruit teacher candidates for the interviews. Random sampling is defined by Shenton (2004) as a random selection of a few participants, which are representative of a larger group, and prevents the researcher from inserting biases into the selection process. In adhering to this procedure, first each consent form was assigned a number. Next, a number generator randomly selected numbers 1-16. The numbers provided by the number generator were matched with the consent forms and this process continued until six teacher candidates were recruited to participate in the interviews during the student teaching semester.

Selecting the six participants for the phenomenological interviews occurred via email. Again, I considered how to relieve as much pressure as possible for the teacher candidate for both sections. The decision to contact each of the six participants via email provided them with a format to consider the decision and respond virtually. However, careful consideration was given to include a restricted period for a response. If teacher candidates chose not to respond within 48 hours then they would be removed from all further contact. Including a restricted period for a response gave teacher candidates the option not to respond and the selection process could proceed as necessary. Data collection began as soon as all six teacher candidates were selected.

The decision to choose six participants to participate in the phenomenological interviews was also given careful consideration. Since I would be conducting interviews across their lived experience of Math Task 4 during their student teaching experience six was a number that would allow me to consider variation among participant experiences. Further, Dahlberg et al. (2008) claims participant variation is more important than the number of participants in phenomenological inquiry. I considered ways that my participants could offer a variation in their lived
experience of Math Task 4 and decided random sampling of participants entering into their student teaching experience would alleviate my bias towards selecting teacher candidates that I had previous experiences teaching.

**Description of program experiences.** Teacher candidates were enrolled in a 2-year initial teacher preparation program. The first 3 out of 4 semesters teacher candidates complete courses with concurrent 2 days per week field placements. The final, fourth, semester teacher candidates complete a student teaching experience. The teacher preparation program structure values the connection of coursework with field experiences and employs research-based practices for instruction of diverse learners in urban school contexts. Also, teacher candidates are provided with assorted opportunities to participate in study abroad experiences through the teacher preparation program. This large preparation program typically places 150 teacher candidates in metro area schools each semester, totaling over 1,200 hours of supervised field experiences and clinical practice. Additionally, teacher candidates are required to complete an “opening school experience” lasting two weeks. This experience intends to equip teacher candidates with the knowledge of setting up a classroom at the beginning of the school year. A clinical model of supervision is employed across all field experiences. Teacher candidates debrief about their pedagogical practices with an assigned university supervisor and school-based personnel at the conclusion of all observations of teaching.

The field-based experience was grounded in a developmental model beginning with first semester experiences in kindergarten and first grade classrooms and transitioning through the grade levels with fourth and fifth grade placements in the third semester. Student teaching placements were selected by the university, but teacher candidates were given a survey to assess their particular interests related to CT, school, or grade level. In addition, the two programs differed in
certification and endorsement offerings. One cohort pursued their pre-kindergarten through fifth grade early childhood and elementary education certification and was offered additional courses to complete requirements of a pre-kindergarten through fifth grade English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. The other cohort was offered additional courses to complete requirements for educating pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students in special education inclusive settings. This cohort would earn a dual certification: (a) pre-kindergarten through fifth grade general education and (b) pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade special education inclusive setting. Both cohorts completed the two mathematics methods courses as well as the simulated Math Task 4 assignment in their third semester of their second mathematics methods course.

Two of the required courses are elementary mathematics methods courses. Teacher candidates take these mathematics methods courses during the first and third semesters of their teacher preparation program. Due to the nature of the developmental model, with their field placement, teacher candidates are in kindergarten or first grade classroom during the first mathematics methods course and during the second mathematics methods course they are enrolled in fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

The first elementary mathematics methods course addresses teaching and assessing students’ thinking in numeracy and operations as well as early algebra. The class texts for this course consists of three practitioner-based texts focusing on children’s mathematical thinking. The first text is the second edition of *Children’s Mathematics: Cognitively Guided Instruction* (Carpenter, Fennema, Franke, Levi & Empson, 2015). This text helps teacher candidates to situate their own mathematical understandings of numbers and operation while learning to instruct this big idea in elementary mathematics. The CGI text includes 11 story problem types
addressing addition and subtraction and three story problem types addressing multiplication and division. The text is the primary course text as it provides teacher candidates with a chance to challenge their thinking about elementary mathematics cognitively as well as pedagogically. Specifically, this text focuses on students’ informal mathematical thinking through anticipated solution strategies. Understanding the intricacies of these strategies allow the teacher to make informed instructional decisions in deepening students’ conceptions of mathematics. Additionally, teacher need support in understanding the multi-faceted progression of children’s mathematical thinking which is what this text offers in relation to the four operations using whole numbers (Carpenter et al., 2015). The second course text is an extension of the whole number work used in the first CGI text. This text, *Extending Children’s Mathematics: Fractions and Decimals: Innovations in Cognitively Guided Instruction* (Empson & Levi, 2011) examines problem types for building students’ mathematical concepts of fraction and decimals. The third course text, *Thinking Mathematically: Integrating Arithmetic and Algebra in Elementary School* (Carpenter, Franke, & Levi, 2003), allows teacher candidates to explore relational thinking around mathematical properties and benchmarks are provided for students’ mathematical understanding of the equal sign. Class assignments in the first methods course involve one on one interviews with children in their field placement and analyzing elementary student strategies.

The second elementary mathematics methods course focuses on teaching data, geometry, and measurement in the elementary classroom. This second course, during their third semester, aims to build teacher candidates’ confidence and capabilities in teaching whole group mathematics lessons. Teacher candidates use their field placement to try on a variety of whole group and small group lessons. For example, the final course project is for teacher candidates to prepare
and implement a simulated Math Task 4, which requires the teaching of two whole group lessons and one small group lesson.

The simulated Math Task 4 assignment is introduced to the teacher candidates in the beginning of the second mathematics methods course. Teacher candidates are provided with lesson planning templates that focus on defining a central focus of both mathematics lessons and assessment as well as anticipating students’ mathematical thinking in relation to the central focus. Teacher candidates plan instruction on their own and prepare for an in course feedback session. This session occurs several weeks after teacher candidates have received the lesson planning documents. The feedback session provides teacher candidates with feedback from a peer and the course instructor. Peer feedback is guided by an instructor created handout that provides prompts relating to specific elements of the simulated task. Once teacher candidates have their feedback they spend the next week incorporating chosen feedback into their planned mathematics instruction and prepare for elementary classroom implementation. Once the teacher candidate has instructed and assessed the mathematics content, they conduct a thorough analysis of students’ mathematical understandings. Teacher candidates are given the option to produce a chart or narrative for this portion of the assignment however, the chart is encouraged to manage synthesis of analysis. Next teacher candidates select a small group of students that share a common misconception in their mathematical understanding and implement an additional mathematics lesson. At the conclusion of this reengagement lesson, teacher candidates collect students’ work samples for reflection. Finally, teacher candidates respond to the MAC, developed by SCALE, to reflect on the analysis of students’ mathematical understandings and the effectiveness of their reengagement instruction. This assignment is graded on a scaled rubric created by the course instructor. The assignment is returned to the students at the final course session. Overall, both mathematics
methods courses introduce teacher candidates to the effective teaching and learning practices of elementary mathematics (NCTM, 2014).

edTPA was first piloted in this program in 2013 and became consequential in fall of 2015. The teacher candidates recruited for this study began their teacher preparation program in the fall 2015 semester. Therefore, they had never known any other teacher preparation experience other than one embedded with preparing for and successfully completing edTPA for initial licensure. In preparing teacher candidates for edTPA during student teaching, signature assignments are embedded across coursework during the first 3 semesters. During the student teaching semester teacher candidates attend edTPA seminars, which offer technical support throughout the completion of edTPA. Teacher candidates complete all four tasks in the Elementary Education edTPA and upload all documents to an online system managed by Pearson Education.

edTPA signature assignments are designed to introduce teacher candidates to the demands of the assessment while simultaneously meeting course expectations. In the first semester of their teacher preparation program course goals and field assignments are connected to understanding young learners (e.g., pre-kindergarten and kindergarten aged students). Comprehensively teacher candidates begin to develop knowledge about instruction that accounts for their learners’ development, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, funds of knowledge, and varying abilities. edTPA signature assignments embedded in coursework during this first semester are specifically focused on considering the context for learning as they plan instruction and assessment. The second semester teacher candidates’ field-based experiences and course goals are aligned to early elementary learners (e.g., first, second, and third grade aged students). During this semester teacher candidates develop understanding of differentiating instruction and assessment for the whole class and to implement specific strategies and assessments for students with
specific learning goals in their field-based experiences. Moreover, two edTPA signature assignments, focusing on planning and assessment, are included.

The third semester, at the beginning of their senior year, courses and field experiences are aimed at upper elementary learners (e.g., fourth and fifth grade aged students). In this semester teacher candidates continue to develop their understanding of assessment and the analysis of student data to plan for instruction and analyze teaching effectiveness. edTPA embedded signature assignments include videoing and analyzing their teaching practices as well as the simulated Math Task 4 assignment. In the final semester of their senior year teacher candidates enroll in their student teaching experience.

Student teaching immerses teacher candidates in a culminating, field-based experience in an elementary classroom. Teacher candidates are expected to shadow their CT, assigned by the university, 5 days a week, 8 hours a day for an entire 14-week semester. During this semester teacher candidates work to complete various assignments measuring their readiness to teach: edTPA, focal child study, and a professional portfolio aligned with the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. Additionally, teacher candidates are required to attend six seminars aimed at supporting their comprehensive understanding of edTPA (e.g., task overview, file format and uploading procedures). Each seminar is 2.5 hours in length and led by the program coordinator.

Data collection. Data collection occurred across the spring semester of 2017 via 24 individual, phenomenological interviews. Phenomenological interviewing’s “aim is to collect examples of possible human experiences in order to reflect on the meanings they may inhere in them” (van Manen, 2014, p. 313). Phenomenological interviewing is unlike semi-structured interviews, which seek generalized responses or reflections. Also, phenomenological interviews “aim is not to reveal lifeworld experience of the researcher but that of the informant” (Dahlberg et al., 2008,
These interviews were dialogues where the teacher candidate spoke as much as possible, and the researcher focused on steering the conversation toward understanding the POI. These interviews included open-ended questions about the phenomenon in hopes of best capturing the participants’ lived experience. van Manen (2014) warns that it is challenging to conduct a phenomenological interview since the focus is on the pre-reflective experience of the phenomenon. The focus of the interviews was to encourage teacher candidates to discuss the setting of each event, what was happening during their lived experience, who were the individuals present during the moments described, and what feelings/emotions did they have during each phase of Math Task 4.

In an attempt to better understand the POI, I conducted four phenomenological interviews from each of the six teacher candidates (see Appendices A, B, C, and D for protocols). The interviews were 45 minutes to one and half hours in length. The initial interview was conducted before teacher candidates began Math Task 4 in their student teaching semester. At the university, teacher candidates are expected to attend a seminar prior to beginning Math Task 4. Since they were introduced to edTPA, including Math Task 4, during their previous semesters and completed a simulated Math Task 4 assignment, they have an understanding of Math Task 4. However, the purpose of this interview was to collect the teacher candidates’ initial lived experiences of the phenomenon as they anticipate beginning Math Task 4 in their student teaching experience. For example, the protocol that was used for the first interview was very broad and included prompts such as: (a) what happened, (b) what did you do, (c) what did you say, (d) what did you think? Since I knew teacher candidates’ interactions with the simulated Math Task 4 assignment was concerning me I wanted to spend time understanding their experience.
The second interview was conducted during the planning of Math Task 4. Teacher candidates had attended the student teaching seminar and had initiated preparation of their Math Task 4 learning segment. This interview solicited their lived experiences while planning mathematics instruction for Math Task 4. The prompt used to begin each of the second interviews was similar in that it encouraged teacher candidates to share any experiences or stories they had about Math Task 4 since the previous interview as well as share experiences about the Math Task 4 student teaching seminar. In addition to this common initial prompt, the rest of the protocol was individualized for each teacher candidate based on the previous interview. For instance, Julia’s follow up questions were about her concerns related to Math Task 4 dominating her student teaching experience and not allowing her to immerse into the student teaching experience. While Stacey troubled how scary and overwhelming Math Task 4 was yet, she felt comforted by the support she felt she had with her CT. Since each of these teacher candidates had shared separate experiences during the first interview it only made sense for the following interview to include individualized prompts as well.

The third interview was conducted once teacher candidates had implemented the Math Task 4 learning segment and completed the re-engagement lesson. Specifically, they were working on writing the MAC and finalizing Math Task 4. Since teacher candidates progressed at various rates through the process of Math Task 4, the third interviews took the longest amount of time to collect. The teacher candidate will be in the process of reflecting on their mathematics teaching. Finally, the last interview was conducted after they received their official edTPA score. This interview allowed them to share their experiences of the scoring process and their reactions to their own personal score. Similarly, to the second interview protocols, the third and fourth
protocols were prepared based on the individual interviews and were unique to each teacher
candidate. Data collection concluded in the final weeks of the student teaching semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data Collection Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1. Initial perceptions, teacher candidates were interviewed prior to their Math Task 4 student teaching seminar</td>
<td>1/11/2017-1/20/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2. Planning Math Task 4 learning segment</td>
<td>1/23/2017-2/9/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3. Implementing and Reflecting on their Math Task 4</td>
<td>2/8/2017-2/27/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 4. Final score reporting</td>
<td>4/21/2017-4/26/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I transcribed the interviews verbatim, during data collection, and uploaded them to Dedoose, a web-based computer assisted data management program, for analysis.

**Data analysis.** I used Whole-Part-Whole analysis (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2014) to analyze data. Analysis was continuous and ongoing throughout the study. As Gadamer describes in Dahlberg et al. (2008):

Thus, the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that the understanding has failed. (p. 237).

Through constant analysis, during and after data collection, of the lived experiences of the teacher candidates, I found three manifestations, or themes (van Manen, 1990), which comprised
the structure of the POI. Phenomenological themes are articulated to provide an interpretation of the structure of the POI. Additionally, each theme is comprised of characteristics which offer the multi-dimensional aspect to the complex structure of the POI. The themes and characteristics together offer an interpretation of the patterns that emerged from across the teacher candidates’ experiences while working through Math Task 4. Therefore, the characteristics are embodied in the themes which are embodied in the POI.

Further, “In phenomenological research, like other qualitative research methodologies, it is difficult to separate data gathering from analysis, as the two are so delicately intertwined throughout all phases of a study” (Vagle, 2014, p. 96). Therefore, when I present the process of data analysis it does not represent a linear path. As recommended by Vagle (2014) it is not possible for me to capture the data analysis process in the context of systematic directions. Therefore, in an attempt to be as transparent as possible about data analysis interpretations of the process is examined below. I do not believe I can realistically describe every aspect of my data analysis process, but I do believe I can provide an understanding of how in-depth and focused the process was.

I began data analysis as soon as I began bridling about the phenomenon. Specifically, a bridling entry below demonstrates how this space was used to question and support each part of data collection and analysis,

10-14-2016: Dahlberg et al. (2008) stated position on sample sizes and the absence of saturation I am finding interesting. Specifically, they claim, “the exact number is not important here. What is important is how one reasons about the number of the informants” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 175). This quote stands out to me since I have tentatively selected to have six participants. Dahlberg et al. (2008) recommends somewhere around
five if the interviewer is skilled and the knowledge about the phenomenon is forthcoming. I don’t think I have either of those at the moment… For one my phenomenon is still called the POI (phenomenon of interest) since I’m not quite sure how to label it or what to label it with for a fear of jumping to reveal the phenomenon too quickly (van Manen, 2014). Next, I am NOT a skilled phenomenological interviewer.

As I progressed through data analysis and returned to previous bridling entries, I would use the comment function, in the word processor software, to record additional thoughts. For instance, on September 22, 2017 I read the excerpt above, used the comment function to suggest returning to Dahlberg et al. (2008) and re-read the quote in the context of the large text to be reminded of methodological decisions during the midst of data analysis.

Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously. In the first and each subsequent phase of data collection data analysis occurred to prepare for subsequent interviews and pre-understandings addressed during bridling. Prior to each interview session I would bridle about my wonderings or assumptions related to the phenomenon. For example, as I completed the first interview with Julia and prior to interviewing Nicole this was my bridling entry,

1-16-2017: I am preparing to interview the second participant. In this interview I want to focus on the participant describing more about what it is like to be IN the moment instead of discussing the way they feel and projecting that onto what is to come in the near future with Math Task 4. To help me stay curious about the moments that they are offering I’m going to try to keep the conversation to a minimum about what is to come and instead focus on what has already occurred. This interview will be slightly different in that this person will be able to speak from more than one day in the field and so the moments of this semester are already building. What I want to do in this interview is get the person
talking and then focus on prompts like: (a) can you describe for me…. (b) What was it like…. (c) I want you to go back to the moment… and (d) Tell me more about being…. Similarly, after conducting each interview, I bridled as soon as I was able to access my computer. Sometimes I bridled immediately following the interview in the space where I conducted the interview and sometimes I did so later. For instance, a bridling entry made on the same day following the interview with Nicole,

1-16-2017: Just finished the first interview with Nicole. Prior to reviewing the transcription I feel that I was a little more focused on trying to capture the details of the moments and not so much about what she was saying and lots of stuff was coming at me so quickly. I’m now questioning what do I take notes on to help me stay organized and not distract me from the quick stream of conversation being thrown at me. I do like how both interviews have run in a conversation format. Overall, from this interview the participant is feeling nervous, overwhelmed, a disruption, and does not like math. Her semester is already so consumed by edTPA that she has felt moments of guilt this week as she has entered into a new 1st grade classroom. Furthermore, this student will be participating in study abroad this semester and therefore will receive her scores while she is out of the country.

Once I had bridled pre and post interview I began transcribing immediately. Since 18 of the interviews were collected in a short time frame I had to quickly transcribe in order to prepare each protocol for the next interview session. To contextualize this process further I have included the bridling entry conducted after transcribing Nicole’s first interview,

1-16-2017: My thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon right now is this state of being overwhelmed that is accompanied by all of these feelings of students being nervous,
feeling guilty, being a classroom disruption, and introducing something that is so foreign to their CT. Teacher candidates are describing having to rely on their CTs and placement to be able to complete so many things that are about their own teaching that the result is being overwhelmed. It is like the Changing face of student teaching.

Bridling entries kept track of the things that might have gone unnoticed (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin, 2009) during initial data analysis and preparation of the next interview protocol.

At the end of each transcription, I bridled my thoughts about the phenomenon. Then I completed an initial read of the interview script. This initial read was uninterrupted and I used it to familiarize myself with the transcript. This step was adhering to the transcript in its entirety and allowed for a holistic perspective of the data (Vagle, 2014). After reading the transcription of Leslie’s first interview I bridled my thoughts,

1-22-2017: As I sat with the transcript and read words like, “nervous wreck, overwhelmed and confused,” I was shocked to find those words. I originally thought that she felt that edTPA was a positive situation for her. However, after I went back to her data she mentioned being undecided about her feelings and her conversation stemmed from talking about the relevance to her field placement.

After reading the interview through a shift in understanding Leslie’s lived experience occurred.

Next, I would return to the interview transcript and read through it again but this time I would pause to make notes in the column. Vagle (2014) describes this reading as the first line-by-line reading. During this reading a paper copy of the transcript was used to allow for the recording of handwritten notes. Some of the types of notes recorded in the margins were inquiries about missing details in the lived experience, comments about noticing’s of important meanings or highlighting specific quotes. Sometimes, I even turned to my bridling journal to track this
thinking. After my second read of the interview transcript I returned to my bridling journal to record how I came to the notes I made, that is noticing’s I had about the data related to this transcript or across other transcripts. This cycle of bridling, transcribing, initial read, second read or line-by-line reading while note taking, and then bridling prepared me for the next round of interviews with each participant. This cycle served as initial data analysis as well as preparation for follow-up questions for each subsequent interview (Vagle, 2014). Additionally, the continuation of this cycle of data collection and analysis happened until all of the 24 phenomenological interviews were collected.

Once data collection of the interviews had concluded all interview transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose as a means of managing the next phase of data analysis. During this phase, a detailed reading approach (van Manen, 2014) was employed for each transcript. Utilizing detailed reading, I reread every word, sentence, paragraph, to build understanding with how the phenomenon was revealing itself in the collection of lived experiences. At first I read each participants’ set of interview scripts. Next, the transcripts were read again but this time reading the interviews grouped in the sets that they were collected. For instance, reading the first interviews from all of the teacher candidates and then moving on to all of the second interviews and so on until completion all four rounds of interviews. At the conclusion of these readings, initial themes were identified for how the phenomenon was revealing itself. For example, one of the initial themes identified was, the newness of Math Task 4. Excerpts placed under this theme were related to teacher candidates’ lived experiences related to Math Task 4 being unfamiliar due to this being the second semester that edTPA was consequential for teacher candidates. In the excerpt below, Jessica was unable to elicit the purpose of edTPA from people in her field placement since school-based personnel had little to no understanding of edTPA. In a statement by Jessica she says,
“the biggest thing is, that we [school-based personnel and herself] didn’t understand the purpose of edTPA” (Interview 1, Line 176). Jessica felt the challenges of being pulled away from the student teaching experience in order to focus on edTPA, one of the requirements for her teaching certification.

In the next phase of analysis, still using Dedoose, but identifying parts became the focus. The initial themes were compared back to the whole. Meaning, a repeated reading through each participant’s transcript sets and bridling while reading. During this phase I attempted to “see something new or something in a new way rather than confirm what is already known” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 238). Therefore, I continually questioned how the phenomenon was appearing and what existed in the lived experiences that I had not noticed before. During this phase I also collected anecdotal notes on the variation in participants’ experiences to describe the individuality among participants. This phase allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the structure of the phenomenon. Initial selections of thematic statements, also referred to as interview quotes, supporting each theme and associated characteristic occurred.

When identifying the interview quotes I bridled through this process to remain oriented towards the phenomenon. This phase was a transition from Dedoose into individual Microsoft Word documents for each manifestation. I chose to remove the parts from Dedoose to facilitate a smoother management of the data excerpts. I composed a Word document for each of the five initial themes (e.g., navigating the requirements of Math Task 4, interacting with edTPA documents, juggling Math Task 4 in field placement, from relying on experts to standing alone, and edTPA scoring and feedback) which included excerpts from the interviews most depicting the meaning of that theme. This document helped to organize the associated characteristics. Further, I bridled about the meaning of each theme as it appeared through data analysis. The findings in
chapter 4 represent the final themes and associated characteristics of how the POI was revealing itself to teacher candidates working through Math Task 4.

Overall, Whole-Part-Whole analysis was guided by methodological recommendations from prominent phenomenological researchers (e.g., Dahlberg et al., 2008; van Manen, 2014; Vagle, 2014), as shown in Table 2.
### Table 2: Whole-Part-Whole description applied to data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole-Part-Whole stages</th>
<th>Application to this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1. The Initial Whole</td>
<td>A reading of each interviewed occurred after transcribing. Bridling occurred at the end of each reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2. Line-by-Line reading</td>
<td>A reading of each transcription occurred yet again. However, this time noticing’s and questions were recorded in the margins. At the completion of Line-by-Line reading the notes in the margins were reviewed to craft the follow-up questions for each participants’ next interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3. Detailed Reading Approach</td>
<td>During this step, using Dedoose, highlighting of particular quotes and memos were created electronically. Additionally, notes were manually recorded in the margins, such as noticing’s and questions. Also, the bridling journal was used to track the experience of each reading to support how the phenomenon was appearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Analysis of each participants set of interviews, from the first to the fourth transcript.</td>
<td>Analysis across participants’ interviews occurred to identify initial themes. At this point, the focus was on interpreting the meanings of the notes recorded in Step 1. Seven themes were identified (e.g., supports, lack of supports, responsibilities, Math Task 4, conflict between teacher preparation requirements and edTPA, Newness of Math Task 4, Scores). At the conclusion of this stage, the labeling of the phenomenon was beginning to become clearer and initial themes were present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Analysis of each set of interviews.</td>
<td>Analysis focused on the identification of participant quotes to support themes and major findings. At this point, some of the initial themes were now collapsed or renamed for clarity. The themes were finalized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4. Line-by-Line reading with a focus on the parts</td>
<td>Careful examination of the structure of the POI was created to organize findings. Themes, major findings, and supporting quotes were verified for interpreting the meaning of the POI as teacher candidates lived through Math Task 4.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trustworthiness

Careful consideration was given to trustworthiness in this phenomenological work. Elements that were most relevant from across three frameworks supporting phenomenological trustworthiness were selected.

Sustained engagement with the phenomenon. van Manen (1990) suggests turning to and sustaining a strong orientation toward the phenomenon. Earlier in this chapter, I described in depth how I oriented toward the POI through my lived experiences as a mathematics methods instructor introducing teacher candidates to Math Task 4. Further, in maintaining this orientation it was made mindful by keeping an open attitude through bridling (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Bridling was a process that enabled me to describe my orientation to the phenomenon as well as detail my methodological decisions and expand the wonderings or pre-understanding I had about the POI (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle et al., 2009). Bridling began prior to data collection and continued until the completion of writing this dissertation. Additionally, two of Vagle’s (2014) commitments to data analysis adhered to remaining engaged with the phenomenon under study. The first commitment describes adhering to the Whole-Part-Whole analysis process via the always ongoing and continuous scrutiny for how the phenomenon was revealing itself. Each part informed the next whole and each whole informed the next part. Complying with this commitment meant bridling before and after each interview, transcribing each interview immediately following the data collection, and analyzing the interview individually and across other interviews to prepare the protocol for the next interview. The second commitment was to focus on the intentional relationship between teacher candidates and Math Task 4. This meant recognizing the POI was the focus of the study and not the teacher candidate nor Math Task 4. Throughout
analysis, sustained engagement with the phenomenon was ensured through bridling and remaining committed to the Whole-Part-Whole analysis.

**Expert and peer reviewers.** Four reviewers, one peer and three experts, were consulted from project inception through completion. The peer reviewer assisted with questioning the researcher’s pre-understandings. Using both, bridling journal entries and excerpts of the data analysis process the peer reviewer was able to ground questions. Once the peer reviewer completed this reading, they met in person or via web-based call to question the researcher. This process allowed the researcher to not judge interpretations too quickly (van Manen, 2014). Also, expert reviewers were used to critically examine the interpretive process of the phenomenon. Expert reviewers answered methodological question that arose during this process. For instance, the naming of the phenomenon was a lengthy process and the experts continued to push the researcher’s pre-understandings of labeling the phenomenon using data as evidence. In particular, the phenomenon initially was labeled vagueness and an expert questioned the use of the word vagueness against data excerpts. The examination of the data with the experts’ support falsified the label of vagueness. All of the reviewers were used to examine the researchers pre-understanding and call them into question when studying the phenomenon.

**Theme validation.** Dahlberg et al. (2008) warns that all interpretations need to be supported by the data and if they are not then they need to be removed or critically examined. Theme validation occurred via verification and re-verification that major findings and quotes supported only the theme in which it was placed. Initially Word documents were created for each theme, major findings, and the inclusionary participant quotes. Then review across the documents occurred to ensure quotes were only used once to support major findings and the broader theme. Additionally, if a theme did not support the data during the verification process then a
decision was made to eliminate the theme, rename it to better support the data, or dispersed among other themes. The initial theme, newness of Math Task 4, did not hold up during theme verification since some of the quotes applied more broadly to another theme, from relying on experts to standing alone. Therefore, this initial theme became a major finding under the final theme, from relying on experts to standing alone, and was renamed, lack of knowledge: newness linked to cutting off experts. The renaming was due to better represent the data supporting this finding.

**Methodological log.** Separately from the bridling journal, which also contained methodological decisions, was a log detailing the decisions about data analysis and collection in its entirety. This log includes a description of how and why the decisions were made to inform data collection and analysis. Specifically, this log included how I was defining parts and whole in the Whole-Part-Whole analysis. This log provided clarity on previous steps taken and supported decisions in the next decision being made. Collectively, these efforts had the aim assuring trustworthiness.
4 RESULTS

In this chapter I will present my phenomenological themes that emerged from the whole part whole analysis to answer the following research question, what are the lived experiences of elementary teacher candidates when engaging in the processes of edTPA Math Task 4 during the student teaching semester? Each theme contains associated characteristics (van Manen, 1990). Together these themes and characteristics represent what it was like for teacher candidates to live through Math Task 4 during their student teaching semester. The three themes are (a) struggling to stabilize Math Task 4, (b) trying to find their fit in a dismantled hierarchy, and (c) teaching on demand. The POI was not studied removed from the context of the teacher preparation experience and therefore the context will be discussed briefly.

In this study teacher candidates were accustomed to relationships they had established in their teacher preparation program, which is typical of most teacher preparation programs across the U.S. The teacher candidate had relationships with various experts and typically communicated varying needs through a chain of command. For instance, the university instructor prepared and delivered coursework instruction while the university supervisor observed teacher candidates in their field placements and the CT worked with the teacher candidate to meet program experiences within their field placement classroom. This is only some of the established relationships that the teacher candidates experienced during their teacher preparation program yet, these are the relationships the teacher candidates in this study described the most across the findings. Moreover, teacher candidates had developed a sense of top down communication as they were working through Math Task 4. They were familiar with a type of hierarchical system within their teacher preparation experience. Now, in student teaching the hierarchical structure was feeling
different to the teacher candidates. Prior to student teaching teacher candidates were used to working towards carefully designed learning goals and meeting those goals. During the first three semesters of their teacher preparation program, if the teacher candidate struggled with meeting the intended goals they were able to work closely with the person who was supporting their learning. This support assisted to build an understanding of effective elementary teaching. However, the hierarchical structure that teacher candidates had come to find comfort in during their teacher preparation program, as well as the various relationships they had built, was disrupted during student teaching with the requirement of completing edTPA.

This study revealed that Math Task 4, and edTPA more broadly, had now been prioritized by the teacher candidates as the top of their mentally constructed hierarchy. Teacher candidates now claimed Math Task 4 required something of them yet, they were no longer capable of communicating with the top of the hierarchy for support as they had previously. They noticed a change to the relationships they had formed. Additionally, they now had to figure out where they fit into this new hierarchy. edTPA had dismantled the hierarchy they had become familiar with during the first three semesters of their teacher preparation program during their student teaching semester. Teacher candidates struggled to find stability in order to successfully complete the assessment requirements. Finally, they found themselves feeling pressured to take action amongst the uncertainty of their new role. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss three phenomenological themes, (a) Struggling to stabilize Math Task 4, (b) Trying to find their fit in a dismantled hierarchy, and (c) Regardless of fit claiming certainty. Also, within each theme variations of the associated characteristics will be discussed. These characteristics are used to represent the structure of the POI in this study. In order to organize the themes and associated characteristics thematic statements, interview quotes, were selected during data analysis which best represent the
pattern of the structure that defines the POI in this study (van Manen, 1990). Additionally, bridling entries will be used to support interpretations and descriptions of the themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Three Themes and Associated Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling to Stabilize Math Task 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to Find Their Fit in a Dismantled Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching on Demand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My overall aim in this phenomenological study was to reveal and interpret teacher candidates’ lived experiences while working through Math Task 4.

Description of Participants

In this section, pseudonyms are used to provide descriptions of the study participants, with the purpose of illuminating variation among the participants. The details included in the descriptions were gathered from the participants during the interviews. In some instances, conversations were pieced together for clarity. For example, a teacher candidate may have described an event but in order to understand the significance of the event in relation to the study, additional details from another conversation were needed. It is important to note all teacher candidates enrolled in this study successfully completed degree requirements, including passing edTPA and receiving teacher certification from the state, and graduated at the end of their student teaching semester.
Julia. She recalled being given the opportunity to make requests about her student teaching placement and immediately thought of her CT. She had previously interned with her CT and believed her knowledge about, and instructional approach to elementary mathematics, were good. Julia shared in the first interview that her CT attended practitioner-based mathematics conferences and was viewed as a leader of mathematics in her school. Julia did not feel confident in teaching elementary mathematics nor completing Math Task 4. Her decision about her CT request for student teaching resided in selecting a CT who she felt was good at mathematics and could support her in completing Math Task 4. Julia’s request was honored, and she was placed in a first-grade classroom with the CT of her choice. Julia had no previous experience with the first grade students in her placement.

Nicole. She was returning to the elementary school where she had interned prior to student teaching. She had experience working within the context of the school but not within the first grade classroom where she was placed for student teaching. As a part of student teaching, Nicole had applied, and been accepted, to participate in a study abroad opportunity. This opportunity took place in the final weeks of her student teaching semester. Nicole explained in our interviews that she felt the need to complete everything within the strict timelines given to her by her teacher preparation program since she was committed to studying abroad. She described that a requirement of the study abroad program is teacher candidates must submit all final edTPA documents to Pearson for scoring prior to leaving. During Nicole’s student teaching experience, she described challenges with inclement weather, the elementary school’s schedule, and her own personal illness causing difficulties with adhering to the timeline. Moreover, Nicole reported that her CT was adamant about following the school’s schedule of Monday through Thursday providing instructional time and Friday being reserved for assessment. She described the demands
coming from her field placement, teacher preparation program, and study abroad requirements felt as if multiple bosses had been inserted into her student teaching semester and she had to learn to please each one, sometimes simultaneously.

Leslie. She transferred to this university because she felt that the teacher preparation program she had chosen was of superior quality. She shared in her interviews that she was aspiring to continue into a graduate program and that it would be important for her to attend a high caliber undergraduate program as well as successfully complete the program. Leslie chose to remain with her CT she interned with preceding student teaching. Her request was granted, and she completed student teaching in a classroom where she was familiar with the CT and students. Additionally, Leslie’s fourth grade placement was an inclusive classroom. Therefore, Leslie had experiences in co-teaching and working with special education and general education students within one classroom. Leslie described herself as a person who always did well in school. Leslie felt that demonstrating her ability to complete Math Task 4 in the upper grades would highlight the depth of her mathematical knowledge. Further, Leslie also felt that she was a passive person and sometimes struggled with initiating conversations about Math Task 4 with her CT.

Jessica. She described herself as always wanting to be a teacher because of experiences she shared with family members growing up. In particular, her mom was a teacher, and she always admired her proficiency in the profession. Especially when Jessica observed her mother during her own elementary schooling experience. Jessica chose to be in a kindergarten placement. She described her field placement as an environment that was similar to her own elementary school. Jessica felt that her elementary school had many resources to support successful implementation of elementary mathematics curriculum. However, Jessica felt that her CT was not like the educators she aspired to be in the future. Jessica shared in an interview that she was not
able to consult with her CT about lesson planning since she, the CT, did not create lesson plans herself. Jessica explained in her interviews that she was provided with the freedom to plan and implement mathematics curriculum using any classroom supplies needed. Further, Jessica reported that she had expressed interest to administrators at the school site about a future teaching position and was eager to perform well.

**Rebecca.** She completed a study abroad experience at the end of her student teaching semester. Rebecca mentioned the weight of trying to follow the teacher preparation program timeline had caused her to fall behind during the process of Math Task 4. She mentioned using previous coursework materials to prepare and implement instruction. Rebecca was placed in a first grade classroom and felt that the curriculum aligned well with what she needed to teach for Math Task 4. Rebecca described herself as a perfectionist who did not like to submit incomplete or low-quality work. The pacing of the student teaching semester timeline caused her to feel overwhelmed and anxious. Rebecca reported that her supervisor surprised her during the day at her field placement and gave her the opportunity to explain herself and time-related problems. Rebecca described how she was working toward completion but did not have enough time between school and personal obligations to finalize assignments. Her supervisor stressed the importance of forcing the time and the need to begin completing assignments. Rebecca felt that her supervisor’s intervention motivated her to begin submitting assignments. Rebecca described the hesitation to submit was because she did not feel that she had the same resources in student teaching as she did in her teacher preparation program.

**Stacey.** She described the responsibility of completing edTPA during student teaching impacted the requests she made for her student teaching choice during student teaching. Stacey wanted to be familiar with the field placement, CT, and students during her student teaching
semester. Therefore, Stacey chose to stay in the same placement preceding her student teaching experience. Stacey reported that she was naturally a self-confident person and was shocked at finding herself in doubt about how edTPA scorers would perceive her teaching. Stacey described noticeable changes to herself during the completion of edTPA. She described how she became very protective over her computer, which contained all her files for edTPA. Moreover, she had to implement mathematics instruction that was different from the norm in her field placement. She described that her CT did not understand Math Task 4, nor did Stacey feel that she could describe it well enough to her. Therefore, her CT gave Stacey permission to teach the first 10-15 minutes of mathematics class until she had accomplished the requirements of edTPA. Stacey questioned the quality of her instruction given the constraints.

The participant descriptions above are intended to highlight the individuality of the teacher candidates as well as the variations among participants (Dahlberg et al. 2008). In the sections that follow the descriptions will be referenced as necessary to contextualize the data. Also, since teacher candidates’ lived experience of Math Task 4 was in the midst of the broader assessment of edTPA sometimes they could not separate the two because it was all embedded. Consequently, when a reference is made to the broader assessment of edTPA it will be mentioned to provide clarity.

**Struggling to Stabilize Math Task 4**

During the student teaching semester teacher candidates prioritized Math Task 4 as the arbiter of effective mathematics teaching. As teacher candidates began and worked through Math Task 4 they shared experiences that related to feeling like Math Task 4 had caught them in a conversation with themselves. This was not a choice they were able to make but they knew it was required for them to become an elementary teacher. The struggle that occurred for these teacher
candidates was in their hesitation and what they felt was their distractions from student teaching. For example, amid collecting the first interviews I began to bridle about the idea of edTPA pushing teacher candidates out of their student teaching experience. This was different from the experience during their previous semester in completing the simulated Math Task 4 assignment. The teacher candidates were describing an experience which was more than testing anxiety. The teacher candidates felt that they had an awareness about Math Task 4 but now they were having to enact the assessment. This enactment was about taking on the independence to be an effective mathematics teacher but, they were still unsure of the protocol to follow in this new hierarchy.

**Being caught in a one-sided conversation.** Four teacher candidates found themselves amid a one-sided conversation with edTPA. They were building familiarity with Math Task 4 and found themselves asking questions or making claims about who the beholder of the information was, as well as expressing their need for support. For instance, during the first interview Julia was describing how she was uneasy about completing Math Task 4 during her student teaching semester. She explained how this feeling had been with her while completing university coursework. Since the rubric provided in her mathematics methods course for the simulated Math Task 4 assignment was different than Math Task 4 Julia’s uneasiness sustained. Additionally, she had to complete the commentary which, had a specific type of language she needed to interpret. Julia explained,

> There was just certain language in the commentary, and I was just like “what does it really want from me? And what does it mean [to] cite from a work sample?” (Interview 1, Line 122).

As the interviews continued, Julia continued to find herself trying to converse with edTPA to find solutions to her problems. During the third interview Julia was describing how edTPA was
unlike any other assessment. When asking her the following interview question, “Have you ever started another assessment where you didn’t have the ‘let me show you’? Have you ever gone through an assessment like this before?” (Interview 3, Lines 481-482) Julia responded,

I am like, ‘can you please give me explicit instruction? Can you please tell me what exactly you want like what exactly should I be doing?’ You can’t get that with edTPA and so that is another reason that I am not confident (Interview 3, Lines 483-484).

Julia had hesitations as she inquired about the exact expectations of Math Task 4. She was curious about the meaning of the language in the MAC and she questioned how to accurately write a response. In the third interview, Julia had admitted to losing confidence in her ability to successfully complete the Math Task 4 assessment. This feeling stemmed from not being able to acquire the explicit direction from edTPA she felt she needed. Julia’s experience illustrates how she relied on edTPA to direct what she should be doing to complete Math Task 4. The teacher candidate wanted to hear straight from the top, edTPA When she did not have the response that she desired she began to doubt her abilities in completing Math Task 4. This response, as well as some of the others below, were not always logical and grounded in what they had previously learned in coursework or seminars. For example, at the time of the third interview when Julia was losing confidence in completing Math Task 4, previous experiences such as, the completion of the simulated Math Task 4 assignment and a Math Task 4 student teaching seminar, should have offered her references to support her thinking. However, she did not reference the use of either.

Nicole’s experience of being caught in a one-sided conversation left her with the impression that she was performing for a judge. She found herself in a situation where she felt the need to inquire about a situation that did not occur during her simulated Math Task 4 assignment.
Nicole felt the pressure from the judgment coupled with the stress of a slightly different scenario occurring. Nicole claimed,

   It [the MAC] was difficult. It was kind of like they got all this edTPA judging. It was like use your best judgement, but it was very hard because I am like, ‘you [the elementary student] know it, but you didn’t show it, so I can’t give you credit for something that you know, and you couldn’t show’ (Interview 3, Lines 248-249).

Nicole felt that her students had more knowledge than what she was able to share with edTPA. She found it challenging to use her own judgement when she ultimately was not the one making the final decision about what to include. She pinpointed a problem with responding to the constraints of the prompt but, could not receive feedback on what to do from the creator of the prompt. The lack of being able to resolve her inconsistency led to her questioning what snapshot of the event she should be submitting to the scorer.

   On the other hand, Jessica found herself feeling the MAC, for Math Task 4 provided by edTPA, was clear in describing the expectations of what the prompt was asking. Jessica found herself in a one-sided conversation as she began to work through what the contents of her response should include. When Jessica was preparing her final responses, she found herself questioning exactly how to fit that to the expectation of the remote edTPA scorer. When I asked Jessica this follow-up interview question, “You were writing to the prompts because with the math you said, ‘it was very specific to the prompt.” She responded with,

   The prompts they were very straight forward. Yes, the questions were straight forward in the sense that, well maybe not straight forward, well they were straight forward in the sense that you read them, and you generally knew. You were like, ‘okay I am going to include this this and this.’ But, you just didn’t know if the format of your answer or how
you answered it was what they [edTPA scorers] were looking for… ‘it is a fooler, it is really confusing’ (Interview 4, Lines 373-376).

Jessica viewed the generalities of the MAC as understandable. However, she encountered the one-sided conversation when she was deciding what she was going to include and the accuracy of her response. She also did feel these questions were never fully answered by edTPA. She found herself still in this dialogue after receiving the final score. For instance,

They [edTPA Scorer] didn’t provide feedback and all they did was match it with the category appropriate rubric. I didn’t really understand the description in the rubric in the first place. It is still kind of hard to understand (Jessica, Interview 4, Lines 275-276).

Jessica was disappointed that she was left with a lack of response from edTPA during and even after she had completed the assessment. She felt she understood the prompts and tried to prepare a written description which best aligned with the expectations. Additionally, Jessica felt that she was good at writing. In the end Jessica was disappointed in the results of her score. Jessica was caught in the one-sided conversation from the inception of Math Task 4 all the way through receiving her final score.

Stacey described her one-sided conversation as a questioning of what to leave out since the template provided for lesson planning in Math Task 4 was divided into blank boxes. This was a foreign template for planning. Stacey’s teacher preparation program expected her to describe specific aspects of her teaching across several boxes, with prompts, for one lesson. Stacey had built familiarity in preparing a detailed lesson plan spanning several pages. The Math Task 4 lesson segment template was much more concise, and only afforded teacher candidates with a two-page minimum for all of the Math Task 4 lessons. Stacey found herself caught in a one-sided conversation. Stacey said,
I’m like edTPA Math [Task 4] they aren’t seeing that. They are not able to see that I am able to plan this stuff out. They don’t even know what it looks like because they didn’t even ask. They just gave you a box (Interview 4, Lines 279-280).

For Stacey she felt unsure about exactly what to include and since she could not find the answer from edTPA she consulted other resources. She claimed,

A lot of it, just not understanding it. I was just like ‘what do you guys want?’ Then you get on Google to try and figure it out (Interview 4, Line 524).

Stacey felt limited in the resources she had available to her since Math Task 4 was a part of an assessment. She consulted the internet frequently. Another resource was her mother. Stacey confided in her mother throughout her completion of edTPA. Stacey recalled how this did not provide her comfort,

My mom is telling me, ‘you fine baby, it’s fine,’ and I am like, ‘girl are you an edTPA grader? No okay.’ugh.” (Interview 4, Line 174)

Stacey found herself pleading in her one-sided conversation for edTPA to interpret her writing as an effective teacher of mathematics. She explained,

I hope they [edTPA scorer] can see how I tied that in there, that is pretty good you know. I don’t know…They may not be able to see the teacher decisions. They may not recognize all of this (Interview 3, Lines 277-278).

She continued in the fourth interview with her plea to the edTPA scorer. Stacey felt that her vocabulary was limited yet, she was confident in her ability to teach. Stacey stated,

I felt really good after [teaching] the [Math Task 4] lesson plans. Writing about lesson plans or writing about how I did this or this I am just like ‘can’t you watch [a] video to see how I did that and that? Do I really need to say that?’ I don’t know how to put that
[teaching] in words like my vocabulary is not large enough to put that into words (Stacey, Interview 4, Lines 526-528).

Overall, all of these teacher candidates found themselves in a dialogue with edTPA about Math Task 4. Being caught in a one-sided conversation seemed to occur when they felt they were inadequate with their own abilities and they needed additional support. However, since Math Task 4 was given the priority and the dialogue was with the requirements of Math Task 4, they felt the lack of response. All of the teacher candidates had questions about what they should do and had an eagerness to be accurate. These conversations left teacher candidates feeling like they had unresolved issues. edTPA was requiring Math Task 4 of them and not responding to what they needed. For some, such as Julia, it shook her confidence while others, such as Jessica, were disappointed. Also, Stacey decided to seek support through supports that had not been recommended by the teacher preparation program or edTPA, she relied on Google. All of the teacher candidates described how edTPA was the responsible party for not answering their questions as well as determining their final outcome. The lack of not being able to be in dialogue with the top of the hierarchy, edTPA, created a sense of uncertainty in teacher candidates.

Uncertainty found in not being able to converse. Teacher candidates remained in this one-sided conversation throughout completing Math Task 4. However, since they had not experienced a time of engaging in a teaching event where they did not have the support of an experienced individual, such as their CT or university supervisor, variations of being uncertain appeared. Four of the teacher candidates recalled experiences where they felt uncertain completing Math Task 4.
Leslie’s uncertainty about what to include her lesson segment template and not being able to resolve her uncertainties triggered her to have anxious feelings about completing the planning template for Math Task 4. Leslie recalled,

I was kind of unclear of it [lesson segment template] at first. I really didn’t [understand] the lesson plan template. I really struggled with the lesson plan template. I was like, ‘I don’t get this, why is it so short? What does it even want me to put in the little [box]?’ I didn’t get it, so I dreaded that (Interview 1, Lines 213-214).

The uncertainty of what to do with the Math Task 4 lesson segment template carried over as she worked through the MAC. She continued to question the language in the prompts as well as the response that best fit the language edTPA used. For instance,

I didn’t know what they wanted me to talk about since it says the assessment learning objectives and not the entire weeks learning objectives. I wasn’t sure if they wanted me to include that subtraction goal as well, so I decided basically to just say more than less (Interview 3, Lines 175-176).

Finally, Leslie admitted that even though she had uncertainties about what to do with Math Task 4, she did feel the most comfortable in completing this part of the assessment. Since she had the most practice in her teacher preparation program with Math Task 4 she was comforted by the familiarity. However, she was shocked to learn that her final score did not mimic her comfort.

Leslie stated,

I got all threes in math and that was the only one [task] that I got all threes on. With everything else I got at least one 4. That definitely surprised me because I felt the most comfortable doing math (Leslie, Interview 4, Lines 18-19).
Leslie felt uncertainties across the interviews. Initially, she was anxious about what to do, then she decided she should include more information in the MAC. This was her attempt to meet the expectations of the prompt. She found comfort in producing a solution to her struggle. Finding comfort during her uncertainty was a way to lessen the anxiousness of Math Task 4 yet, she was left with being shocked by her final results since they were less than what she preferred.

Jessica found herself in uncertain feelings as she attempted to interpret the ambiguous rubrics, felt anxious about the final scoring outcome, and these feelings overwhelmed her from the initial introduction to edTPA. Jessica’s uncertainty with edTPA began with her initial introduction to the assessment during university coursework. She recalled,

She [university instructor] handed us a giant packet on edTPA. It was confusing to everyone. Honestly, I think everyone in my cohort went home and cried that night. We were like, ‘what is this? I don’t know what to do (Interview 1, Lines 21-22).

Jessica became consumed by edTPA all at once. The overwhelming amount of information coupled with the uncertainty manifested in a physical reaction, which was crying. During the last interview, Jessica recalled her experience during student teaching as one that felt like completing a pre-determined checklist. However, the anxiousness about the final outcome still resided in her since she doubted the accuracy of her abilities to complete the checklist. She recalled,

I was able to you know check off all of the things that I had done. I was still following along with the timeline, and so I was happy with my work. But there was still this impending fear that I just didn’t know what was going to happen as far as scoring (Interview 4, Lines 178-179).
As Jessica received her final score she describes how the uncertainty of Math Task 4 remained. She described how difficult it is to interpret her score due to the ambiguity of the rubric. She explained,

The description it is very vague. For rubric 16 it just says, ‘candidate identifies and explicitly connects patterns of learning to conceptual understanding and procedural fluency or mathematical reasoning/problem solving.’ Which is essentially, I mean if you would of looked at the rubric, that is what it would have said under 4 for that part. So, it is not super specific (Interview 4, Lines 36-37).

Jessica’s uncertainty about edTPA appeared during her university coursework and pursued through the final reporting of her score. She questioned her ability to be accurate and then she was uncertain of how to interpret her final score. She wanted clarity in the scoring procedure in hopes of improving her teaching.

Stacey’s uncertainties were about terms used in Math Task 4 as well as Math Task 4 expectations and the contents of the rubrics. In the second interview Stacey was planning her Math Task 4 lessons and defining the evaluation criteria for the mathematics lessons. Stacey began questioning the specifics of what needed to be included in the criteria, she stated, “They have to be flexible? I don’t know. Now, I need to go home and read the handbook” (Interview 2, Line 100). Additionally, Stacey was uncertain about a specific word that edTPA used and she admitted to not being knowledgeable enough to solve the problem on her own. She explained,

There was one term in there that I just did not understand what they meant. I didn’t know. It was unfamiliar for me, and I had to Google it. I just didn’t know what they were asking (Interview 4, Lines 78-79).
Stacey began to use the strategy of relying on Google to resolve the uncertainties she experienced with Math Task 4. Stacey also described how uncertain she was about the scoring process as she was working through Math Task 4 and interpreting the final results. During the Math Task 4 assessment she was not able to make sense of what part of the task correlated with the language in the rubric and therefore she decided to ignore the rubrics in supporting her through Math Task 4. Stacey explained,

Most of the rubrics well they only tell you what [to include]. Like this rubric lines up with what? I need it to be very explicit. I need it to say for lesson segment look at rubric number blah (Interview 3, Lines 327-328).

After she received her final score she was still uncertain about the rubric. However, since she had passed edTPA she was not concerned with the uncertainty any longer. She stated, “I don’t even know what that four means, I don’t. I don’t even care what it means” (Interview 4, Line 339).

Overall, Stacey’s uncertainty was different from how Jessica experienced the uncertain feelings. As she worked through Math Task 4, and found uncertainty, she realized that she needed a solution. After she received her final score Stacey was no longer concerned that she still was uncertain about the scoring procedure. Stacey was just relieved that she had passed edTPA.

Nicole’s uncertainty was heightened when she did not receive the guidance she felt she needed to complete a requirement of Math Task 4. Nicole recognized that she had a network of professionals that could have been a benefit to her but, they had not experienced edTPA themselves. The lack of inexperience caused an unanticipated challenge for them to support Nicole through the specifics of the edTPA process. Nicole explained,

A lot of people know what you are supposed to do, but don’t necessarily know how it is supposed to be executed. They understand what we need to do and what we turn in, but
they don’t understand the process and how to do it, because a lot of them haven’t gone through it (Interview 4, Lines 98-99).

For Nicole the lack of inexperience in completing the actual assessment caused her to question the authenticity of offering her the type of support she was seeking. As Nicole worked through the specifics of Math Task 4 she was familiar with some of the requirements yet, it did not alleviate the uncertainty. She stated,

> edTPA math we have to summarize everything, like all the scores in one chart. I realized I can’t give all of the students’ different assessments because I can’t then put it in their [edTPA] little chart. So that makes it harder to differentiate (Interview 2, Lines 142-144).

Nicole had learned how to differentiate mathematics instruction in her teacher preparation program. She struggled with conforming her idea of effective mathematics teaching into the edTPA template for Math Task 4. Also, the scoring process and scoring report created uncertainty for Nicole. She shared in the final interview that she knew she had not done her best because she could not interpret the rubrics. She said, “I felt that there were certain parts that I knew that I didn’t do well. And a lot of it was just that I didn’t understand the rubric fully because the rubric goes very vague” (Interview 4, Line 118). Nicole was aware of her shortcomings she was experiencing during the completion of Math Task 4 materials. However, she did not know how to navigate her shortcomings to inhibit a negative impact on her final score. Moreover, once she received her final score she felt the grader had read her portfolio. Unfortunately, she was not able to interpret the rubrics originally and did not receive more specific feedback. She was still uncertain about the scoring procedures and how it related to her teaching performance. She explained,

> I definitely think that they read through and gave me like notes on what I did, but it was frustrating because I didn’t know. Like for one of my examples I got a three out of five
for rubric 16 and then it says, ‘candidate identifies what students did right and wrong related to conceptual understanding/ procedural fluency and math reasoning and problem solving’ but I don’t know why I didn’t get those extra two [points]. It kind of doesn’t tell me, it told me what I did (Interview 4, Lines 84-85).

Uncertainty appeared within all four of these teacher candidates’ experiences of completing Math Task 4. However, within this uncertainty there were variations. Some teacher candidates experienced anxiousness, while another teacher candidate strategized how to overcome the uncertainty during the assessment, and then after the final score reporting a sense of no longer being disturbed by the existence of the uncertainty emerged. As teacher candidates processed the one-sided conversation they felt trapped in, feelings of uncertainty became heightened. During the bridling after each interview transcript a pattern of uncertainty emerged in the responses from the teacher candidates. For example,

[bridling entry 8-18] Throughout was this feeling of uncertainty or as one teacher candidate says, “iffy”. They don’t see edTPA being realistic for the everyday classroom. They describe their CT as very open and helpful yet lacking in knowledge relevant to Math Task 4. Therefore, the teacher candidate is left to figure out how to fit all of their teaching moments into edTPA while they don’t understand what that means…

Teacher candidates referred to uncertainty through many different terms. They also experienced uncertainty in many different ways. However, teacher candidates all had a heightened feeling of uncertainty as they were working through Math Task 4 and felt themselves questioning what they should be doing to accurately complete the assessment. As teacher candidates struggled with feelings of uncertainty about Math Task 4 they also responded.
**Responding to self.** As teacher candidates remained in a one-sided conversation with themselves they also responded to themselves. This response was a way to push through the uncertainty they were feeling. All six of the teacher candidates inferred some sort of meaning about Math Task 4. To mention a few some of the teacher candidates referenced their previous coursework experiences, others described their perceptions, and some explained their experience with requirements. Interestingly, just as they found themselves caught in a one-sided conversation that was not always logical their responses were sometimes illogical as well. The response was in fact not always methodical, but they felt they were under pressure to successfully complete Math Task 4, and within a constrained timeline.

Rebecca’s response was about her experiences with the MAC which she had a challenging time completing. The MAC allows for teacher candidates responses to be no more than 8-single spaced pages. Rebecca recalled, “I didn’t know anybody that had a hard time staying within the page limits. I think that most of us were trying to get to that page limit” (Interview 4, Line 227). She felt that she had to stretch her thinking in order to compile enough information to work toward this goal. Therefore, she did not feel the page limit was a restriction. Instead of feeling constrained Rebecca saw it as a goal of the task. Additionally, she felt the commentary was very redundant and exhausted her mental capacity. She stated,

By the end of the commentary you were done you were like burned out. You had already said it so many times and you were just like ‘I mean I already said it just refer to the other [prompts].’ It was just yeah very repetitive (Interview 4, Lines 97-98).

Rebecca’s response to her work with the MAC was about the challenges she faced in meeting the page requirements and maintaining her stamina to think critically. Additionally, Rebecca was responding about the experience of completing one of the Math Task 4 templates.
Stacey’s response was also in relation to the edTPA documents, the Math Task 4 lesson segment template, and the MAC. Stacey did not feel like the documents were conducive to the way she anticipated representing her teaching. She described the Math Task 4 lesson segment template,

“It felt empty, it is still a little empty. Honestly, I started getting scared because like I’m already at 2 pages. I know it can’t go over two pages. I was just like, ‘ohhhh is this the right font? Oh yes, it is and I’m still out of space.’” (Interview 2, Line 235)

The Math Task 4 lesson segment template felt very restrictive due to the page limit restrictions as well as the formatting. Stacey also had difficulties when working through the MAC. Stacey did not describe the same reservation as she did with the Math Task 4 lesson segment template although she did have similar feelings. For instance she said,

“It is very sterile, and it has the letterhead of edTPA. Then like even the way you label it is so particular. You have to say, task 1 part C evaluation criteria” (Interview 4, Line 412).

Stacey’s reactions to the edTPA documents showed how nerve-racking it was for her to work through these official forms.

Leslie also had concerns about the edTPA documents. Leslie, similar to Stacey, felt restricted by the page limit requirement for the Math Task 4 lesson segment template. Leslie knew that she typically well exceeded that page limit for one lesson and was puzzled by how she was going to incorporate four lessons into 2-single spaced pages. She explained, “I’m still really worried about making that lesson plan be two pages for 4 days. When my 1-day or my 30-minute lesson plans have been like five pages” (Interview 1, Lines 224-225). During her mathematics methods course Leslie explained that she was able to fit her lessons into the lesson segment
template. However, the simulated Math Task 4 assignment only had two lessons as opposed to the three to five she was now having to incorporate. Leslie also shared about her experience with the MAC, like both teacher candidates above, Leslie felt completing the document was overwhelming. She said,

It [the MAC] was stressful it just depended on the question. Some questions that were asked, I could have just gone on and on. Some questions that were asked, I didn’t even know where to begin. I was just like ‘what do they want?’ And the questions were so repetitive (Interview 4, Lines 259-260).

In addition to being anxious about the conciseness and accuracy of her responses Leslie also evaluated the usefulness of the edTPA handbook. She described using the handbook as a resource. The first component of this resource she described was the index which she used to clarify ambiguous language in Math Task 4. She said,

There is an index in the back of the handbook of all the definitions that define their [edTPA] language…That handbook has a ton of information on what you should do from page one, so I used that some (Interview 4, Lines 322-324).

The other component was the rubrics. She attempted to use the rubrics to clarify her thinking, yet she was unsuccessful in interpreting them. She said, “I referred to the rubrics also because I wanted to see if there was anything about that in there, but it wasn’t really specific” (Interview 3, Lines 141-142). Leslie’s response to herself included being overwhelmed by the completion of the edTPA templates. She felt that she was only able to use the edTPA Handbook for the index.

Jessica, similarly to the experiences shared above, felt having to respond to Math Task 4 was particular and required careful examination. Jessica said,
I know their picky on formatting. I know their picky on like they are all looking for specific things. So, that is why I am like I don’t want to leave anything out. Because I just want to make sure that I include every single one of those things that I know that they are going to be looking for with a magnifying glass (Interview 3, Lines 389-391).

Jessica felt that she had to be very detailed about what she included. Specifically, she had to be sure to include the details important to edTPA. She felt that her assessment was going to be scrutinized by the edTPA scorers. Jessica felt she needed to try to include any detail she could deem important to edTPA, in hopes of earning a passing score.

In a slightly different experience Julia recalls how she found herself trying to converse with others about a response she had crafted to a MAC prompt. Through conversation with her peers Julia recognized an error in her thinking that she had contrived about a term and she used that working definition to complete edTPA templates. She and a group of peers met to edit each other’s work and share questions they still had about completing edTPA. Julia found herself in a conversation with a few peers, she said,

It is not how I interpreted it. They [her peers] were all like, ‘that is not how I interpreted it’…I looked it up in the handbook and it was talking about skills that relate to what you are learning. I was like ‘ohhhh okay,’ and I was like, ‘thank goodness that I asked you guys’ (Interview 4, Lines 144-146).

Julia was grateful that she had chosen to meet with her peers and discuss a difficulty she was having with Math Task 4. After consulting her peers and the handbook she realized her error and was able to correct her mistake prior to submission. Julia was relieved that she had found external conversation to correct the misconception she had developed. Julia also recalled another time when she responded to herself and experienced relief. Julia recalled receiving her final score, “I
clicked the PDF in the email and it was right there. I was like oh okay, so I was just like ugh I passed that is it. That is all I needed to see is that I passed” (Interview 4, Line 157). For Julia the particulars of the score report was irrelevant. She found relief in the fact that she had passed edTPA. Julia being able to share her response with others provided a different answer than the one she had on her own. Also, Julia had convinced herself that the only thing she needed from edTPA was to see a passing score. Both of these experiences ultimately ended in a sense of relief. She was relieved to have caught her misconception and she was relieved to learn she had passed the assessment. Her responses were not fulfilling types of relief. They were the type of relief you feel after the pressure has lessened or been removed.

Nicole’s responses were moments of being overwhelmed by the technical language found in the edTPA documents and support materials. Additionally, the necessity of formatting her own experiences within the expectations of the edTPA documents we a part of the overwhelmed responses she created. In the first interview she recalled, “Overwhelming because it is like very official words and very like specific vocabulary. I’m like, ‘I need this dumbed down to college student words.’ So, it was a little overwhelming” (Interview 1, Lines 580-581). She felt that the wording and style of the document was off putting and left her feeling inadequate about completing the templates. Similarly, Nicole did not feel any more comforted by the edTPA handbook. Nicole attempted to use the edTPA handbook yet, she did not find the organization to be convenient for her needs. She explained,

The edTPA handbook, I like it, but I hate it because it is not organized. It is not setup where it is like [edTPA Task] 1,2,3,4. It splits it up where there is like an overview of like [Tasks] 1-4 and then rubrics for 1-4 and then like requirements or something. Cause it is
like I went to one table that referred me to another table and that referred me back to that table (Interview 3, Lines 280-282).

While Nicole appreciated the information provided in the edTPA handbook she was not able to easily access the information and was also confused when she found a typo. Nicole focused on this typo and it created uncertainty in her understanding of an edTPA requirement. Finally, the Math Task 4 lesson segment template did not allow Nicole to demonstrate the complexity of the differentiation she had planned for her Math Task 4 lessons. She shared, “I am looking to the differentiation for the students that need it. I realize that on...our template for planning doesn’t have that for edTPA” (Nicole, Interview 2, Lines 135-136). Nicole was overwhelmed, and she found a problem in the edTPA handbook. She expressed how this created more uncertainty for her. Nicole’s responses to herself created more insecurities than solutions to the uncertainty she was already experiencing.

Teacher candidates’ responses to the one-sided conversation they found themselves apart of stemmed from several needs. First, teacher candidates were justifying the details of the requirements in the best way they could. They were overwhelmed by the formatting and contents of the edTPA documents. Additionally, one teacher candidate, Julia, experienced moments of relief after experiencing stressful situations. Teacher candidates completing Math Task 4 found themselves needing support from a more experienced person which was a part of the hierarchical structure that they were used to in their teacher preparation program. Instead, they found themselves unable to find stability as well as experiencing hesitations throughout Math Task 4. They struggled to create some form of stability in this new hierarchical structure they found in student teaching. When they reached out to seek advice they found themselves questioning the process and no one from the top responded to their questions. They did not have the affirmation of what
it meant to be successful, nor could they decipher the grading system to determine the quality of their own work. This left teacher candidates feeling uncertain about their decisions along with feeling under pressure and overwhelmed. As teacher candidates began to infer meaning from edTPA materials they began to respond to themselves in a way that gave them a solution for completing the task. However, this response was still not adequate, and they still questioned if it was acceptable for the person, the edTPA scorer or edTPA, at the top of the hierarchy.

**Trying to Find Their Fit in a Dismantled Hierarchy**

Teacher candidates were introduced to Math Task 4 during their university coursework. One introduction was through a simulated Math Task 4 assignment at the end of their second methods course. During this assignment teacher candidates were provided with explicit instruction about the contents of this assignment. Also during this time, if the teacher candidates experienced any sort of confusion they could consult with the university instructor. As a part of the simulated Math Task 4 assignment teacher candidates were required to read the edTPA handbook to build familiarity with Math Task 4. Another component provided teacher candidates with the opportunity to implement university coursework into their field placements. Teacher candidates planned mathematics lessons for 2 sequential days with the support of their CT and university instructor. Since teacher candidates are only in their field experience for 2 days during this part of the teacher preparation program their time was more restricted in the field than during student teaching. Prior to their student teaching semester, they were introduced to Math Task 4 within the hierarchical structure of support they had come to know and understand in their teacher preparation program. They had built a relationship with the university instructor as well as their CT. Teacher candidates consulted the university instructor and/or their CT when they
faced challenges with the simulated Math Task 4 assignment. In return they were met with feedback that supported them in deciding their next step.

During student teaching the relationships they had formed and the hierarchy they previously understood were dismantled by Math Task 4. They now had to figure out how to navigate the requirements of Math Task 4. Teacher candidates found themselves negotiating their shifting role as student teacher and effective mathematics teacher. Bridling allowed me to recognize that teacher candidates were experiencing more than just being overwhelmed by the assessment. For example,

[Bridling entry 9-22] Math Task 4 appears to be looming over teacher candidates. They feel like they are in a haze to complete edTPA requirements and they are overloaded by having to make so many decisions.

Having to make many decisions about planning and implementing mathematics curriculum in the elementary classroom, as well as adhering to the requirements of Math Task 4, had teacher candidates questioning where they fit in the hierarchical structure. They were now taking on responsibilities of teaching in a way they had not prior to their student teaching experience.

**Finding support during Math Task 4 introduction.** Teacher candidates’ introduction to Math Task 4 during coursework was intended to build familiarity with the language, formatting, and most importantly demonstrate coursework alignment with the requirements of Math Task 4. Teacher candidates recalled varying experiences and in particular two provided specific accounts of their experience. They initially found the introduction to be stress inducing and nerve wracking. The amount of information was a lot and the presentation of the information was conducted differently across university instructors. However, neither teacher candidate felt they enjoyed their introduction to edTPA.
First, Jessica’s introduction to edTPA was during her second semester of her teacher preparation program. She was given a detailed packet of information outlining all the necessary components of edTPA. Meaning, detailed information for all four tasks required of an elementary teacher candidate completing the Elementary version of edTPA was dispersed in one large document. Unloading all the information at once was terrifying for Jessica and stress inducing. During the first interview when we were discussing her initial reaction to edTPA she described, I think that all of us were scared from that [the second semester edTPA introduction]. So, when we got into block III [semester three] courses we had to do an edTPA version for our social studies class and then for our Math… I think that being able to [practice edTPA tasks] with our professors easing us in, they really did take it step by step (Interview 1, Lines 25-26).

Jessica’s initial exposure to edTPA was less than favorable. Once Jessica moved to practicing specific edTPA tasks, such as completing the simulated Math Task 4 assignment, during her methods coursework, in the following semester she began to feel more comfortable. She recalled finding comfort from the practice and feedback from her university instructor. So much so that she was feeling confident about beginning Math Task 4 during this first interview. She stated, Practicing it more and more has made me feel confident. I took like that really positive feedback and support from like our professors [in the third semester] to really kind of, you know, boost you to say that it is going to be okay. I don’t think that I had that type of encouragement at first, and that is why I was kind of just like you know pitying myself. I was like you know I didn’t do well [in the second semester], and it’s not going to be good from here on out. But you live and you learn, so it is all good now (Interview 1, lines 79-83).
Jessica’s introduction to edTPA was given all at once during her second semester coursework. Then in her third semester she was introduced to specific tasks and felt that the more specific information helped her to feel more confident about completing edTPA during student teaching. Jessica was viewing herself as responsible for taking on the challenge of Math Task 4 during student teaching. Furthermore, she felt she was capable at this time, since she had received so much support and feedback during the simulated Math Task 4 assignment.

Contrastingly, Rebecca’s experience of being introduced to edTPA during her university coursework was quite different. However, the initial introduction was still overwhelming. Rebecca was introduced to edTPA during the semester preceding student teaching. This introduction occurred across a couple of methods courses which presented simulated task assignments to be completed as final projects. Rebecca did not know the purpose of edTPA and was getting lost in the specific details. She explained,

[Our management course instructor explained,]’we are trying to prepare you for the edTPA.’ So we were like, ‘okay, why didn’t anyone tell us that?’ We just walked in [to mathematics methods course and social studies methods course] and then they give us a syllabus and they were like, ‘this is the [simulated] edTPA and do it in this format.’ But, they didn’t give us a big picture yet, so it was like this part right here and this part right here and then expected for us to just do it. So, it was just really overwhelming (Interview 1, Lines 9-11).

While Rebecca had to consult a university instructor to gain understanding about the big idea of edTPA, she still had similar feelings as Jessica at the onset of learning about edTPA. The introductions were the exact opposite of one another. Both teacher candidates found themselves relying on their university instructors for further clarification. The support was offered in clarifying
teacher candidates misunderstandings during coursework assignments from those they considered higher than them in the hierarchical structure. These teacher candidates viewed themselves as student in the teacher-student relationship.

**Grasping for support during Math Task 4 implementation.** During student teaching teacher candidates admittedly still needed the support from the experts in the profession, to assist in interpreting the demand of Math Task 4. They found themselves yearning to be the student in the teacher-student relationship. However, this relationship shifted slightly, in part because of edTPA being a high-stakes assessment that teacher candidates had to complete on their own. Another cause for a shift in this relationship was the newness of edTPA and fewer experts knowing the exact expectations of the assessment. Moreover, support was offered to teacher candidates through university student teaching seminars, as well as university supervisors and CTs. However, since Math Task 4 is a part of a high-stakes assessment and new to many professionals in their student teaching placement four teacher candidates were finding themselves grasping for more support than they found.

Julia recognized her need for support by establishing herself as a novice and comparing herself to experts in the profession. Julia stated, “I have to have support because I am still second-guessing myself. People who have been in this profession for a really long time don’t know what to do. Why should I know what to do?” (Interview 3, Lines 38-39). She saw professionals around her receiving professional development and support from administrators in her student teaching placement. She felt that she sought that same sort of support from those she ranked more knowledgeable than her but, she felt that she was not able to receive the support they could offer her because of the specificities in Math Task 4. She said,
I needed to go to [my CT] to seek advice a lot of times but I couldn’t because they didn’t know what I was talking about. I wanted to go to my professors or like ask people who I am not allowed to ask because I needed advice and I needed help (Interview 4, Lines 252-253).

Julia’s student teaching placement was very collaborative and supportive. However, since edTPA was so new, and an assessment, she felt cut-off from her support in the field. Julia turned to her university supervisor for support. She recalled a debriefing conversation she had with her supervisor after one of her observed lessons. She had anticipated questions about her lesson that could possibly support her in gathering clarification about Math Task 4. Nevertheless, Julia felt that her university supervisor had a filtered response since she was in the midst of completing Math Task 4. She explained, “I had an observation and I talked to my supervisor about things that I could or could not do. She gave me the best advice that she could, through edTPA” (Interview 3, Lines 708-709). When I asked Julia what that was like she responded with,

I have to be very careful how I ask stuff. I’m like, ‘okay I am going to ask this person but, I am not going to tell them that it is about edTPA.’ I’m just going to ask the question and then they can answer me. I don’t want to get them in trouble but at the same time I have no one else to ask. (Interview 3, Lines 737-742).

Julia was grasping for support and devised a strategy that offered her the support she needed. She recognized the ethical consequence in her decision but felt that it was her only option. Julia continued to find ways to position herself as the student in the teacher-student relationship. Even though Math Task 4 was nudging her to take on the role of teacher, she felt she still needed support in making instructional decisions.
Nicole was worried about having to make changes in her student teaching placement for the purpose of completing Math Task 4. During the first interview she shared that her student teaching placement had a very strict school wide schedule. The school wide schedule consisted of 4 days for instruction and on the 5th day, typically Friday, the students were assessed. Nicole knew she needed to teach 3-5 lessons for Math Task 4. She was concerned about merging the two schedules without causing too much of an interruption to classroom routines for the students. She recalled,

I did cause a complete disruption, I talked to them [cooperating and assistant teacher]. I am moving a little ahead and then coming back. So, we are going to jump and do one standard, then come back [to the other standard] (Interview 2, Line 33).

Nicole consulted with her CT to minimize the interruption. Unfortunately, she felt she had failed since she had to rearrange the sequencing of the curriculum. She was faced with the challenge of being the teacher within a system where the administrative team controlled the daily classroom schedule. Nicole was having to negotiate her new role as teacher. Nicole had to seek clearance from dual levels of authority, administrator and teacher. Nicole expressed how she felt her CT could not offer her the support she needed, “These are people [CTs] who are doing what I want to do, and they can’t even relate to me on this level” (Interview 4, Line 340). She saw herself teaching in the same way the CT was in the classroom. Yet, she was still needing and unable to gain the advice she needed. In the third interview she was explaining how edTPA was one of her many bosses in her student teaching experience. She felt that she had to juggle between these authorities to successfully complete student teaching. However, she continued to feel that she was failing at the tasks she needed to complete. She stated what that was like for her,
It is like a juggling act, and I am not juggling very well is how I feel. It is just so hard.

Again, I think it [edTPA] has a really big role for it being so new. Really, no one, my CT, didn’t know anything to expect. She is like ‘I don’t know what you are doing but go for it’ (Interview 3, Lines 92-94).

Nicole had a persistent sense of feeling like she was not performing her best during Math Task 4. She described herself as a disruption to her student teaching placement, unrelatable to her CT, and not being able to transfer between the numerous responsibilities she was having to manage. Nicole did not feel like she was successful with her new-found responsibility of taking on the role of teacher.

Jessica felt that she was performing on her own for a checklist of items. She recognized what she was attempting to complete was very different than that of the professionals in her field placement. Therefore, Jessica found herself in isolation completing the requirements of Math Task 4. She explained,

I don’t really see many teachers who create this long drawn out evaluation criteria. I, as a matter of fact, my CT doesn’t even make lesson plans. I don’t know. So, I see myself doing these things, but I still feel like I am just kind of going through the motions because that is part of the timeline (Interview 3, Lines 218-220).

Jessica was not clear about what she should be doing. As a result, she found herself working through Math Task 4 because of the timeline expectations. Additionally, Jessica was given total freedom to take over the mathematics instruction in her student teaching placement during the implementation of Math Task 4. She was attempting to play the part of teacher without any guidance from her CT since she was planning and implementing mathematics instruction that was completely different from the typical mathematics instruction.
Stacey described in the final interview how she sought support during her edTPA assessment, as well as the challenges she faced as she attempted to stand alone throughout the assessment. She stated, “It was just like, I don’t know, it was so difficult and there was so much pressure on this, and I just wasn’t ever sure if I was doing it right” (Interview 4, Line 354). Stacey knew that edTPA would be a determining factor in a successful completion of her initial certification requirements. The anticipation of successfully completing edTPA magnified the stress inducing experience. She recognized that she was having to do something on her own, but she questioned if what she was doing was enough to pass the test.

Rebecca chose to ignore the requirements of Math Task 4 at one point during student teaching. She described this time as a period that she had so much going on in her life and she did not know what to do with Math Task 4. Rebecca could not comprehend how she was supposed to convey all of her instructional decisions into the edTPA templates. Rebecca’s solution at the time was to choose to separate herself from edTPA for a brief period of time. Her university supervisor noticed Rebecca was beginning to fall behind on due dates for parts of Math Task 4 and surprised her at her placement. Rebecca recalled,

She [university supervisor] did come and see me one day out of the blue actually. She was like, ‘hey so do you have any questions about edTPA because you haven’t been sticking to all of the stuff?’ [I responded with], ‘well I just don’t really know what you mean.’ She was like, ‘well I can’t really give you more like I am not allowed to just tell you so just make sure that you are looking at all of the rubrics and you are looking at my feedback and you are putting more into your commentaries.’ She told me that ‘I was a really good student teacher but that my commentaries didn’t reflect it.’ So, she was like,
‘you need to talk about it more and more and more just add more.’ and I was just like, okay, just add more (Rebecca, Interview 4, Lines 204-211).

While the supervisor did not clarify anything specifically for Rebecca, she said the surprise visit was enough to motivate her to write something. She then worked to catch herself up and took the approach of just getting something done.

Similarly, to Rebecca, Leslie felt that her university supervisor was not able to offer her useful support because of Math Task 4. Both teacher candidates recognized a change to a relationship they were used to offering ample support. Leslie described, “Supervisors were very vague. I mean like I know their feedback had to be vague but yeah it was not really enough to do anything with” (Leslie, Interview 4, Lines 65-66). Leslie continued to explain that not having specific feedback from her supervisor made her feel a little nervous uploading the final submission and was grateful she had her simulated Math Task 4 assignment, from her mathematics methods course, as a reference.

In student teaching the support offered was more technical support. Teacher candidates still felt they needed more support in the finer grain details of completing Math Task 4. In the previous semesters they looked to those higher than themselves in the hierarchy, the professionals to offer this support. During student teaching while implementing Math Task 4 a shift in the type of support offered by those that were previously above them was created. Now teacher candidates were expected to make decisions in particular ways but grasped for the experts to offer this support. Since Math Task 4 was part of a high stakes assessment teacher candidates felt they were not getting the help they needed. The nervousness about how to consult the expert created questions about their own ethics, and to even ignore the amount of pressure they felt they were under.
Exercising authority to find their fit. Teacher candidates began making decisions about where they needed to fit in this unstable hierarchy. For instance, they began to make decisions they knew their university supervisor would disapprove of for the sake of meeting Math Task 4 requirements. Also, they prepared to adjust their schedule to teach sequential lessons as was required by Math Task 4. Finally, in their student teaching placement they made claims about what they had to accomplish with Math Task 4. Specifically, to inform the CT of their new role in the elementary classroom. Sometimes the experts complied while other times they questioned the teacher candidates’ decision.

Nicole knew that she had to prepare sequential mathematics lessons for Math Task 4. Nicole also became ill during the time she was supposed to begin her Math Task 4 lessons. When she returned to her student teaching placement she was not able to begin Math Task 4. This delay in starting upon her return was because of the schedule at her student teaching placement. Therefore, Nicole decided that she would recommend a change of observation to her university supervisor. Nicole described, “I was sick Monday and Tuesday, so I asked to move the observation, but my supervisor wasn’t comfortable with moving it. She wanted to get at least one done by now” (Interview 2, Lines 412-414). Nicole continued to explain how this made her feel overwhelmed by everything that needed to be done for both, Math Task 4 and her student teaching assignments. Further, Nicole chose to implement a number story for one of her Math Task 4 lessons, as she had learned it in her mathematics methods course. Nicole set the number story up with a brief conversation about the problem context and then allowed the elementary children to solve the problem. Next, she facilitated a whole group discussion where students were pre-selected to share their strategies. The university supervisor shared with Nicole her disapproval of her lesson choice. Nicole said, “I did do a number story actually for an observation [during
student teaching]…It didn’t go very well. My supervisor [said], ‘well this isn’t how you should teach number stories.’” (Interview 3, Lines 73-73). When I asked Nicole how that made her feel, to follow the recommendation of a university instructor and be corrected by the university supervisor she said, “It was conflicting…so we are going to wing it” (Interview 3, Lines, 93-106). Nicole prioritized the requirements of Math Task 4 at the top of her hierarchy and she was adhering to the demands negating the university supervisors position. She realized that she could not meet all of the demands on her at once. Nicole chose to make the decision to implement mathematics instruction that she felt was allowing her to complete Math Task 4.

In a similar experience, Leslie knew that she could not rely on the other professionals for support with her Math Task 4 assignment. She was also aware that she did not have control over how they reacted to her mathematics lessons. Leslie was placed in an inclusion classroom meaning some of the students in her classroom had been identified to receive special education services. Therefore, Leslie was the third teacher in her student teaching placement. One teacher was the general classroom teacher and the other teacher was the teacher offering support to those students identified for special education services. During the Math Task 4 lessons Leslie knew the problem-based approach to instruction was going to be different from the norm of her student teaching placement. She confirmed that she was able to control herself from telling a student what to do but, was concerned about the special education teacher offering support too quickly. She described what that was like for her,

I can control myself from overstepping, but I can’t [control] the special education teacher in there. I know she is going to want to be helping everybody. I’m gonna be like no no no just try and figure it out. She is not comfortable by that at all, so that is hard (Interview 2, Lines 131-132)
Leslie thought of herself as a passive person, so having to remind the teacher in the classroom that she was not able to do something during instruction was uncomfortable. Additionally, Leslie knew that she had chosen to implement mathematics lessons that her university supervisor would disapprove of as well. She decided that it was more important for her to adhere to the requirements of Math Task 4. Consequently, she chose to disagree with her university supervisor during this observation. She explained,

I was aware of the feedback I was going to receive. I pretty much knew this is what my supervisor is going to say but this is how I have to do it…I had to agree to disagree. I was like, ‘well maybe if I am teaching my own thing and this is not edTPA related I guess I would teach it this way.’ But, that is not the case in this situation. I have to do it like this (Leslie, Interview 4, Lines 158-162).

Leslie felt that the consequences of Math Task 4 were greater than from her university supervisor. She decided to proceed with what she thought she needed for Math Task 4.

Julia, similar to Leslie, could tell that her CT was not agreeing with her approach to mathematics teaching, during the implementation of her Math Task 4 lessons. Julia stated,

She [CT] was constantly interrupting my lessons so I could tell the toes were being stepped on. [I said,] I am sorry I am really sorry I don’t mean to be this way, but I have to, you know (Julia, Interview 4, Line 373).

Julia claimed she was uncomfortable correcting the person whose classroom she had taken over. However, she felt she had to for the sake of getting the results she needed for Math Task 4. It was more important for Julia to ensure that she had variety in her elementary children’s strategies and therefore chose to correct her CT.
Jessica’s implementation experience was different from Julia’s and Leslie’s. Jessica was given permission from her CT to take over the classroom lessons and assessment during her Math Task 4 implementation. However, Jessica found herself anticipating the use of certain norms and routines in her student teaching placement. Then during implementation she had learned she had expected something of the students that was not typical for them. She explained,

I would realize this hasn’t been my class all along and so there is stuff that maybe I would have done differently to prepare them for a new unit. But, it is very nice with it not being my class to be able to start from a clean spot (Interview 2, Lines 131-132).

Jessica had elevated herself to the same level as her CT during her Math Task 4 lesson implementation. Since the routines and norms that she expected were not already in place she would be reminded that she was not quiet the lead teacher yet.

At other times teacher candidates did not know how to begin choosing where they fit. For example Stacey said, “[My] CT wants them to line up decimals and add or subtract and edTPA wants to see that plus another strategy I don’t know” (Stacey, Interview 2, Line 76). She felt herself caught between the requirements of Math Task 4 and her CT. She felt that it was too difficult to decide how to merge both expectations. Ultimately, Stacey decided that she would have to adhere to the requirements of Math Task 4 and secondly consider her CTs request.

Teacher candidates chose to make decisions about where they fit in the new unstable hierarchical structure. This was challenging for the teacher candidates. They had made decisions which, prioritized Math Task 4. The teacher candidates noticed the ramifications of their decisions created a less than satisfactory response, from the professionals they were working with during their student teaching experience. Teacher candidates were unintentionally reshaping the relationships they had come to know in their teacher preparation program.
Instability of their fit. Teacher candidates were seeing the changes in the professional relationships they had come to know, because of their assertiveness to exercise where they fit in the new hierarchy. However, they adapted their fit based on their need. Sometimes they would experience an internal struggle while maintaining external composure. For instance, during a grade level planning session their fit was the student teacher. However, in the elementary classroom they were assuming the lead mathematics teacher position when they implemented Math Task 4 lessons. Also, their fit would change because they were uncertain about what they should be doing themselves, and they could not anticipate their next steps. As I bridled through this wondering I continued to ask, “Is Math Task 4 pushing teacher candidates out of their student teaching experience or is it opening the door for them to embrace their chosen profession?” Since teacher candidates were in student teaching placements that did not use a problem-based approach to mathematics instruction, teacher candidates were taking on the challenge of introducing a problem-based mathematics instructional model into their student teaching placement. Five of the teacher candidates recalled experiences in a variety of roles as they took claim to fitting in one spot or another in the hierarchy. These excerpts could have fit in other categories above but were specifically placed in this section to demonstrate the variation of their fit, into the hierarchy and across experiences.

Since Math Task 4 was implemented early in the student teaching semester Rebecca had not had enough time in her student teaching placement to anticipate the children’s thinking in mathematics. Therefore, she saw her fit in the hierarchy below the CT as the student in the teacher-student relationship. Rebecca asked her opinion about the contents of the mathematics instruction. Rebecca explained,
I was working directly from the standard, which was [adding numbers] up to 20. So, she [CT] didn’t say anything, and we thought that they were going to have a hard time with number problems to begin with. So, that is what she was like, ‘yeah just do the standard.’ And [during implementation] I was like, ‘oh no they need a little bit more of a challenge.’ (Interview 3, Lines 76-77).

Fairly quickly into her mathematics lesson Rebecca realized the mathematics instruction needed to include higher numbers. Rebecca then increased the difficulty in the problem type as well as the number size. Additionally, she knew she needed to see more than one strategy from each child. Rebecca subconsciously decided her fit in the hierarchy. Finding herself in a mathematics lesson that was not a good fit for the students empowered her to begin making the planning decisions for the mathematics instruction. She described when she understood how she was challenging the children’s mathematical thinking,

That is why they are struggling with [the mathematics lessons]. When I kept asking that they use a different strategy, they were like which one and I am like, ‘well’…They were like, ‘which one should we use?’ I was like, ‘I don’t know?’ (Interview 3, Lines 53-54).

Rebecca confirmed that she had planned more challenging mathematics lessons based on the children’s struggle and, could identify the challenge the children were facing yet, she was uncertain about how to support their thinking in the moment during mathematics instruction. Rebecca first saw herself as needing support while planning mathematics instructions. Once she gained confidence in planning mathematics instruction she was still uncertain during the implementation of the mathematics instruction.
Stacey also struggled with trying to identify how to support children’s flexibility in their solution strategies when solving number stories. Stacey saw her fit as a teacher and knew she wanted to see the children in the classroom using more than one strategy. She recalled,

I want them to show me a different strategy. I can’t even come up with different strategies. All I know is the standard algorithm. All I can think of is if they use the hundreds blocks and use some shading and stuff. But that is only for adding cause when you get to subtracting, how are you going to take away? I don’t know. (Interview 2, Lines 142-144).

She knew their previous classroom experiences had focused solely on the use of the standard algorithm. She explained,

They’re [students] so use to [using the] standard algorithm formula. You know, do it this way, and you know they don’t [understand] that. How do I get them to give me something else? (Interview 2, Lines 127-128).

Stacey hesitated about her role as a teacher and what she needed to do to see the results she felt she needed. She claimed what she was going to do as a mathematics teacher in the second interview. But, questioned the legitimacy of her abilities to perform to her expectations. Then she described this as being forced into her decision by Math Task 4. She stated,

It [Math Task 4] is forcing [me]. edTPA says they want this, so okay I’ll give them this. Even if that is what is not there to give. I will create it, and I will make my kids do this weird stuff to them (Interview 3, Lines 365-366).

Stacey’s CT gave her the first 15 minutes of mathematics to teach her Math Task 4 lessons. Stacey therefore saw herself as the lead teacher of this segment. Yet, the more she tried to meet the requirements of Math Task 4 the more she questioned her own abilities. Stacey believed that if she did not meet the expectations of Math Task 4 she was justified, since she was given such a
short amount of mathematics instructional time. She explained that she would not do harm to the children’s mathematical understanding. Stacey was focused on meeting the requirements the best she could in the environment she was given. However, she doubted if her best was enough for Math Task 4.

Leslie recalled her role as being a student, and compared how that conflicted with her new role as mathematics teacher, who was expected to be teaching Math Task 4 lessons. She stated,

Especially for some students you know, some of my students with special needs. [They] need step by step, explicit instruction. It is kind of like what we learned and what this edTPA is telling us to do contradicts. What I’ve learned in our special ed. classes. that is kind of hard to work around. But, for the purpose of this assignment I’m just like, ‘wow this is just what we do. I’m sorry kiddos I will get back with you.’ (Interview 2, Lines 142-144).

Leslie felt guilty for not being able to offer the support she felt some students needed. As Leslie continued through Math Task 4, she recalled what it was like for her and the children in the classroom, who were selected for the reengagement lesson,

I mean when we pull small groups it is a lot of the same kids every day. So, these were new kids in a small group and they, also I could tell, were a little weird about the situation because they didn’t want [to be pulled]. They were like, ‘why am I getting pulled into small group? That is what happens to people that don’t understand, and I understand’ (Interview 3, Lines 140-141).

Leslie became more confident in viewing herself as the mathematics teacher during these lessons. She had a conversation with her CT prior to pulling the small group for the reengagement
lesson and he expressed how shocked he was about the students she had identified. Leslie felt confident about her analysis of their work samples and therefore, felt comfortable justifying to her CT why this was the group she would be pulling for the Math Task 4 reengagement lesson. Leslie felt the pull between being a student and being a teacher. She grew more confident in her role of teaching as she transitioned from planning Math Task 4 lessons to reengaging in Math Task 4.

Nicole did not have any hesitation in claiming her fit as a mathematics teacher. She knew her Math Task 4 lessons would introduce mathematics in a new format to the students and she chose to develop a strategy to support their introduction to problem solving in a new way. She was standing alone as a mathematics teacher and making instructional decisions. Her CT did not participate in her Math Task 4 lessons. Therefore, Nicole implemented her strategy by using student work time to clarify her expectations to the class. Nicole explained,

I used a picture to explain [how] to share their thought process. [It] was something that was new to them. They were like, ‘but I just added it,’ and I was like, ‘well show me how you added in your head.’ They were like, ‘what? I just added.’ So, that took a while to explain to every student like, ‘this is what you have to do.’ But we got through it (Interview 3, Lines 30-32).

In the final interview, Nicole questioned her decision to be the teacher of Math Task 4 lessons. She witnessed herself being a teacher, in a way that was different than that of her student teaching placement. She said,

I was doing a lot of my edTPA. I didn’t feel like I was of service to the students in the way I should be. Because [I was] very focused on something [Math Task 4] that schools aren’t focused on (Interview 4, Lines 183-184).
Since she had prioritized Math Task 4 in defining the type of teacher she needed to be during mathematics lessons, Nicole felt that she had taken away from the children’s mathematics learning. She admitted that she was focused on mathematics instruction that was different. Initially, she was confident about identifying as a mathematics teacher but, then she felt as a teacher candidate completing assessment requirements, she did not do the job she had claimed.

Julia found herself claiming the role of teacher candidate completing Math Task 4 requirements in the second interview. For example she said, “I can’t focus on my classroom and my kids and like what they want from me I have to focus on what edTPA wants from me (Interview 2, Lines 222-223). In the third interview she felt herself taking on more of the teacher role as she became more immersed in Math Task 4. She was participating in a grade-level meeting and as the other teachers were discussing lesson plans Julia was internally struggling with the choices they were making. In her mind she had decided that she would need to plan differently than what the grade level had decided. She stated,

I am like literally like just dying over in the corner when they [grade level teachers] are all talking about what they have to do for next week. I am just like oh my gosh I am not doing that please, please understand (Interview 3, Lines137-138).

She admitted that she felt guilty about having to focus on something different. However, she also felt forced by Math Task 4. She described,

I feel bad because I feel like I am pushing our students behind because they are not learning the standard that everybody else is learning…But at the same time I really have to do this. I don’t have a choice. I have to you know, I don’t know what else to do (Interview 3, Lines 133-134).
Then as she had completed implementing Math Task 4 lessons she found her fit shifting from mathematics teacher back to teacher candidate. She was working through the MAC and realized that she did not have all of the information she needed to analyze the children’s mathematical thinking. She explained,

I am reading like the [MAC] prompt, and it is like you need to get at the underlying cause of this misconception. I am like, “what is their underlying misconception?” Then I just stopped in my tracks (Interview 3, Lines 28-29).

Julia continuously moved between being the teacher to being the teacher candidate. Julia felt that Math Task 4 forced her to make specific decisions against other teachers in the grade level, which elevated her to teacher. Then she had to assume the role as teacher candidate when she was still having to learn what mathematical concept she needed to identify for the reengagement lesson. She also felt that she was not immersed in her student teaching placement because she was so focused on completing the requirements of Math Task 4.

Initially, teacher candidates were introduced to Math Task 4 during their university coursework. This experience was very overwhelming regardless of how it was introduced. However, during this time teacher candidates were supported by the university instructor who could freely answer their questions to provide clarification. As teacher candidates transitioned into student teaching, and began Math Task 4 for the actual assessment, they began to grasp for help. The university supervisors had to filter their support since they could not make decisions for the teacher candidates about any part of the edTPA assessment. Also, CTs were not aware of what the expectations were for edTPA. CTs only knew that it was an assessment the teacher candidate was required to complete for initial certification. Teacher candidates questioned their ethics while attempting to find information they needed to work through Math Task 4. They felt they
were failing and needed more support. The teacher candidates felt they were being separated from their student teaching experience as they performed differently from their student teaching placement. They began to make decisions different from the expectations of their CT and/or their university supervisor. In doing so, teacher candidates still felt that edTPA was at the top of the hierarchy but, their decision making changed where they would fit into the hierarchy. Instead of asking for permission as they previously had, teacher candidates asked for forgiveness when some of their decisions were met with dissatisfaction by CTs or university supervisors. Overall, their fit was not static instead it was fluid and depended on the phase they were in with Math Task 4 implementation. Also, depending on how strongly they felt in making the decision to be a teacher vs. a teacher candidate. Some gained confidence as they worked through Math Task 4 while others continued to be uncertain about their decision making.

**Teaching on Demand**

Teacher candidates had to make instructional decisions, among new relationships, and within a shifting hierarchy. However, since edTPA had to be completed during the student teaching semester the teacher candidates felt the pressures of the time crunch and being certain about their decisions. Even though more often than not they were unsure about the consequences of their decisions. This position in the hierarchy was different from their previous experiences in their teacher preparation program. Teacher candidates had not previously experienced independence in this way. This independence dictated the time frame, understanding of the task at hand to be completed, and sent the teacher candidate out to complete the work. They typically are given some kind of support as they build understanding from coursework or field placement experiences. Additionally, they always had the luxury of participating in a teacher-student role. While in their teacher preparation program they completed assessments independently they did not have
one particular assessment carrying so much weight in determining program outcomes. edTPA, being an assessment, provides the guidelines and the time frame and then expects for the teacher candidate to prepare and submit teaching materials. Teacher candidates perceived edTPA to be at the top of the hierarchy and they had to complete the requirements of the assessment. Sometimes teacher candidates felt they needed to just act to demonstrate they were certain. The motion to just act was not always methodical. Other times they had to act and then consider the impact of their actions. Teacher candidates were not used to being pushed into the type of independence that edTPA was affording them.

**Constrained by the timeline.** The teacher candidates were pressured by the timeline. They felt they had to make decisions for the sake of completing the requirements of Math Task 4. This expectation began early in their student teaching semester as teacher candidates were given, by their teacher preparation program, a timeline providing due dates for the segments of edTPA to be completed. The intention of this timeline was to provide technical support to teacher candidates as they managed their time. Five of the teacher candidates described the pressure of the timeline constraints as they worked through Math Task 4.

Julia described the edTPA timeline as a persistent force during her student teaching experience. She described how edTPA dictated her time,

> I mean it [edTPA] was constantly in the back of my head. There was constantly a deadline. You have to do this, you have to do that, it has to be this way, it can’t deviate from this (Interview 4, Lines 107-108).

Julia was having to spend her time being sure that she was completing the expectations of Math Task 4. Additionally, she was completing it in a way that was as accurate as she could infer for
the assessment. In the same interview she continued to describe how she managed her time. She stated,

I did not do anything else except for edTPA. Any free second that I had I was re-reading, I was typing, I was analyzing data, I was making charts, making sure I didn’t have a condition code, finding resources or sources that I could cite. Every second that I had, I was doing edTPA up until it was due. (Interview 4, Lines 114-115).

For Julia, she felt the responsibility of passing edTPA and therefore it became the priority to her. edTPA dominated her time until she completed the final upload procedures.

Stacey also experienced the pressure of the timeline constraints. She described this pressure early in her student teaching. In the first interview Stacey shared the immediate start to Math Task 4 in her placement. She said, “I’m having to do edTPA stuff this week…This is my second week in the field…it is all up in my face and I can’t breathe” (Interview 1, Lines 37-39). When I asked Stacey what it was like for her to feel like she cannot breathe, she responded with, “I don’t know. It looks like a little form that is not that serious…But it is so serious it is so serious.” (Interview 1, Lines 69-70). Stacey’s constraint with the timeline was that it had to begin quickly.

Similarly, Jessica felt the timeline constraint. She said, “We are on such a strict timeline for edTPA” (Interview 2, Line 105). Jessica felt that she could not deviate too much from the timeline because it was so regimented. However, during the final interview Jessica shared that she had decided to temporarily deviate from the timeline. She felt that it was more important for the focus to be on the accuracy of Math Task 4. She stated,

When I saw that my assessment didn’t go as well as I had planned in my head I was like wait a minute I am going to have to back up and punt from here. I have to get a whole
new game plan. Which was stressful because I felt like I had put time into something that I thought would work and then it didn’t and then I had to go back. So, I think I was panicking only because of this timeline (Interview 4, Lines 269-271).

Jessica noticed that she needed to change her assessment. This was stressful because of the required time constraints. However, she chose to temporarily neglect the timeline so that she could figure out how to gather the data needed for Math Task 4.

Rebecca felt that she was in this haze trying to figure out what she should be doing but the time was passing her by so quickly. She explained,

A lot of us are behind on the [teacher preparation] schedule because we also had like winter break [in our field placement]. That set us back, and I don’t know, it has just been really weird, and we are all just trying to catch up right now with all of that. But, I don’t know, I mean it is just stressful (Interview 3, Lines 183-185).

She felt stressed by the fact that Math Task 4 was the first task she was working on in her student teaching placement. Rebecca had to complete three other tasks. The pressure of being behind from the beginning made her feel like she was being forced to just complete requirements. She also questioned how the time effects the quality of her edTPA materials. Rebecca stated,

I do think that it [edTPA] is a good assessment of kind of like why we do the things we do or what you’ve learned in your program and stuff like that. But yeah, I just feel like yeah it was very rushed like every week we were doing something else (Interview 4, Lines 190-191).

Additionally, she used terms such as ‘annoying’, ‘this sucks’, and ‘stressful’ to describe what it felt like to be behind the timeline at the beginning of edTPA. Rebecca also explained that one of the factors for being behind, was because her student teaching placement had a school break that
was not accounted for in the schedule provided by the teacher preparation program, for edTPA. It was out of her control and she was not sure of how this would impact the outcome of her being able to complete the entire edTPA. Rebecca also described the time intensive experience she had with completing the edTPA templates and how she felt perturbed having to be so tedious with writing her response. She stated,

It took so long. Each prompt took an hour, because you were trying so hard to describe it and match it with the rubric. [Then] describe it some more and you are like, ‘okay, am I really hitting everything, is that what really happened? I can’t really remember any more.’ It is just so annoying (Interview 4, Lines 217-218).

Rebecca described being constrained by the predetermined timeline as well as the time intensive task of completing the edTPA templates. She felt that at times that she was unsure of how to stay on track with the timeline and was doubting her written responses the longer she spent writing them.

Likewise, Nicole felt the constraints of Math Task 4 as she worked through the assessment. Nicole was told to consider creating another version of all four tasks in edTPA as a backup, just in case the first attempt was not successful. Nicole realized during Math Task 4 that she was not going to have sufficient time to prepare this safety net. She described,

I have been told that do it once and if you have time do a backup. Because if you do not make it [pass] your first submission you have back up for a second submission. But that’s just not possible like because I don’t have time (Interview 3, Lines 343-344).

Nicole felt the pressure of the timeline and worried about not being able to keep up with the recommendations from the university program coordinator. Nicole also felt the pressure of the time constraints when she was trying to implement Math Task 4. She explained,
The way that edTPA is setup like that timeline is like is tricky cause it is consecutive lessons vs. separate lessons. You have to be able to block out time to do it [edTPA], and that is not a choice. (Interview 2, Lines 251-252).

Nicole described the particulars of the timeline as being overwhelming. She viewed the teacher preparation timeline as offering support to surviving edTPA.

The time constraints of Math Task 4 left teacher candidates feeling unsure about how they were going to accomplish all of the requirements of Math Task 4, as well as the remainder of the other student teaching tasks. Since Math Task 4 was the first of the four tasks to be completed teacher candidates experienced anxiety as they had to deviate from the timeline or were pushed behind unintentionally on the timeline. When they were unsure about how to catch up or to deviate from the timeline they described this force or pressure that was complicated and difficult to navigate.

**The façade of understanding.** Teacher candidates began to justify their decision-making process through the understandings they had inferred from their experiences with Math Task 4, and edTPA more broadly. These justifications were rooted in previous experiences that had led them to the decision they needed to make. Sometimes this understanding was just to conceal the doubt that remained in their experiences.

Julia came to an understanding that her CTs support was only useful for outside of Math Task 4. She did not feel that the advice she was being given to improve her lesson was useful for completing the requirements of Math Task 4. Julia explained,

She [CT] said my lesson was really strong and she gave me some ideas for differentiation and stuff for the future. I don’t know if I can use it for edTPA, which is sad, but you know I can use it for the future (Interview 2, Lines 50-51).
The teacher candidate’s understanding of Math Task 4 was that her CTs feedback was irrelevant for the requirements she was under.

Stacey could not solidify her understandings about Math Task 4. She felt that she was just doing the best she could and was hoping that the result was correct. She stated,

“It [Math Task 4] is this unknowing. What is sad is even while you are doing stuff sometimes you don’t know what you are doing like ugh like today I did it” (Interview 2, Line 160).

Stacey’s reservations were magnified by her CTs response about teaching Math Task 4 in her student teaching placement. Her CT was not sure what Stacey should be doing for Math Task 4. Therefore, her CTs solution was to carve out time at the beginning of the math segment for Stacey to accomplish Math Task 4 lessons. Stacey felt that this gave her the freedom to implement Math Task 4 in the way she understood. Stacey also felt that it would not leave a lasting impact on the student teaching placement. Stacey described,

She’ll [CT] just let me do whatever honestly. She’ll be like, ‘oh hey girl.’ I’m like, ‘thank you.’ But see, this is my thing that I did. It’s only for three days or four days so it didn’t take up too much of anybody’s life. They [Math Task 4 lessons] are not that long of lessons now, like 15 min. chunks that’s it. So, there are no roadblocks to encounter in 10 or 15 minutes while you are doing it, you just do it and move on (Interview 3, Lines 135-137).

Given the freedom by her CT to implement Math Task 4 Stacey felt that even though she did not have a clear understanding of what to do she could complete the teaching and move on from that experience.
Rebecca came to an understanding that she should be creating something new with Math Task 4. She described,

I have an understanding with edTPA, we should not rely on something with this [Math Task 4]. We should come up with our own. And, so I am just trying to figure out how to take what we are doing right now [in the elementary classroom] and merge it into something different [for Math Task 4] (Interview 1, Lines 163-164).

Rebecca knew that the instruction in her elementary classroom was different than what she needed to plan and implement for Math Task 4. Therefore, she came to the idea that she had to be original for Math Task 4. This was stressful for Rebecca, because she continued to describe in the interview that she felt like she did not know what to do and, having to create something from ‘scratch’ was challenging.

Jessica decided that she needed to begin with working through the requirements of Math Task 4 and not relying too much on the edTPA support materials. She stated,

I know this sounds vague but just the completion of it, I really think that working through it and not just reading the manual. Not just reading the questions but actually just getting into the meat of it really, I guess gave me that explanation (Jessica, Interview 4, Lines 245-246).

She used this strategy from the onset of Math Task 4 as she described in the first interview how she negotiated working through Math Task 4 and considered the requirements of Math Task 4 afterwards. She explained,

“In reality. you don’t really always even follow your lesson plans and so saying that you are going to do something exactly as it is written on the lesson plan is essentially what you have to do in edTPA” (Interview 1, Lines 296-297).
Jessica felt that she would be bound to the Math Task 4 lesson template if she filled out the template prior to teaching. Since she was not sure exactly about the contents of her Math Task 4 lessons and, what exactly should be written on the template, she chose to wait so that she would only have to fill it in once.

Similar to Stacey and Jessica, Nicole felt that she just had to jump in and take the test. She was not sure exactly what that meant but, she was just going to tackle the requirements as she needed. She described what that was like,

I was learning to do something, and I was teaching. So, I felt with edTPA it is because we haven’t really been taught how to do it. Kind of like when you go to school you learn the content but then you learn how to take a test. So, I felt that I had learned all of the content and all of the background behind it. But, I didn’t learn how to take the test, I just took it (Interview 4, Lines 219-220).

Nicole claimed that she felt she knew how to teach mathematics effectively but, she did not know how to tell someone how she taught mathematics effectively. This was troubling for Nicole since the assessment was scored based on how well she could write about how effectively she taught mathematics.

Leslie gave her impression of edTPA as being pushed into independence. She stated, “I feel like we are being let off on our own and more independent, like you can do this, you have done it before. Do it again” (Interview 1, Line 211). Leslie felt that this was hard for her to do since everyone, including herself, was so unfamiliar with edTPA.

It is hard for the kids because they are like, ‘what are we doing?’ It is hard for the CT teacher because they are like, ‘what are you [doing]? This is not teaching.’ Then for me it is like, ‘I don’t know, I’m just trying.’ (Leslie, Interview 2, Lines 33-34).
Leslie described how she was afraid of having to leave some kids behind with her Math Task 4 lessons. Even though, she admittedly felt, she was trying her hardest to appease the requirements of Math Task 4. However, she did not feel that teaching in a different way from the typical classroom instruction was the best for the students in her student teaching placement.

These teacher candidates did not feel that they had a proficient understanding of Math Task 4 but, they felt that they had to complete the requirements nonetheless. They described what they needed to do to complete the contents of Math Task 4. However, being given the freedom to independently decide how to put those requirements into practice in their student teaching placement had teacher candidates feeling unsure about their understandings.

Teacher candidates were trying to do what they could with the understandings that they had from previous coursework and field experiences. They were permitted this new-found independence to complete edTPA. Teacher candidates found it challenging to negotiate the time constraints, as well as feeling proficient about their understanding of how to merge Math Task 4 into their student teaching placement. Math Task 4 was different from the mathematics instruction that occurred in all of their student teaching placements and so it was difficult for them to conceptualize how to embed Math Task 4 into the elementary classroom. Overall, the teacher candidates’ response was to complete the requirements because of the fast-paced timeline.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the findings revealed three themes and associated characteristics of teacher candidates’ lived experience of working through Math Task 4. The themes detailed what it was like for teacher candidates to experience the POI amid having their typical hierarchy disrupted by Math Task 4. Teacher candidates struggled in trying to find stability with Math Task 4. They had placed edTPA at the top of the hierarchy to build stability. However, by doing this they found
themselves being caught in an ongoing conversation with themselves which, magnified their uncertainties and yielded a self-response. The act of being caught caused the uncertainty and response to themselves to not always be methodical and grounded in their previous understandings. Nevertheless, the teacher candidates had to figure out where they were going to fit in the new hierarchy so that they could complete Math Task 4 and potentially find support. During the student teaching experience, the teacher candidates did admit to using coursework materials to support their completion of Math Task 4. They just questioned if this was enough to successfully complete Math Task 4. Also, they began to make decisions and sometimes those decisions were met with discomfort from the experts in the profession. Finally, teacher candidates were teaching on demand. They felt rushed and pressured all at once to take action and complete edTPA. They put on this façade of understanding to survive the demand of teaching within set time constraints. In the following chapter, I will reveal the POI that these themes represent and connect the phenomenon to the recent literature in the field.
5 DISCUSSION

As teacher candidates worked through Math Task 4 three phenomenological themes were identified as the patterns of the structure which creates the POI. Teacher candidates’ lived experiences revealed the POI was elusiveness as they completed Math Task 4. Generally, elusiveness is defined as, “eluding or failing to allow for or accommodate a clear perception or complete mental grasp; hard to express or define” (Elusiveness, n.d.). However, this definition does not capture the intricate structure of the phenomenon, elusiveness, as experienced by teacher candidates living through Math Task 4. This phenomenological investigation describes the complexity of elusiveness from teacher candidates’ lived experience of Math Task 4 using the phenomenological themes and associated characteristics. The aim of studying a phenomenon is to understand in a way that was not known previously (van Manen, 2014). I found elusiveness to be the phenomenon during the Whole-Part-Whole analysis through the themes of: (a) Struggling to stabilize Math Task 4, (b) Trying to find their fit in a dismantled hierarchy, (c) Teaching on Demand. These themes are the structure of elusiveness experienced by teacher candidates while they worked through Math Task 4, which are used to support the following interpretations. Elusiveness appeared as teacher candidates found disconnects between their learning in university coursework, which supported how they learned to implement Math Task 4, and the implementation of Math Task 4 during their student teaching semester as they interacted with CTs as well as university supervisors. The elusiveness of these disconnects created the opposite of enhancing consistent alignment of teaching practices from university coursework into student teaching as Barron (2015) suggested was a potential lever in using edTPA. Additionally, edTPA is a time-consuming task for teacher candidates during their student teaching experience as shown in the

The themes and associated characteristics from this study indicate teacher candidates found it challenging to reconceptualize relationships they had experienced previously in their teacher preparation program. They had placed Math Task 4 at the top of a new hierarchical structure that was challenging to define and at the same time understand their fit within this structure to successfully complete the requirements of their assessment. Elusiveness appeared through teacher candidates’ lived experiences of working through Math Task 4. In this chapter, I link the current literature to my findings of elusiveness. In the sections that follow, I discuss elusiveness as it appeared through each theme. The contents of this chapter are organized in the following manner: (a) revelation of elusiveness, (b) interpretation of the findings, (c) implications, (d) recommendations for future research, (e) trustworthiness, and (f) limitations of the study.

Revelation of Elusiveness

As a course instructor, and prior to analyzing these data, I thought that I recognized what was happening for the teacher candidates as they navigated edTPA requirements. I believed that the teacher candidates were overwhelmed by the demands of edTPA requirements during their student teaching semester. However, as I interacted with the teacher candidates, I also became aware that something more than their feeling of being overwhelmed was there and unsaid. Initially, I had difficulty pinpointing what teacher candidates were experiencing as they engaged in a simulated Math Task 4 experience during the mathematics methods course. Later, the collection of their experiential accounts led me to uncover the nuances of elusiveness as the teacher candidates worked through Math Task 4. Vagle’s description, “phenomenologists love to study the things we tend to assume we know-the things we think we have settled” (2016, p. 58)
resonated with me at the inception of this work. Feeling overwhelmed and being inexperienced were lesser parts of what was occurring with the teacher candidates. Elusiveness was greater than feeling overwhelmed. Elusiveness manifested in the teacher candidates’ intentional relationship with Math Task 4 and appeared through their descriptions of their lived experiences. Elusiveness appeared as teacher candidates felt the pressure to complete Math Task 4 within strict time constraints, the were trapped by their uncertainties, and they found it challenging to understand where they fit in the hierarchical structure they had built. My analysis of the data helped me to uncover themes and associated characteristics related to elusiveness that the teacher candidates experienced. As a result, I realized that teacher candidates had to restructure relationships with experts as they entered student teaching to complete Math Task 4. The hierarchical structure they were familiar with in their teacher preparation program was no longer functioning the same during student teaching while they were completing edTPA.

Interpretation of the Findings

Math Task 4 as the priority in a new hierarchical structure. Teacher candidates were in a state of elusiveness while trying to navigate the requirements of Math Task 4. The teacher candidates had to overcome obstacles through the process of edTPA. They described their experiences as rushed, feeling the pressure to respond to Math Task 4 prompts accurately, and teaching against the norms in their student teaching classrooms. They had to simultaneously juggle the expectations of their student teaching placement and their preparation of Math Task 4. The elusiveness of the edTPA requirements in Math Task 4 led to the insertion of something new or different in teacher candidates’ student teaching classroom, causing a mismatch. Bunch and colleagues (2009) studied teacher candidates and found they are capable of transferring new knowledge and teaching practices learned in their university coursework into student teaching, and then
translating that experience to the prompts on TPAs. While in this study findings suggest teacher candidates’ negotiated teaching practices that were different from their student teaching placement, as they had to integrate edTPA’s expectations, was stressful as well as left them feeling uncertain.

Student teaching is a key experience in teacher preparation programs (Brown, Lee, & Collins, 2015). The edTPA licensure requirement has caused teacher candidates’ lived experience of student teaching to change (Chung, 2008; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Hodges & Hodge, 2017; Hutt, Gottlieb, & Cohen, 2018; Santagata & Sandholtz, 2018). In this study, teacher candidates found themselves prioritizing the navigation of edTPA requirements over learning how to be a teacher during their student teaching placement and feeling as if they had been divested of benefiting from their teacher preparation experience. This new hierarchical structure the teacher candidates had created placed edTPA as the priority. For example, teacher candidates mentioned the lack of attention they devoted to student teaching assignments because of the demands of edTPA. They felt that the outcome of edTPA was greater than any other requirement required of them in the student teaching semester. In a recent study, Au (2013) described student teaching seminars to be focused on edTPA and found teacher candidates interpreting student teaching as a place for teaching to the demands of edTPA. In this study, teacher candidates shared briefly about their Math Task 4 and final upload seminars, both offering technical support for edTPA. No other student teaching seminars were discussed. Relatedly to Au’s (2013) study in this study, teacher candidates described struggling to incorporate edTPA’s expectations within the elementary classroom during the navigation of the Math Task 4 requirements. Specifically, Nicole described how she felt that she was failing at juggling the expectation of her student teaching classroom because she had to navigate Math Task 4 requirements. Nicole was preoccupied by being
as accurate as possible for the sake of her edPTA score. She chose to alter student teaching placement routines, such as reorganizing the school-wide schedule, 4 days of instruction and 1 day of assessment, to meet the requirements of implementing Math Task 4. Therefore, the teacher candidates did infer that the priority of student teaching was to enact edTPA. Moreover, she was reshaping the relationship she had with her CT and school administrators. Instead of taking over Nicole felt she disrupted and rearranged schedules and curriculum for the sake of completing Math Task 4.

In other studies, researchers have found that edTPA scorers have limited contextual knowledge about the teacher candidates’ field experiences (Dover & Schultz, 2016). Also, teacher candidates are left with a time-consuming demand (Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017) to articulate their effectiveness through concise writing (Denton, 2013). In this study, teacher candidates had to make instructional decisions to incorporate instructional materials that differed from the norm in their field placement. Additionally, teacher candidates were unsure of how to articulate the introduction of a new instructional approach within the context of the edTPA templates. Therefore, findings suggest mathematics instruction, from pedagogical practices to student handouts, were structured differently from the norm for Math Task 4 lessons. This difference resulted in teacher candidates making decision independently of their student teaching placement. Teacher candidates’ understanding of the Math Task 4 requirements led them to stand alone and make independent decisions about effective mathematics teaching.

Notably findings from Dwyer’s (2014) study characterized these interruptions to the field placement as a major inconvenience to the CT who has volunteered to host the teacher candidate. The teacher candidates in this study found the tension between student teaching expectations and the requirements of Math Task 4 to be elusive. Since the teacher candidates needed to complete
Math Task 4 they felt the time constrained pressure and chose to introduce a new instructional approach to the elementary mathematics classroom in their student teaching placement in hopes of successfully completing Math Task 4. In this study teacher candidates felt that they could not rely on their CT. For example, Rebecca took the recommendation of her CT to implement a story problem following the mathematics curriculum standards suggestion. However, during implementation of the mathematics lesson Rebecca quickly realized that her mathematics instruction was not challenging enough. Another experience was when Jessica was introducing a new mathematics unit. Her CT gave her the curriculum guide and said for her to just take over the days she needed for Math Task 4. When Jessica asked her CT if she had any resources or previous lesson plans to reference her CT did not and said the curriculum guide had everything she needed.

Math Task 4 took priority during the teacher candidates student teaching semester. While the hierarchical structure was never officially described in the teacher candidates’ teacher preparation program they learned about this structure through the relationships they formed. The student-teacher relationship offered teacher candidates with experts that they learned from and sought feedback. During student teaching teacher candidates placed edTPA as the priority in student teaching and now sought feedback and support from the top of the hierarchy that was no longer functioning in the same way. Now the top was off limits and teacher candidates felt that edTPA was pushing them to stand on their own by making instructional decisions and claiming to be the lead teacher. This pressure to perform successfully cause teacher candidates to feel uncertain about their own abilities and under immense pressure to be as accurate as possible in order to pass edTPA and earn their initial teaching certification.

**Inferring meaning from the top.** edTPA was placed at the top of this new hierarchy in student teaching. Teacher candidates were provided with reference materials and templates to
support their successful completion of edTPA. However, teacher candidates experienced elusiveness when they interacted with the edTPA documents and tried to rely on the understandings they had inferred. They described their uncertainty being reaffirmed by the edTPA documents. This is problematic as others have described assessments like edTPA as a “high stakes snapshot” (Dover & Schultz, 2016, p. 99). The snapshot described by Dover & Schultz (2016) is framed as one opportunity to demonstrate preparedness, due to the summative evaluation being a determining factor in obtaining initial certification. In this study the more teacher candidates encountered the edTPA documents the more they were inferring understanding about what to include as their most detailed and accurate response.

Four of the teacher candidates found themselves experiencing elusiveness while trying to interpret, respond to, and finalize edTPA templates. Specifically, teacher candidates described the learning segment template as being too compact and too divided into sections that only contained headings. The formatting of this planning template was foreign to teacher candidates, causing elusiveness to appear in the expectations of what to include. Similarly, Paugh and colleagues (2017) found teacher candidates reported feeling limited in what they could include in the planning template. In this study, the four teacher candidates had learned about the complexities of planning, such as language demand, differentiation, and anticipating children’s mathematical thinking in their teacher preparation program, yet how to represent their knowledge of their mathematics planning in the Math Task 4 lesson segment template was elusive for them.

In Chung’s (2008) study, they described that planning for the teaching event in a performance assessment has the potential to feel fabricated. Consistent with Chung’s findings, in this study, the teacher candidates described how foreign the Math Task 4 lesson segment template was for them. In addition, planning felt fabricated for teacher candidates in how they had to
choose which parts of their mathematics teaching to include. Leslie described how she included much more detail in her simulated Math Task 4 assignment than she was able to for Math Task 4 since she was now required to implement more lessons in the same template. The teacher candidates were not able to merge field placement planning experiences into the planning for Math Task 4 and they found themselves hesitant about what should be included.

Interestingly, in Denton’s (2013) study, they found that teacher candidates who chose to shorten the Math Task 4 learning segment, by teaching the minimum of three days, resulted in an unanticipated benefit of providing additional time to prepare the edTPA documents for final submission. In this study, none of the teacher candidates reported making the choice to limit their Math Task 4 learning segment for the sole purpose of finding additional time to prepare materials. However, teacher candidates did find themselves questioning their conception of planning because of their experiences in preparing the lesson segment template. Additionally, numerous studies have reported the time intensive demand of teacher candidates preparing edTPA templates (Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017; Denton, 2013; Greenblatt, 2015; Paugh et al., 2017). Similar to this study, the teacher candidates described how intense the pressure of completing edTPA was for them within a constrained timeline and therefore they felt edTPA was dominating the time they had during student teaching.

The MAC was the other template where teacher candidates had to construct a written response to in order to represent the effectiveness of their teaching. In contrast to the Math Task 4 lesson segment template, the MAC, teacher candidates did not find it challenging to stay under the maximum page number of eight. For instance, Leslie described that she did not know any of her peers who experienced this challenge and in fact she felt they were struggling to write to the maximum page number. Previously Denton’s (2013) study found that the high-scoring portfolios
had included more written pages in their commentaries than the low-scoring counterparts. While the final assessment templates and scores across teacher candidates were not studied in this way the struggle to articulate how much writing was enough was challenging for the teacher candidates. In this study, Rebecca found herself in an elusive state when she was debating what else to say and how to say more about the prompts in her MAC. Additionally, four of the teacher candidates recalled experiences where elusiveness appeared when they were trying to interpret the prompts. Through analysis, the findings in this study suggests that teacher candidates felt that the prompts were very repetitive and that the language in the prompts were sometimes challenging to decipher.

As a solution to experiencing confusion about the MAC, Corliss (2015) suggested that prior to preparing materials for edTPA teacher candidates must understand the prompts in the MAC so that the assessment concepts can be anticipated throughout the assessment. In this study, teacher candidates were introduced to the prompts prior to the preparation of Math Task 4, yet the document still eluded teacher candidates as to how they should respond. They found themselves unsure of language within the prompt and they were not sure of what the prompt required in their response. For example, Julia struggled with understanding how to cite student work samples. Writing for evaluative measures was elusive for Julia. She described in the final interview how she scored lower than anticipated in a particular area and she attributed it to the possibility that she was sometimes contriving responses she felt she needed for the purpose of accuracy. In Paugh and colleagues (2017) study they found teacher candidates experiencing uncertainty about the assessment could hinder the reflective features intended in edTPA.

The Handbook and rubrics were resources intended to support teacher candidates as they completed edTPA. However, these resources also proved to be elusive to teacher candidates, and
therefore were not found useful for the intended purpose. Given the time-consuming pressure of completing edTPA templates this could have prevented teacher candidates from feeling they had enough time to reference the handbook beyond defining terms as they did in this study. Three of the teacher candidates referenced the sole purpose of the handbook for them was to define unknown terms they encountered during the assessment. However, when teacher candidates found themselves in an elusive state while responding to the templates they considered or attempted to seek clarification in the handbook and within the rubrics. The rubrics also lacked conveying clarity when teacher candidates sought information from their contents. Based on findings from Corliss’s (2015) study, they claim that if the handbook contents, including the rubrics, are analyzed prior to preparation of edTPA, teacher candidates will be able to encounter and meet expectations of the cognitive demand of edTPA. However, findings in this study were more consistent with Denton’s (2013) study, teacher candidates lacked clarity when using the handbook and rubrics and these documents were not useful in supporting their completion of edTPA. For instance, the teacher candidates found that the conciseness of the handbook and the lack of clarity were too much for them to overcome and therefore they ignored the expectations outlined in the documents in order to complete edTPA within the required timeline.

Elusiveness was embedded in the teacher candidates’ sense making process while they interacted with the edTPA templates. The façade of understanding infiltrated previous understandings and created new ones. The word façade was used to describe the internal struggle that teacher candidates were experiencing while they were having to produce an outward composure during their student teaching placement. Teacher candidates were struggling to interpret edTPA templates and reestablish relationships while completing edTPA. The transferring of information between contexts, university coursework to field-based student teaching, about edTPA
documents proved that teacher candidates still found the documents elusive even after coursework experiences. Hiebert and Morris (2012) assert that to build effective mathematics teachers, teacher candidates must be introduced to the routines during their university coursework experiences. Teacher candidates in this study were introduced to routines of teaching elementary mathematics such as anticipating children’s mathematical thinking. However, transferring this information to the field-based experience of student teaching, coupled with the preparation of Math Task 4, was demanding. Five of the teacher candidates described their feelings of elusiveness in sense making as overwhelming causing them to lack confidence and caused them to have reservations due to uncertainty of how to pull Math Task 4 and student teaching placement norms together. Similarly, Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) found in their study teacher candidates had similar tensions associated with edTPA and felt it was due to the nature of edTPA being a summative high-stakes outcome measure.

Overall, as teacher candidates found themselves in elusiveness as they interacted with the edTPA documents it also hindered their sense making process during edTPA preparation. Paugh et al. (2017) found that the intensive writing of edTPA documents caused a disruption to their student teaching experience. Also, Adkins (2016) claims that persevering through the training process of using edTPA documents will yield useful information as she has witnessed at her own university. In this study teacher candidates were found to be using a façade of understanding to assist in the inferring process throughout Math Task 4.

**Establishing fit to complete Math Task 4.** Elusiveness appeared when teacher candidates enacted Math Task 4 in a classroom that was not their own and an inability to access their network of experts. Teacher candidates are novice in learning to become teachers and therefore need support from their CT or university supervisor during their student teaching semester.
Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) points out that edTPA is being used as one requirement in some states for initial certification and is modeled after the in-service equivalent, NBPTS. This assessment is designed for an experienced certified teacher who makes the choice to take it for advancing their certification level. edTPA was not optional for the teacher candidates in this study. Additionally, Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2016) claimed in-service teachers are given the option to complete the assessment as well as having access to their own classroom during the assessment. In this study, teacher candidates completing Math Task 4 were expected to perform for a high-stakes assessment in a classroom they had little to no control over as the student teacher. Embedding Math Task 4 as a summative performance assessment in the student teaching experience unintentionally cuts off the teacher candidates’ network of experts. The teacher candidates were now forced to make independent decisions about mathematics instruction in their student teaching placement and exercise this role to complete Math Task 4.

All of the teacher candidates in this study described experiences related to feeling that their experts; university faculty, supervisors, and CTs were available yet inaccessible because of edTPA. In Pecheone and Whittaker’s (2016) study, they claim that CT’s discovery and understanding about supporting teacher candidates has proved to be useful through a successful completion of edTPA. In their study, none of the CTs had previous experiences with edTPA nor understood the expectations well enough to support teacher candidates. Furthermore, Greenblatt (2015) cautions that the use of edTPA can cause dissonance between the teacher candidate and the CT. For example, in this study, when Stacey implemented her Math Task 4 lessons at the onset of each mathematics class for 10-15 minutes she felt this was her only option since it came from her CT and neither of them could embed this type of mathematics teaching into the typical
classroom curriculum. This dissonance caused Stacey and her CT to question the usefulness of the Math Task 4 lessons within the context of an elementary classroom.

Similarly, four teacher candidates in this study felt they needed additional support in understanding the contents of edTPA from their supervisor during student teaching. However, supervisors took on the role to support teacher candidates with the timeline expectations of student teaching. Moreover, supervisors would conduct observations of teacher candidates teaching in their student teaching placement, yet teacher candidates saw this as a separate event from performing for Math Task 4 and therefore the feedback did not inform teacher candidates with their performance assessment. Findings from Soslau & Rath’s (2017) study suggests, supervisors should support teacher candidates during student teaching using both formative and summative assessments to support their teaching effectiveness. In this study, teacher candidates faced challenges when they implemented mathematics lessons aligned to the teaching practices they learned in their university coursework for Math Task 4. For instance, Nicole’s supervisor gave her a less than desirable observation score since Nicole chose to elicit students’ strategies prior to whole class discourse about the strategies. Her supervisor advised Nicole she should be showing solution strategies prior to letting students’ independently solving a mathematics problem. Leslie had a similar occurrence with her supervisor. Leslie’s supervisor explained in a debriefing conference that her pedagogical practices were not useful in supporting students’ understanding of the content. Leslie claimed she was following the recommendation of her university instructor to meet Math Task 4 requirements. These teacher candidates had access to their university supervisors yet, were unable to benefit from their expertise due to the difference in philosophy from Math Task 4 expectations. Also, Sato (2014) asserts that teacher preparation is a highly individualized process and that outsourcing the grading and employing standardized outcome measures
puts teacher preparation at risk for becoming standardized and removes the personalized relationships with the experts. Additionally, this study found that edTPA affords the opportunity of connecting university coursework to field-based experiences, consistent with other studies (e.g., Au, 2013, Darling-Hammond et al., 2010).

While problems within student teaching already existed prior to edTPA, these problems have now become magnified. Soslau and Rath (2017) claim that university instructors, typically specialized in a content area, prepare teacher candidates for student teaching and then during student teaching supervisors and CTs, who typically do not have content specific training are overseeing teacher candidates’ successful implementation. The disconnect between university coursework and field-based experiences was also found in this study. Two of the teacher candidates wanted to consult university faculty during their student teaching experience but were unable to because of edTPA preparation. Specifically, the teacher candidates felt it would be a conflict of interest to consult university faculty about the question they had concerning subject matter knowledge. Therefore, teacher candidates resorted to referring to coursework materials. Teacher candidates did not know which experts they could rely on for support yet being novices, they expressed still needing support. Barron (2015) suggests that experts at the university as well as during the field placement supporters need to be properly trained in supporting teacher candidates during the preparation of their edTPA materials. The requirements of edTPA cut off the experts from the novice. All of the teacher candidates in this study felt they needed to seek additional pedagogical assistance from their experts who were inaccessible because of edTPA.

**Not knowing the scoring and feedback procedures.** Adkins, a university dean who has found edTPA to benefit her university more than cause harm, claims edTPA rubrics provide a measure of teacher effectiveness, which details the complexity instead of standardizing teacher
effectiveness outcomes (Adkins, 2016). In my findings, none of the teacher candidates could interpret the complexity of the rubrics and were left making decisions about the high-stakes assessment without clear grading guidelines. Therefore, questioning the educative nature of edTPA (Denton, 2013; Greenblatt, 2015). As an instructor using a simulated Math Task 4 assignment in my mathematics methods course, I distributed and graded on a rubric. Yet, the rubric I used during the simulated task is scaled differently than the 5-item Likert scale rubrics used for Math Task 4. The rubric in the simulated assignment was similar to other coursework assignment rubrics and therefore I did not feel the need to change the format. However, after analyzing the findings in this study, I now use a class session to cover the edTPA rubrics in depth with my students. SCALE (2016), has created a document titled, *Understanding Rubric Level Progressions* which unpacks the scoring decisions within each of the eighteen rubrics. Teacher candidates’ uncertainty about the grading guidelines led them to ignore the rubrics altogether. Upon receiving their final scores, they even mentioned the lack of usefulness for determining why they received individual scores on the rubrics and found relief in passing edTPA. Adkins (2016), reported the three hundred dollars expense to the candidate to score edTPA is well justified given the wealth of feedback received. However, edTPA scoring and feedback was in large part ignored by teacher candidates since they could not interpret the complexity of the rubrics. Additionally, in this study the teacher candidates did not receive any feedback that was different than the exact statements found in the rubrics. For instance, three teacher candidates reported that the scorers placed the description of their earned level from each rubric in the scoring report, yet the information was useless because they did not understand the rubric originally. While the literature suggests that edTPA has some benefits over the paper and pencil content assessment (Adkins, 2016; Au, 2013; Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017) some are still concerned about a remote
scorer providing teacher candidates outcome measures they cannot interpret (Chandler-Olcott & Fleming, 2017; Denton; 2013; Dover & Schultz, 2016; Paugh et al., 2017). In this study the teacher candidates all received a passing score and they found content in seeing they passed however they still had uncertainty about the scoring procedures.

Implications

The findings from this study provide implications for stakeholders supporting teacher candidates understanding of Math Task 4. Understanding how teacher candidates found themselves in the state of elusiveness allows for edTPA coordinators as well as university faculty and supervisors to consider supports of clarification associated with edTPA. Considering how a hierarchical structure that fosters the student-teacher relationship is now impacted by the implementation of edTPA during the student teaching semester could offer insight to alleviating elusiveness for the teacher candidates. For instance, common professional development for university faculty and supervisors about how to support teacher candidates through the preparation of edTPA could foster teacher candidates understanding of how to meet edTPA requirements. Through professional development faculty and supervisors can learn more about how to support teacher candidates in transferring university-based materials and content knowledge into the student teaching context as they navigate edTPA. For example, explicating the learning goals of signature assignments embedded in university coursework to university supervisors may allow for clearer understanding of pedagogical practices recommended by edTPA, specifically, Math Task 4. Teacher candidates in this study tried on new and challenging pedagogical practices for a novice (Forzani, 2014) during the implementation of their Math Task 4 lessons. Math Task 4 forced the facilitation of university coursework much to the dismay of some university supervisors. Offering clear learning goals of signature assignments may support supervisors in providing better-
aligned feedback during student teaching observations and conferences. Additionally, professional development workshops for CTs about edTPA would be useful in supporting the relationship between the candidate and the CT. For instance, the university could dually train university supervisors in understanding edTPA and supporting CTs understanding of edTPA. A consensus about the expectations and allowances of teacher candidates’ network of experts might eliminate the elusiveness teacher candidates found during the preparation of edTPA. Notably, SCALE has published and disseminated *edTPA Guidelines for Acceptable Candidate Support*. The intent of this document is to define the feedback allowed by experts supporting teacher candidates during their high-stakes completion of edTPA. Teacher candidates in this study described the constraints of the feedback their supervisors and CTs offered. Teacher candidates felt the feedback was too general or not useful in supporting their instructional decisions during student teaching.

Revision of supports in place during the simulated Math Task 4 assignment during my coursework may help to clarify the demands of the edTPA documents. For example, as briefly discussed, I began unpacking the scoring procedures of the Math Task 4 rubrics as provided in a document created by SCALE (2016). The process of explaining the scoring guidelines and distributing the scoring procedures to teacher candidates will offer clarity in the scoring process. However, the teacher candidates in this study described their impression that scoring at the top of the rubrics was unattainable. Furthermore, only one out of the six teacher candidates in this study received a 5, the highest rubric score possible, on one rubric and it was not Math Task 4. Also, the reporting of the final scores was less than desirable for the teacher candidates. They all passed the edTPA, which means the edTPA was not a gatekeeper into their desired profession. However, the educative process of edTPA during student teaching was interrupted due to the lack of feedback and process of score reporting. Specifically, Julia desired to understand why she
was rated at various levels on the rubrics. For example, she had been complimented by university supervisors’, throughout her teacher preparation program, for being very reflective of her teaching. The edTPA rubric scoring the reflective nature of her teaching, she earned a 2. This mismatch raised concerns for Julia and she felt she was not able to interpret the meaning of the 2 because of the lack of clarity in the scoring procedures and feedback.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies should continue to study the impact of edTPA locally and more broadly to assess the effects on teacher preparation in the U.S. and to determine if edTPA leads to better prepared teachers. Moreover, a high-stakes assessment during teacher candidates’ student teaching experience as a result of policy mandates creates an additional layer of complexity within an already complex system of teacher preparation, particularly during student teaching. Consistent with previous studies (Burns et al., 2015; Meuwissen et al., 2015; Chandler-Olcott, Fleming, & Nieroda, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2017), further research must continue to reflect on the demands associated with edTPA within and across content areas and teacher preparation programs. Studies could focus on the affordance of edPTA in building professional autonomy. Since teacher candidates chose to implement pedagogical practices different from the norm into their student teaching classroom, even against their university supervisors’ recommendations, did this decision-making process build their professional autonomy? If so, how? Another area of focus could be examining the impact of Math Task 4 once teacher candidates become licensed professionals. Since the teacher candidates in this study chose to enact pedagogical practices they had learned in their university coursework during student teaching, do they continue to enact these pedagogical practices as a licensed teacher? Is Math Task 4 influencing the elementary classroom by the intended purpose of producing more effective mathematics teachers? As the body of knowledge
continues to grow policy makers and stake holders alike should give careful consideration to the findings of these studies about the impact it is having on teacher preparation programs in the U.S.

Limitations of the Study

Graduate and undergraduate students in various programs complete edTPA for initial certification requirements, this study focused on undergraduate elementary teacher candidates. To excavate how elementary teacher candidates’, experience the phenomenon that exists in my elementary mathematics methods course and while completing Math Task 4 this population, enrolled in their undergraduate elementary degree, was most relevant. In addition, the decision to focus on students enrolled at the large urban university was most relevant since this is the context for the mathematics courses that I teach. Knowing the lived experiences of these elementary teacher candidates at this university was important for this phenomenological inquiry.
REFERENCES


research design in mathematics and science education. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.


Vagle, M. D. (2014). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.


APPENDICES

Interview 1

Hello, thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. My goal in this conversation is to get an idea of your experiences beginning edTPA Math Task 4. As we talked about when you signed the consent form, nobody in the program knows that you are talking with me today, so I want you to feel comfortable sharing about your experiences without being concerned that I will tell others what you said. When I talk and write about what I am learning, I will not ever use your name and will keep your identity confidential. Do you have any questions about that?

So, I want us to just talk and I am going to take notes on what you say. These are not judging notes. It is just to help me organize my thinking. I have some questions prepared to ask you, but I want this to be a conversation, so you do not have to wait for a question. To get us started, let me tell you about the little bit I know about your experiences--I know that you were asked to complete a mock Math Task 4 in your block III mathematics methods course, but I don’t know anything about your particular experience with that. I also know you have had some seminars related to edTPA. I am not as familiar with the process of edTPA Math Task 4 in block IV. So, feel free to talk about any of that and also feel free to talk about any experiences you have had that aren’t in a formal class or seminar. I want to start by inviting you to share any initial stories or experiences with me that could help me to better understand your thoughts, feelings, reactions related to edTPA Math Task 4.

Listen and ask these types of questions:

- What happened?
- What did you do?
- What did you say?
- What did you think?

If the participant is unable to produce an experience or story I will use the following prompts:
1. I want you to go back in time and try to put yourself in the moment when you first heard about edTPA. Tell me about anything you remember about that moment. Do you remember what was said? Do you remember where you were sitting? What thoughts were going on in your mind—stuff like that. Anticipated follow ups: Tell me about being nervous (etc.) What was that like for you? How do you feel about beginning edTPA Math Task 4?

2. What other moments do you remember related to the edTPA—and specifically Math Task 4 if you have any? Anticipated follow ups: What was it like to read the edTPA Math Task 4 in the edTPA Handbook?

3. Let’s talk a little about your current field work? What parts of the edTPA have you done so far? Have you completed the context for learning in math yet? Anticipated follow ups: what was it like to talk with your CT…) Can you describe your experience talking with your CT about your context for learning document or asking for permission to complete the learning segment?

4. What are your thoughts about edTPA Math Task 4 as an assessment for your teaching certification?

5. I have reviewed the pacing timeline for edTPA and I’m aware that an expectation at this point is for you is to be working through or to be completed with reading the edTPA Math Task 4 in the edTPA Handbook. Can you describe your experience of reading Math Task 4?
Interview 2

Introduction and questions for all participants:

Hello, it is so nice to see you again. Today I want to begin by inviting you to share any experiences or stories about Math Task 4 since our last meeting.

1. Prompts for the student teaching seminar: Tell me about the edTPA Math Task 4 seminar. What were you thinking? What did you do?
2. Did you have to go over anything with your C.T. about the next edTPA Math Task 4 step? How did that go?

Individual questions by participant:

Julia

1. Do you feel like you’ve gotten an actual teaching experience since the last time we met?
2. Last time you said do I do a # story is that what they are looking for? I want to know who is they? Have you figured out what they are looking for?
3. Have you had any experiences with edTPA “taking away your student teaching experience”?
4. Do you still feel like edTPA doesn’t go away? Tell me about it not going away
5. Another idea that you said was that “edTPA was not making you a teacher that this was just another test”. Describe that for me.
6. Tell me about a time you’ve been working through edTPA and you thought I don’t know what edTPA wants, I need clarity

Nicole

1. Can you explain this statement that you made last time, “It is like good luck and I’m like oh my goodness”
2. Last time you were talking about being a disruption to the grade level. Have you disrupted the first grade pacing guide?

3. How was it figuring out your standards and planning it in your own time line?

4. You also described feeling like a disruption to the classroom. Do you still feel like a disruption to the classroom? If so, how?

5. You don’t want edTPA to get the better of you. How have you navigated that?

6. Do you still feel like a student in the classroom or a teacher teaching?

7. How does it still feel like edTPA has been chosen for you as a priority?

8. You said, “This semester is a lot more overwhelming so let me go literally week by week”, How has this semester felt more overwhelming?

9. What did you mean when you said this, “edTPA is like more pushing my limits” How?

10. You don’t want future teacher candidates to feel this guilt. How do you feel that guilt?

**Leslie**

1. Tell me more about a statement you made at our last meeting, “I really noticed, and I haven’t quiet decided how I feel about it” Is that the Math Task 4 is very assessment driven

2. Last time you described this idea of a focus assessment instead of assessing every lesson. Describe to me what it is like for you to think about a focus assessment as a teacher candidate.

3. The first moment that you heard about edTPA you said that you were confused, Now that you are preparing to undertake edTPA do you still fill confused? Is it the same kind of confused? Describe that state of confused for me. What does it mean to be confused about edTPA?
Jessica

4. Tell me about what it was like to “hear about edTPA but no one wanted to talk about it. It was kind of like everyone whispered about it.”

   - When was a time that you felt like someone was whispering about edTPA?

5. Tell me about this statement, “That is where I started to get scared, because I don’t think it was broken down into terms that it could have been.”

6. Tell me about “surprisingly not nervous” what does that mean to you?

7. At one point during the last interview you described a situation where you felt that your block II teacher, “tried to give you as much information as possible with the packet and you were overwhelmed.” Then, later as we were talking, you said that, “you feel more relaxed because of the guidance.” Tell me about those two descriptions.

Rebecca

1. edTPA was this thing that felt so overwhelming. You wished for a seminar that would just tell you about edTPA. Was the Math Task 4 Seminar what you were imagining?

2. Initially simulated Math Task 4 was super overwhelming. How does it feel this semester?

3. The group me was a valuable resource during Block III when working through the simulated edTPA tasks. What resources do you value this semester?

4. You said, “It is scary because you don’t know if you are doing it right.” How did you live through that?

5. Your CT you described as being super supportive. She threw you into a lesson and she’s willing to assist you with edTPA. How has that support been for you?
6. At the end of the last interview, you were confused and didn’t know where to start or how to merge the math curriculum with edTPA. You said you felt lost.
   o What has that been like?
   o At the seminar?
   o During planning?
   o During implementing Math Task 4?

**Stacey**

1. The last time we met, you said that you were, “clueless, unsure about edTPA, edTPA was scary, serious real official, and coming fast.” Can you describe for me what you meant?

2. Then you said, “I can’t breathe edTPA is all up in my face.” Tell me more about that

3. edTPA is this cloud. Describe the cloud of edTPA for me.

4. You also said, “The lesson plan feels empty.”
   o Are you planning for Math Task 4 currently?
   o Does it still feel empty?
   o Are you writing in the optional boxes?
Interview 3

Introduction and questions for all participants:

Hello, so today we are meeting because you are working through or have finished your assessment commentary for Math Task 4. Tell me what that means to you? Do you have a story that stands out in your mind about edTPA Math Task 4?

Individual questions by participant:

Julia

1. Tell me when you found yourself thinking about this statement you made “a crap load of stuff you don’t want to do.”

2. How have you experienced “Feeling like you have so much to do, but you don’t know what to do.”

3. How did you “find it in yourself to grade the math assessments?”

4. Tell me more about this statement, “I don’t know if I can use it for edTPA? Which is sad.”

5. How has the “math portion been positive for you?”

6. “I think that it would be a lot more stressful than it is.” How has Math Task 4 been stressful for you?

7. “I don’t know what they want me to assess.” How did you find what they wanted you to assess?

8. Tell me when you found yourself not being able to “turn off edTPA.”

9. “You’re going on that confidence. I don’t have confidence in the little technicality rules.” Describe for me how you have found yourself being carried by the confidence and lacking confidence.
10. edTPA as the Cloud:
   - Tell me about this, “overlying cloud of edTPA.” How is it “sucking the life out of you?”
   - “It is kind of like all of these different clouds.” Tell me more about your cloud
   - “I could’ve learned things without edTPA. Which I did. The pressure and the cloud suck the life out of student teaching.” Tell me how that pressure has sucked the life out of student teaching for you.
   - You’ve described your clouds in colors, black to dark grey, and in size, little too big. Describe a time when you remember edTPA’s cloud being present.

Nicole

1. How was it for you to have, “some trouble”, when you were trying to kick off your Math Task 4?
2. You felt “bad” for being sick. Why did you feel bad?
3. The number stories felt like they were “sticking” to you. Can you describe that for me?
4. The last time you were focused on developing your assessment. Tell me about what that was like for you.
5. The Handbook has been a valuable resource for you. Describe a time where you needed to stop and read the Handbook.
6. “Stressful cause I’m still getting to know the kids. It is hard when I just came in. I just met them. I’m kind of jumping in to it” Is that feeling still there?
   - How so?
7. If you started in placement earlier and stayed with this group, then it would be more “realistic”.
8. Last time you said that edTPA Math Task 4 still feels overwhelming.
   a. How has it felt overwhelming?
   b. What does overwhelming feel like?
9. Describe for me what you mean by edTPA being hard?

Leslie
1. So, did you take the “number stories route?” What was it like for you to make that decision?
2. The last time you weren’t sure what edTPA wanted. Can you tell me about a time you needed to decide, but you didn’t know what edTPA wanted?
3. “It is definitely hard to challenge that…and it is hard for the kids.”
   a. Describe for me where you felt you were challenging the gradual release model.
   b. Describe for me how it was hard for the kids.
4. Did you, “step on toes or overstep boundaries” while working through Math Task 4?
5. During the last seminar you said, “If you do this [number stories] you will hit all the components.” You said this statement was made at the Math Task 4 seminar. How did you hit all the components in Math Task 4?
6. “We are a little boxed in.” Describe that for me.
7. Evaluating student work, “the last time you didn’t know what to do.” How did you get through that evaluation this time?
   a. What was that experience like for you?
8. Last semester the mock math task, you described as a “pain.” Do you feel that way about Math Task 4?
9. “It is kind of like what I’ve learned. What edTPA is telling us contradicts” each other. Tell me more about that statement.

Jessica

1. “I’m still a little nervous,” how?

2. You described your initial introduction to edTPA as, “hush hush.” How would you describe edTPA’s presence now?

3. You mentioned that, “you’ve noticed if your CT isn’t comfortable with something she brushes it off.” Do you feel that you’ve been brushed off in planning or teaching edTPA Math Task 4?

4. You said last time you were just going to, “own this and teach it.” Can you describe a moment where you, “owned it?”

5. “It has become more than edTPA.” Tell me about it and edTPA.

6. “Honestly, I didn’t think about edTPA.” How did you do that?

7. “I feel stronger. Because, while I am teaching I feel like I have been given this responsibility…It becomes more than just teaching edTPA.” Tell me more about that statement.

8. “That’s when I realize this hasn’t been my class all along.” Tell me more about a moment you realized this wasn’t your class.

9. Last time you said, “I’m at a good place. As far as you know this part of the math task” How did you find that good place?

10. “They are very picky” Who are they?
    
    o Why do you think they are picky?
11. “Time to type edTPA. Oh, this is a piece of cake because you get a little box.” Describe for me, as you were typing in that box, when you found yourself thinking this is a piece of cake?

12. “edTPA is looking for the writing.” What was it like for you to sit down and write for edTPA?

**Rebecca**

1. Describe to me what is it like, “To make [edTPA] up as you go.”

2. How has edTPA “forced you to dive in”?

3. “I feel like we wouldn’t be working as hard as we are with edTPA.” Tell me more about that.

4. You said there is a “disconnect between edTPA and what you taught with story problems and WMT,” describe that disconnect.

5. “CGI story problems that is not wat my teacher is doing” You chose to teach the story problems the CGI way for Math Task 4 instead of your CTs way. Why did you do that?

6. What was it like to make a decision like that?

7. “Today a lot of them started to do different things so I was like yes I know what I’m Doing” Tell me more about that lesson and how it was to feel that you knew what you were doing

8. Tell me more about “this is the real deal so that’s why it is so overwhelming”

9. How does “knowing that [you] do have room to mess up…ease [your] nerves”?

**Stacey**

1. The last time you had just kicked off your learning segment. How did that go?
2. “I’m doing my little floaty like edTPA hippie [math], ‘I want you to think for yourself.’

[Then] I turn it over and its back to what they are used to…I just want to be done.” Describe that statement for me.

3. “Being forced to do something that they wouldn’t usually do. I don’t know what that is going to look like, I’ll tell you next week. When I’m trying to teach multiple strategies”

Tell me about that, now that it is next week. How did you feel forced?

4. How did you live through what your CT wanted from you in their classroom and what edTPA wanted from you for Math Task 4?

5. “I don’t know. I need to go and read the handbook” How does it feel to say I don’t know in your assessment? Did you go read the handbook?

6. “You are assessing how small of a box you could put me in and see what you could get and that is what you are assessing right now” Explain that statement to me.

7. “edTPA you don’t know my life” How did edTPA not know your life?

8. “It is just a lot of confusion where I think this cloud is just kind of this haze and you just try to make your way through” How did you make your way through the haze?

9. “I think that my supervisor questioned my whole thing [edTPA]” Tell me more about this statement. Where were you? What were you doing? What were you thinking?

10. “Yeah like edTPA wants in order to say that we can teach math effectively this is crazy.”

Tell me more about that statement.

11. In reference to the learning segment, you describe it as “empty” does it still feel empty?
Interview 4

Introduction and questions for all participants:

Hello, so today we are meeting because you have completed edTPA and received your final scores! Anything you are wanting to share with me today? What has happened since our last interview? Catch me up!

The topics below will be used as probes when necessary (i.e. The process, preparation, living through it, receiving the feedback/score, etc.)

- Local evaluators
- Peer editors
- Final upload completion of MAC
- Rest of edTPA
- Receiving your scores

Individual questions by participant:

Julia

1. In our last interview you mentioned that you felt more calm, that your life was getting a “little less sucked out” and that you were starting to relax.
   - Describe how that happened

2. What was the experience like of you trying to identify a misconception and the teachers in your field placement, as you said, “They weren’t even able to like have a conversation about it”?
   - Once you found your answer, did you share your findings with anyone at your placement?

3. Unpack this statement for me, “I was briefly going over edTPA and none of the administrators at that school know what edTPA is which I feel is a problem”

4. What would you be doing when you found yourself thinking this, “it is nothing to do with edTPA, so it is not really important is what I keep telling myself”
5. Describe what the pressure of edTPA was like for you.

6. Over the course of our interviews, you described a cloud and this cloud was black then darkish gray the gray to lighter gray. Unpack your cloud for me. What were you doing when you knew you were in your cloud? How did the color change? What did it mean when the color was changing?

7. You said it “was hard to take over somebody’s class”. Describe what that was like for you.

8. Throughout the interviews, you have talked about interjecting yourself. Describe to me how you interjected.

9. You’ve said, “I don’t want to do it because I am afraid that what I am doing isn’t good enough like is this what edTPA wants?” and I don’t usually have anxiety but with this, I do?
   - What did you mean by these statements,
     - Afraid
     - Anxiety
   - How did you work through those feelings?
     - What did you do?

10. “I have to be very very careful how I ask stuff I’m like okay I am going to ask this person, but I am not going to tell them that it is about edTPA” AND You said “I don’t know what edTPA wants so we need to ask our experts and they are not allowed to tell us anything”
    - When was a time that you found yourself having to be careful?
What is it like to be very very careful?

How did you work through these situations?

Do you know what edTPA wants now?

11. Another statement you made was “whether or not edTPA brought up that thinking or brought up that question I still need to know the answer regardless if it is for edTPA or if it is for real life teaching”

Are edTPA and real life teaching the same?

How would you describe real life teaching?

12. “I don’t think it you know shows my teacher effectiveness skills, but I have learned stuff through it which I feel like is a positive”

What did you learn from edTPA?

Why did it not assess your teacher effectiveness?

13. You’ve mentioned in the previous interviews that edTPA was “too much pressure”

Describe that pressure for me.

Nicole

1. The last time we met, you had most of your math commentary finished you just needed to go back and ‘make sure it sounded good’. How was the rest of that experience for you?

2. During your teaching of the math lessons, you said, “I did get to see some of their thinking, but it was a very difficult process”. What made it a difficult process?

3. You said that you had two students in your edTPA that were considered to have low performance in math and during your teaching of the edTPA lessons they didn’t get the additional time or extra assistance that they normally do during math class. How did you make that decision? How did it feel to make that decision?
4. How did you feel about your observation when your Georgia State supervisor disagreed with one of your edTPA Lessons?
   - You said that she gave you the vibe that your lesson wasn’t the best for edTPA
   - What did you do after you met with your supervisor?

5. How did it feel to have some professors that you viewed as experts in certain areas of edTPA while you viewed others as unaware of edTPA?
   - Where their other people besides professors that you viewed as edTPA experts
   - Where their other people besides professors that you viewed as unaware of edTPA?
   - What was it like for you to work on edTPA and “everyone wasn’t on the same page”
     - What does it mean to be on the same page?
   - “they didn’t understand what you were doing”
     - How did you know that they didn’t understand what you were doing?

6. What was it like to work through edTPA and have to play ‘catch-up’ in the classroom?

7. “edTPA is a lot harder to show and encapsulate everything that I am doing in a lesson”
   - How so?

8. You were in a position where your school only allowed assessments on Fridays. If something happened during the week, like a holiday or you or your CT being sick you had to start your learning segment again.
   - Did you have to start your learning segment over because of something that happened?
   - What happened?
9. You consulted the edTPA handbook but found an error and it didn’t answer your question. Did you ever find the answer to your question? What did you do?

10. Say more about this statement to me “Everything with edTPA came quickly and you felt like you were still learning to swim.”

11. Initially you said that edTPA was overwhelming but then you said that you were “over that”
   - How did you get over that?
   - What happened?

12. You were told to make a ‘back-up’ edTPA but you didn’t’ tell your CT because you didn’t know how she would feel about you saying, “I don’t think that I am going to make it” I need to have a backup.
   - What was it like for you to make the decision to not share that information with your CT?
   - How did you make the decision not to share that with your CT?

Leslie

1. You mentioned last time that your supervisor observed one of your edTPA math lessons and didn’t agree with the order of the lesson. You allowed the students to explore and then discussed the strategies. How was the feedback you received from your supervisor after you submitted your edTPA?

2. You felt that this edTPA Math Task 4 experience was easier than your mock experience
   - Can you describe to me why that was?

3. What is an experience that stands out in your mind about edTPA?
4. What are your thoughts about edTPA math task 4 as an assessment for your teaching certification?

Jessica

1. Last time you said, “It’s all good” you felt like you were getting stuff done and you felt “accomplished” Where are you now that you have your results in hand?

2. Walk me through the experience of finishing up Math Task 4
   - How was to finalize the “knit picky” commentary?
   - What is “knit picking”?
   - How was preparing for final upload?
   - What were the steps you had to take to get ready?

3. Describe for me what it meant for you to be “complacent” with edTPA.

4. Unpack this statement for me “I am being forced to do this I am trying to learn from it and I am trying to take stuff from it and I do see that it is pretty cool”

5. You mentioned last time that you want the larger education community to have an understanding of edTPA. You mention your CT’s inability to support you was due to her lack of awareness with edTPA’s existence, your supervisor could only ask these probing questions, which you mentioned one of your questions wasn’t grammatically correct, and also your mom, who is an experienced educator, your conversation about edTPA has been limited with her, you said “I try to explain it but she is confused because she didn’t do it… Describe an experience you had during edTPA where you needed the support of the larger education community with edTPA
   - What did you do?
   - How did you make your decisions?
6. When you sat down to grade your first round of assessments after your learning segment you said “I definitely went into panic mode…I kept changing my point values…I realized that when I was trying to put it into evaluation criteria the rubric was just out of too many point”
   - What does it mean to go into panic mode?
   - How did you come to a decision?

7. What was it like when you were “finding [yourself] making sure you were answering every single thing”?
   - How did you know when you were done?

8. You described having to do the right thing for the students as having this “teaching responsibility” and the right thing for you was “edTPA”. Describe how you juggled the teaching responsibility for edTPA.

9. During the last interview you weren’t a “100 %” clear about the grading process, did you find that clarity before you submitted your edTPA documents?
   - How? OR Why Not?

10. From the beginning of our interviews until now you’ve mentioned throughout that edTPA was “just another hoop we have to jump through, it is just something else that we have to do…I feel like I know about it but sometimes I don’t really understand the purpose or the point of it”
    - Describe that more.
    - How do you feel about edTPA and it process now?

  **Rebecca**
1. When describing your experience with writing the assessment commentary you said, “it wasn’t that bad. I don’t know I thought it was going to be annoying like more annoying than it actually was”
   - Can you unpack that statement for me?

2. Also, the last time you were unclear of how to respond to the probing questions your supervisor had given you. Although you had to respond to the questions by making edits to your edTPA task.
   - What did you do?

3. When you submitted your assessment commentary to your supervisor you said, “I was very relieved, but I knew that it wasn’t my best work because I rushed to do it”
   - How did you find relief in that moment?

4. In our second interview you said, “I have a general idea of what I am supposed to do now…I mean I don’t know I’m still kind of making it up as I go”
   - What did you mean by that?

5. Throughout the interviews you would say things like “I feel good” or “I think edTPA is a good thing” and then after these statements you would say things like “I wish we had more time” or “it is a little scary” or “I feel like I don’t know we are really being thrown in there”
   - How did it feel to work through edTPA with these different types of feelings?

6. One of your peers at your field placements made you feel like you were in a competition at one point when she compared where you were both at with planning and implementing edTPA materials
   - How did you handle that situation?
7. What is an experience that stands out in your mind about edTPA?

8. What are your thoughts about edTPA math Task 4 as an assessment for your teaching certification?

**Stacey**

1. When did you start feeling like, “you knew what you were doing” and no longer stuck in your cloud of confusion?

2. Unpack this statement for me: “They only did it for me on those lessons honestly” How do you know your students were only doing it for you?

3. Last time you stated, “You know they have their own thing that they have to give people what they want like their milestones that’s their people edTPA happens to be mine” Describe what you meant.

4. What did you mean when you said, “Eureka doesn’t require stuff that edTPA does”?

5. When things were confusing how did you get rid of your hazy cloud?
   - What did you do?

6. Describe this statement more for me, “I would be grading work but not like this”
   - How was the grading experience for you?

7. “I am done with it but it still feels a little bit like is this what they want”
   - What do you mean?
   - Did you find what they wanted?

8. “I’m like edTPA math they aren’t seeing that….I am able to plan this stuff out they don’t even know what it looks like cause they didn’t even ask they just gave you a box and you just put whatever you want”
   - What do you mean by “plan this stuff out”
How did you make decisions to plan this stuff out

“"I didn’t even put like academic language”

Why?

How did you feel about that?

9. “I’m just like yeah how dare they tell us to go to the rubric and you’ll be fine”

When did someone tell you to go to the rubric?

What did you do?

How did that feel?

10. Say more about this for me, “we don’t really get a say in that and so it is really not checked off the list because it is not the official and I have to make it official but right now I can’t make it official”

How did that feel?

11. “ I am a robot and I am having to pretend to not be a robot”

What did that mean to you?

How are you a robot? What did you do to pretend to not be a robot?

12. “I don’t know if this is a good idea for kids…because they are just going to show you but then I am like you don’t know about what I’m telling you they are just going to do exactly what you do or exactly what you show exactly what you highlight…so like if you highlight one kid doing something somebody is like okay I will do that too.”

What do you mean you are just telling them and they don’t know?

Whom are you telling?

How?
13. Describe a time where you felt like this, “edTPA says they want this so okay I’ll give them this even if that is what is not there to give but I will create it and I will make my kids do…this weird stuff to them”
   - What were you doing that was weird?

14. “we are all robots edTPA it is too late for me” Unpack what you mean by that statement

15. I hope you are happy edTPA I hope you are happy is that what they wanted?
   - What do you mean?
   - When did you feel like that?

16. You used the word Fanagle in our interviews. What does fanagle mean to you?
   - How did you fanagle edPTA?

17. EdTPA man they would be surprised I mean do they not know what is going on in class-rooms
   - How did you come to this question?

18. Did you CT see any of your completed edTPA stuff
   - Why?

19. “Y’all got me up her pulling standards that we have been off of this like we did decimals two weeks ago and then I just pull it back up”
   - Who are y’all?
   - What was it like to make that decision?

20. In our second interview you said: “I didn’t really want to do that…[talking about adding and subtracting decimals] but that is where they are at in math and so I was like okay I’m going to let them figure out how to do it you know the hundreds grid you know hopefully they’ll do some of that but I’m not going to tell them”
What happened? Did you introduce this idea? Did the students get to explore?

What did you do?

21. “I’m not going to pass edTPA…oh I’m going to pass but that is not GSU I’m scared I’m going to be angry”

   Why did you feel that way?

22. “Okay CT wants them to line up decimals and add or subtract. EdTPA wants to see that plus another strategy”

   How was it to work with your CT and meet edTPA requirements?

23. You’ve mentioned the concern for your students needing to be flexible and their lack of ability to be flexible. Why do you think that is?

24. During your first interview you described a deadline as scary because “they wanted the real official document now” then in the third interview you said you couldn’t check off anything because you were submitting for the GSU deadline and you had to make your stuff official before the edTPA deadline.

   What was that like for you?

   What do you mean by official?

25. “edTPA came so quick and it seemed like it was a near future thing and now it is all up in my face and I can’t breathe”

   What was that like for you?

   Did it change or stay that way?

   Why? How?