

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT TEACHER IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:
PRESERVICE TEACHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School,
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PRESERVICE TEACHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES
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Abstract

This yearlong study considers how five preservice teachers were constructing their teacher identities. The study began the end of their junior year in a teacher education program and concluded after the preservice teachers completed their On Site Senior Year Program [OSSYP]. I examined the narratives the teachers shared in terms of what their stories revealed about the influences on their teaching identities. In addition, a purpose of the study was to determine important questions about teaching identities that might be considered by teacher educators and by teachers themselves.

I used a narrative inquiry approach to this study. The study included six interviews with each of the five preservice teachers over a one year time period. The preservice teachers responded to open-ended questions and often determined their own agendas during the interview process. I read the transcripts of the interviews numerous times using both horizontal and vertical readings. For example, I first read all six interviews from each preservice teacher. Then I read all five of the transcripts according to the sequence of the interviews beginning with the Pilot Study, then the transcripts from the first interview, and so forth. During the readings of the transcripts, I recorded notes in the margins of the transcripts and I documented summary notes in a notebook. As I identified themes in the stories, I completed a grid of the themes as a way of providing a visual overview of the findings for each individual participant. The themes in the stories suggested the influences on how the preservice teachers were constructing their teaching identities. Later in the study, I considered the themes common among the five participants' stories. Despite similarities in the themes, the stories suggesting these

themes varied in their content and in what stage of the study the teacher shared their stories.

The findings indicate the importance of the OSSYP program in providing the context for the social construction of teaching identities. The preservice teachers were constructing their teaching identities through interactions with peers, with supervisors, and with students. Since many aspects of the stories were not in response to an interview prompt, the content of the stories was often intuitive and determined by the preservice teacher. For example, they initiated stories of reflective thinking, the importance of building relationships with their students, and recognition of the teacher knowledge they were constructing.

An implication of this study is the critical importance of engaging preservice teachers in discussions that support them in constructing their teaching identities. Teacher education programs, especially those similar to the OSSYP experience, play a vital role in this identity construction process. An additional implication of this research is the knowledge and understanding of the identity construction process that came from the narratives of the teachers during a time when they were engaged in the construction of their teaching identities.

Chapter One: The Construction of Teacher Identities

Teacher Identities: Who am I As A Teacher?

The questions “Who am I?” and “What kind of teacher do I want to be?” have been addressed by teachers for many years, but only in more recent years have researchers recognized the importance of these questions to the teaching profession as a whole (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2007). These authors suggest that identity construction means building a personal sense of the world along with developing a clear understanding of how teachers see themselves interacting with others. Thomas and Beauchamp argue that professional identity stands at the core of the profession and thereby provides the framework for teachers in the construction of their own ideas of “how to be” and “how to act” as a teacher (p. 230). The critical importance of identity is also suggested by Palmer (2007) who notes that a strong sense of identity is the trait common to all good teachers. Palmer writes that our teaching experiences reveal who we are and that “teaching holds a mirror to the soul” (p. 3), adding that we cannot know our students until we know ourselves. In our teaching, continues Palmer, “We teach who we are” (p. 2).

Narratives In Education

In his landmark book *A Call for Stories*, Robert Coles (1989) shares a quote his supervisor made while Cole was serving his residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. Quoting Ludwig, Coles writes: “What ought to be interesting is the unfolding of a lived life rather than confirmation such a chronicle provides for some theory . . . Let the story itself be our discovery” (p. 22). Moen (2006) argues for the use of narratives in the field of education. He notes the complexity and multidimensional aspects of teaching that

make it difficult to understand the realities of the classroom. Narratives provide the means for understanding these complexities. Narratives, Moen continues, are a researcher's way of uncovering new questions about teaching and uncovering questions in ways that other approaches to research do not accomplish. In telling their narratives, teachers incorporate empirical data with theory. The author suggests also that it is through narratives that we can study teachers as they engage in the practice of teaching, and through narratives we follow a teacher's developmental process. Teachers share their narratives within the context and culture of their teaching lives, adding to the credibility of narratives in supporting our understandings of teaching lives.

Johnson and Golombek (2002) suggest that it is through their stories that teachers reflect on their experiences and make sense of their teaching lives. As they share their stories with one another, teachers inquire into their beliefs and practices as well as question their assumptions. Johnson and Golombek propose that in their stories, teachers weave together their understandings of theory and their knowledge of teaching. Through the stories they tell, teachers situate their knowledge of theory in the context of their teaching. When teachers can make sense of their work, they are empowered as they find justification for their teaching practices.

Narratives That Shaped My Teacher Identity

In 1964, following the same path my mother and her sisters chose, I entered the teaching profession. I attended the same college as my mother and lived in the same dormitory. I learned to use the basal reader and to wear "heels" as appropriate dress attire. After graduation, I returned to my hometown and accepted a teaching position in the same district I had attended for twelve years. By mid-year, following the traditional

path of the 1960s, I was engaged to be married the following summer. I accepted a fourth grade teaching position in State College, Pennsylvania and my husband entered graduate school at Penn State University. Two years of teaching in State College fulfilled the three years required for permanent certification in Pennsylvania. After these two years, my teaching days ended as I turned my attention to caring for a son and daughter.

From Pennsylvania, my husband's work took us to Maryland, back to Pennsylvania, to Missouri, Colorado, and back to Missouri. Fifteen years later and after our children were in college, I returned to teaching after moving to Missouri.

The Schools and Students Who Influenced My Teacher Identity

Rural Pennsylvania: Fourth Grade

My teaching identity, a compilation of the stories from my days in the classroom, began with my first year of teaching. Among my teaching stories from that year, 1964, are the stories of Miss Strasser, the honest-to-goodness "old maid school teacher" who taught directly across the hall. From her, I learned the importance of having fun in the classroom and the impact of a loving, yet strict teacher on her students. For no reason, and at any time of the day, Miss Strasser rolled a kickball into our classroom, much to the delight of her fifth graders and my fourth graders. There were no specials teachers, so I played the piano and sang with my fourth graders. We filled entire afternoons creating a huge mural of Pennsylvania history. Our playground was the field behind the school. A special treat on Friday afternoons was getting the old Scott-Foreman basal readers out of the closet during reading time. To this day, I do not understand what made those books enticing to my students. I remember that we (36 fourth graders and I) read and created and learned. Much to the distain of a supervisor visiting our classroom one day, we had

spilled chocolate milk down over the phonics chart. Even then, for some reason, I just couldn't get too concerned about chocolate milk on the phonics chart.

State College, PA: Fourth Grade

After my husband and I were married, I moved from this small rural community where the majority of students came from families farming rich agricultural land to State College Area Schools where my students' parents were university professors. When the reading consultant explained during my initial visit to the school that the Scientific Research Associates [SRA] reading kit sitting on the windowsill was not to be used, not knowing at the time what SRA was, I soon understood the important implications of the school's decision *not* to use these kits. Instead of reading story cards out of a box and answering multiple-choice questions, we read library books and talked about them. Since the school was the original high school in town, we had access to a large auditorium and stage. A play written by one of my fourth grader students and her mother, scripted for the entire class, was performed on this stage, lighting and heavy velvet drapes drawn between acts adding to the effects. Putting my sewing skills from years of 4-H to use and sitting at the Singer sewing machine, I created animal costumes for the cast.

It was years later when I realized the impact of two years in the State College Area School district on my teaching. The building principal was loved and respected by staff members, and his dedication, professionalism, and non-stop sense of humor set the tone throughout the school. I was offered support from a literacy specialist and I had the freedom to carry out the curriculum as I saw fit. I was free to and expected to make instructional decisions with support from administration and curriculum specialists.

Within this environment, I was secure in accepting responsibilities for implementing the curriculum as I deemed best for my fourth graders.

Rural Missouri: Fifth Grade

I returned to teaching 15 years later, by then living in Missouri. Our son and daughter enrolled in universities in Illinois and I accepted a fifth grade position in a small rural district about 15 minutes from our home. My African-American students, about a third of the student population, came from families who had lived in the community for generations. Many of my students lived in poverty. I remember children with free spirits and a willingness to take risks, and children who knew how to create their own fun. It has always been my contention that these children didn't know they were living in poverty. During my time at this school, I learned about literature discussion groups through a presentation by an instructor at the University of Missouri. Following that presentation and after a ten-minute visit to the superintendent's office and a request for money, I had \$500 to purchase multiple copies of books for literature discussion groups. With books in hand, we formed literature groups, and we read. We made paper mache puppets and wrote stories. The Kiddos brought chickens and turtles to school. My friend Claudia joined the staff two years later and opened the world of picture books to me and my fifth graders. From my principal, Dr. Benner, I learned important lessons about teaching.

When I asked Dr. Benner if a particular student had to complete the fourth grade basal since I saw no need for him to do so, Dr. Benner smiled and replied, "Who the Hell cares if he knows what a schwa e is?" When some of my boys threw wet paper towels out the bathroom window, the fourth-grade teacher was appalled and went storming into Dr. Benner's office to complain. I concluded that no harm had been done and the boys

simply cleaned up their mess. Arriving at Dr. Benner's office at the end of the day, it was clear he knew why I was there. With his feet propped on his desk, and smiling, he commented, "We need to make sure we don't punish children for normal childhood behaviors." End of discussion, issue settled, we moved forward, and I took with me a valuable lesson about children.

My students taught me lessons as well. One of my fifth grade boys boasted that he held the record for the most bus referrals of anyone in the entire school, a claim confirmed by the principal. This same student, on his hands and knees, begged me to allow him to finish *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIHM* (O'Brien, 1986) before going on to social studies. From another student, Andy, I learned the power of a great piece of literature. When Andy finished reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Rawls, 1997), I attempted to fulfill what I believed was my teaching responsibility by asking him what kind of project he'd like to do as a follow up to the story. Looking confused, Andy paused, then said, "Mrs. D., please don't make me do anything with this book." I realized at that moment I had come close to taking something very precious away from him. Andy's quiet contemplation after reading the story was his response. Bobby's mother helped me understand the impact I had on her son when she thanked me for "allowing Bobbie to be himself." Enrolled in the gifted program, Bobby had appeared extremely quiet and shy to his previous teachers. His quick sense of humor and leadership skills emerged in my classroom, and by the end of the year, it was evident that his contributions to our classroom community were immense.

Dusty taught me a lesson about honoring and respecting students. When I wrote his name on the board for talking while I was teaching, he continued to talk. I added

checkmarks after his name to no avail. A few minutes later, Dusty came to the board, picked up a piece of chalk, and put checkmarks across the entire board, from one end of the room to the other. He then turned and asked, “Now what are you going to do?” I had no idea what to do next, but I never again wrote names on the board.

Suburban St. Louis: Fourth Grade

My husband and I decided to move closer to St. Louis and his work. As part of our plan to move, I transferred to a suburban St. Louis school district. The school was located in a community that was home to a large auto manufacturing plant and other industries. On my first day of school in a brand new building still under construction, I watched as the fourth graders entered the room. No one was talking, and each student sat down and folded his or her hands. (The students in the previous school never came in quietly, and they certainly never sat with their hands folded.) After a few minutes, one brave boy raised his hand and asked if I was going to put names on the board. Not understanding what he meant, evidently permanently banning any thoughts of writing names on the board ever again, I asked Jeff to explain. He told me that in previous years teachers wrote names on the board when students misbehaved and added check marks if the behaviors continued. I told the class I would not be writing names on the board. I remember thinking, “This is not good . . . children are not meant to sit silently with their hands folded.” It took a few weeks, along with discussions about the books we were reading and their realizing we would resolve issues in ways other than by my writing names on the board, and the problem of the silent classroom was resolved.

I met Keith on the first day of my second year at the school. Standing on top of his desk, he announced to me, in front of the class, “I don’t have to do anything you tell

me, you _____. On the last day of the school year, I was worried when Keith had not arrived by the start of the school day. Fifteen minutes later he entered the classroom carrying a single red rose bud. Handing the rose to me, he shared, “We’re [Keith and his mother] late because I had to get this for you.” With the support of his classmates as they became his friends and when they did not respond to his negative behaviors, Keith had gradually allowed his classmates and me to break through the protective barrier he spent years building around himself.

My teaching identity during the two years at this school was influenced by the support of my principal and her validation of the literacy instruction in my classroom. I enjoyed close friendships with colleagues with whom I laughed and shared stories. My teammates and I became known throughout the building for our “Red Square Meetings,” times when we met in the hallway outside our rooms on the red square in the carpet pattern . . . just for fun and “just because.” The four of us laughed at the Red Square, and students in our classrooms could see and hear us laughing. It was during my time at this school that I enrolled in my first graduate class, driving to the University of Missouri, St. Louis, one evening a week.

A comment from my principal helped me through difficult times in years to come. During our meeting that followed her formal observation in my classroom, she shared, “I don’t need to tell you what you need to change. You will figure it out on your own.”

Denver, Colorado: Fifth and Sixth Grade Multi-age

After teaching for two years near St. Louis, my husband and I relocated to Denver, Colorado due to his job transfer. Accepting a fifth/sixth grade teaching position, I was introduced to year-round schools, multiage classrooms, and *no* textbooks. The

staff, even before construction on the school began, determined that the school would follow a whole language philosophy and implement literacy workshops, hands-on-math, and inquiry learning. Classroom teachers worked with Ellin Keene, known in literacy education for her book *Mosaic of Thought* (2007) as well as with other professional development facilitators.

One group of multiage fifth and sixth graders helped me understand the true meaning of a classroom community. Never before, nor since, have I worked with a group of students who cared so deeply about one another. When these students voiced their concern over their reputation for being the noisiest class in the building and that they never earned “The Stallion” award for good behavior, I told them we would celebrate in other ways. In addition to their emotional support for one another, both in the classroom and outside of school, they were high academic achievers and their writing pieces were outstanding. They never did stop talking, but it was due in large to their talking that they established their bonds with one another.

Students in my multiage classes at this school had experienced years of reading and writing workshop with their previous teachers. My responsibility was to keep them reading and writing. While teaching at this school, Kim showed me the healing power of writing. Her arms were badly scarred from a fire when she was five years old. Kim and her sister were left alone in a trailer while their mom went drinking. She had never spoken of the fire to anyone, including her father. Walking by her desk during writing time one day, I realized she was writing and illustrating her story of the fire. Most astounding to me was Kim’s request to share her story at the end of our writing time. Kim’s classmates provided the safe environment making it possible for her to share her

story. In another class, it was Justin who helped me understand the power of great literature in building a classroom community. Following Justin's lead, the entire class read *The Giver*, (Lowry, 2007) most reading it a second time, and some a third time. *The Giver* was a strong thread woven throughout the classroom community that year.

While teaching at this school, I learned that diversity is not always in the color of a child's skin. I learned that emotional abuse and neglect cross all economic boundaries. Some of my students, in a district located in the county having the highest per capita income of any county in the United States, had huge emotional needs. Some of the students' physical needs were not being met. Despite their all having white skin, the diversity among the students was great.

Return to Missouri: Fifth Grade

I completed a masters' degree at the University of Missouri during a year's leave of absence from the school in Denver. After receiving my master's degree, I returned to Denver for one year, and then returned to Missouri again after my husband and I decided we wanted to eventually settle and retire in Missouri. Returning to Missouri also provided the option of continuing graduate studies at the university.

I began teaching at a school with a free and reduced lunch rate of 95 %. The fifth graders at this school taught me that students who supposedly could *not* read, *could* read, and they *did* read when they had books of interest and stories to which they related. Because of the students' serious behavior issues, I believed it was not possible to establish literature groups. The students proved me wrong. After reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, (Taylor, 1996) one of the African American boys found my multiple copies of other Mildred Taylor books on the shelf, rounded up classmates, and

formed a literature discussion group. And for the remainder of the year, we read in literature groups.

From these students, I learned of the anger in many children, anger that boils over, often unexpectedly and for apparently no reason. I learned that my attempts to make physical contact in an effort to offer comfort often intensified the anger, but by remaining in close proximity to the child, the child often chose to find comfort in moving close to me. I learned that explosive anger is often averted when hands are busy and productive, and so, we made hand-sewn pillows. I realized that boys who fight violently on the playground quietly engaged in friendly games of chess in the classroom. I learned that for an angry child, his or her only safe haven may be the classroom.

My final classroom teaching experience was in a fifth grade classroom at another school in the same district. My students engaged in collecting family stories, story projects that provided a powerful link between the students and their families as well as providing me strong connections with families. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the school, students collected stories from former students and teachers. As a result of this project, the fifth graders engaged in learning in ways I had not anticipated, and I believe they learned more about American history than any social studies unit could have accomplished. I was reminded once again of the power of a great piece of literature when every African American boy to whom I gave a copy of *Leon's Story* (Tillage, 1997) literally carried the book around day and night. Troy, "labeled" because of behavior issues in previous years, was able to break away from the label and did so with support from his classmates. It was Troy's mom who called a year later, on Christmas Day, to report how well he was doing and to thank me for my support of Troy.

My last year of teaching began with 38 fifth graders crammed into a too-small trailer. This group of students showed me that students will “rise to the occasion” and in the process demonstrate their care for one another. I watched as the students came together to create and present an allegory of the Holocaust, written and directed by two classmates. It was Devon who demonstrated the power of telling a peer, with compassion, “Get over it and move on.” In his wisdom, beyond that of most fifth graders, Devon guided his classmates on a number of occasions to a resolution of a conflicts and often did so by getting his peers to laugh about the situation.

My teaching identity has been influenced by children who taught me that if I get out of the way, they will surpass my expectations every time. Children taught me how to laugh with them and at myself. It was from my students that I came to believe there is not a single child who does not care, who cannot read, and who does not have a gift to share with others. From my students, I learned that every child has a story to tell.

Not realizing at the time, and never considering the concept of a teacher identity, I was constructing my teaching identity as I experienced each new teaching situation and as I worked with and learned from my students. I was constructing my teacher identity as I worked, played, and shared stories with colleagues. Administrators set the tone in each of the teaching environments I entered, some in positive ways and some not, but all impacting who I was becoming as a teacher.

My Interest in Narratives Guided This Study

My interest in narrative stems from experiences with my fifth graders as they recorded family stories that in turn were the basis of the texts for picture books they created. A few years later I was working with preservice teachers, and once again I

planned projects that involved these students in recording narratives. The transcripts from these recordings also provided the text for picture books. With both fifth graders and preservice teachers, I observed the affects of narratives on the students as they became involved in retelling the stories they had recorded. I was aware of the emotional ties with family friends and relatives, ties that were a result of the interviews. The wealth and richness of the stories recorded, along with the impact on those involved in the projects, supported my understanding of the power of personal narratives.

Building on these experiences, I conducted interviews with preservice teachers enrolled in a course I was teaching. We engaged in conversation about their learning in their teacher education program. They were open in sharing insightful information about their course work. During these interviews, the preservice teachers shared information about their personal lives that led to their decisions to become teachers. The content of these interviews convinced me of the power of stories in understanding the lives of future teachers. By now I knew I wanted narratives to provide the data for my dissertation research, but I did not know how to approach this kind of study. An article by Rebecca Rogers (2004), “*Storied selves: A Critical Discourse Analysis of adult learners' literate lives,*” provided a model for the use of narratives in research. In her article, Rogers considers the identities of adult learners who returned to school in order to complete their GED degrees. Based on her interviews of these adults, considered by the public schools to be failures or dropouts, Rogers considered their identities in terms of their literacy learning. Rogers’ article was an example of a possibility. Additionally, the course “*Narrative Identity,*” taught by Dr. Jay Gubrium in the sociology department at the university and well known for his work in this area, provided a theoretical base and a

deeper understanding of the concept that our identities are narrated. Following the completion of the narrative identity course, I conducted a pilot study during which I interviewed twenty-three elementary education majors, asking them to share family stories and stories of their lives leading up to their becoming preservice teachers. These interviews affirmed my belief that the narratives of preservice teachers would provide data to enhance understandings of how teaching identities are constructed.

Need for The Study

It is important for educators to understand the concept of teacher identities and to recognize that teaching identities are at the core of teaching practices, and ultimately at the center of education. The extent to which we are successful in educating all students, including preservice teachers, is determined by each individual teacher in any given classroom. I propose that few teacher educators view identities as central to teaching and learning, and far fewer educators understand their own teaching identities and how those identities are constructed.

Many teacher educators engage preservice teachers in learning activities that touch on identity work, activities that have the potential for facilitating discussions about teaching identities. Many of these discussions could be extended to facilitate conversations supportive of identity construction. In addition, an understanding of teaching identities necessitates, for teacher educators and preservice teachers, awareness and understanding of the factors that impact the construction of these identities.

Purpose of The Study

This study considers how five preservice teachers engaged in the construction of their teaching identities. Each participated in six interviews; the first interview took place

at the end of their junior year and five interviews were conducted throughout the senior year OSSYP experience. One purpose of the inquiry was to consider what stories were told and how the stories were told. A second purpose of the inquiry was to determine the influences that determine how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities. A third purpose of the study was to suggest findings based on data coming directly from the narratives of the preservice teachers as they lived and experienced their early identity construction. The narratives of preservice teachers, told from the sites of their identity construction, allow researchers and others to witness identity construction through the lens of individual preservice teachers. A fourth purpose was to offer suggestions as to what influences teaching identities.

Barone (2007) suggests a fifth purpose for a narrative inquiry study and one I view as a purpose for this study as well. The author writes that researchers studying teacher narratives aim to raise significant questions about teaching and thereby add to ongoing conversations in education. A fifth purpose of the study then was finding new questions for consideration.

Research Question

The following question guided this narrative inquiry: What do the narratives of preservice teachers reveal about how they construct their teaching identities?

Methodological Design

A narrative inquiry paradigm was used in this study. In addition to the pilot study interviews at the end of the preservice teachers' junior year, each participant was interviewed five times during her OSSYP year. During the interviews, the preservice teachers responded to open-ended questions, and most often, their responses led to the

participants creating their own agenda for the remainder of the interview session. The transcripts of the interviews were coded several times and in a variety of ways using a thematic approach to narratives (Riessman, 2008). The thematic approach is discussed in Chapter Three of this paper. The findings of this study are shared through the preservice teachers' stories in Chapter Four. As Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) suggest, "Narrative is the phenomenon studied in the inquiry" (p. 22). The authors suggest that narrative is a way of thinking of experience, and as the researcher, I considered the experiences of the preservice teachers through the narratives they told. These narrated experiences were critical to the construction of their teaching identities.

Participants in The Study

The participants in this study were five elementary education majors in their senior year at a Midwest university. All were white, female, and from middle class families, and each of the five grew up and continued to live in the Midwest state in which the university was located. The participants in this study can perhaps be considered "typical elementary education majors" since the descriptions reflect students in many elementary teacher education programs. Based on the researcher's prior relationships with the students as a result of their being enrolled in her courses, the five participants were chosen from the 23 in the pilot study because of the researcher's view that these participants would remain in the study for the year. Also considered were preservice teachers with good academic records and ones whose behaviors indicated a commitment to teaching. These were preservice teachers I believed would be successful during their OSSYP year and preservice teachers I believed would contribute to the field of education when they became classroom teachers.

On Site Senior Year Program [OSSYP]

The On Sight Senior Year Program [OSSYP] was established at the university twelve years ago. All elementary education majors participate in this yearlong program. The participants in this study completed their OSSYP experience in schools that had participated in the program in previous years, and for these schools, the program was now a part of the culture of the schools.

During the first semester of their OSSYP year, preservice teachers spent several weeks in classrooms at each grade level. They participated in school-wide activities and helped where needed in the classrooms. While in the schools, the preservice teachers were supervised by a mentor from the university and by the classroom teachers to whom they were assigned. Host teachers also provided supervision in the second semester during student teaching. This yearlong placement locates the preservice teachers in contexts that have enormous influence on their evolving teacher identities as indicated by this study and by the program's established credibility and reputation. From the time they enter the elementary teacher education program, the preservice teachers know about the OSSYP program, they hear positive feedback from previous OSSYP students, and they look forward to this senior year program with excitement and anticipation.

Placement in the individual schools during the OSSYP provides a context in which they "have access to competence and [access to] personal experience and engagement" (Wenger, 1999, p. 214). Within the OSSYP program, the preservice teachers are immersed in an environment that facilitates their exploration of new ideas and their discovery of new insights. During this time, they construct their knowledge of teaching and their teaching identities.

Throughout the interviews, the OSSYP students often referred to the Teaching Fellows Program, a graduate induction program offered through the same university the students attended. Applying for the Fellows program was an option after completing an undergraduate degree. When accepted into the program, Fellows assume full responsibility for a classroom and are under a one-year contract with the school district. During the year, Fellows work closely with a mentor, pursue graduate studies, and earn a masters degree. Each of the OSSYP students was assigned to a school that was also hosting Teaching Fellows. The preservice teachers interacted with Fellows as grade-level teammates and as sources of advice and suggestions about the school, teaching, and the Fellows program. In addition, these schools had former Teaching Fellows on their staffs, and administrators, classroom teachers and mentors at the schools had prior experience working with the Fellows program. The Teaching Fellows program was a part of and a positive influence on the culture of the schools to which the participants in this study were assigned.

Significance of The Study

Within the current climate of education in the United States, teachers are under attack from lawmakers and many others in the public sector. Only 50% of the teachers remain in the profession after five years. Many who remain in the classroom are not successful and do not find their work rewarding. Some find themselves teaching in ways that are contradictory to their beliefs (Alsup, 2004). A strong sense of identity is necessary in order for a teacher to understand and meet the challenges the profession presents. An identity is the teacher's basis for making meaning and the basis for decision-making (Bullough, 1997).

A strong sense of identity relates directly to a teacher's willingness to take risks and implement changes in teaching practices. Without a well-defined identity, teachers become who others think they should be, filling the role and expectations of those other than themselves. As Nias (1989) notes, education is one profession in which the person cannot be separated from the teacher. A teacher's self-efficacy and commitment to teaching are directly related to identity. Teaching identities are fundamental to teaching and learning. A study of how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities and the significance of narratives in understanding identity work then offers implications for teacher education programs and for professional development at all stages of teachers' careers.

Narrative inquiry offers a way of understanding the experiences of five preservice teachers and their identity construction process. This study then seeks to suggest meanings for the experiences of these preservice teachers as opposed to a study that might attempt to know a "truth" or prove a theory. In this inquiry, the narratives the preservice teachers shared provide the data for the study, and in turn, the researcher's narrative tells the story of those data.

Organization of The Study

This study is reported in six chapters. Chapter One introduces the research, the research question, and an overview of the procedures and limitations of the study. Chapter Two offers a review of the literature, including a review of the theorists whose work provides a basis for the study. Chapter Three provides an explanation of the approach to the study, the rationale for the methodology, and an outline of the research process. Chapter Four presents the findings from the study through the stories the

preservice teachers shared. Chapter Five locates recurring themes in the stories that were shared, themes that support the influences on identity construction identified from the data. Chapter Six suggests insights determined from the stories, a discussion of implications for further research, and ideas for how teacher educators might engage preservice teachers in identity work.

Factors Impacting This Study

There are several factors that may have impacted the narrative inquiry approach used in this study. First, the participants bring multiple realities to their stories and they share their stories through the lens of personal experiences, experiences that take place in particular social and cultural arenas. Their stories are influenced by their personal histories and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the same storied event would quite possibly be shared in a different way at another time, in another place, and to a different audience. The preservice teachers told their stories as they remembered the events at the moment of the telling. Their stories, therefore, are representations of the event, not the actual event.

A second influence on this study is the perspective of the researcher. As the researcher, I present the data in the form of the stories I wrote, stories written from my perspective and influenced by my cultural and historical background. From the data, I determined which stories to tell of the many that were recorded, and I decided how to tell the stories. The data from a narrative inquiry, therefore, are open to interpretation by the researcher. In addition, the text created by the researcher is open to interpretation by each reader.

The narrative inquiry process cannot be separated from the relationships that evolve between the researcher and the researched. My relationships with the participants began two years prior to the study when they were students in classes I was teaching, and I continue to communicate with them even after the completion of the study. Again, the impact of the relationships between the researcher and the preservice teachers cannot be fully identified.

Conclusion

The intent of a narrative inquiry is to gain an understanding of a particular circumstance, or particular actors, or a particular social phenomena. Narrative inquiry, according to Riessman (2008) is “grounded in the study of the particular” (p. 11) and therefore narrative inquirers are not interested in attending to the generalizability and conclusions of research findings. Where some studies look to make predictions and determine outcomes, narrative inquiry’s focus is on understanding and meaning making (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007).

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be,’ ‘how to act,’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society. . . . teacher identity is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (Sachs, 2005, p. 15).

Overview of the Literature

This review of the literature on teacher identities explores five areas related to this study: (a) The concept of teacher identities along with definitions for the term, (b) Teacher identities as a continual and evolving process, (c) The importance of understanding teacher identities, (d) The work of George Herbert Mead, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, and Jerome Bruner as it relates to identity, (e) The influences on preservice teachers’ evolving identities.

Criteria for Selection

Much of the literature on teacher identities dates back to the 1980s when an emphasis on the concept was first brought to the attention of educators. This review, therefore, includes mostly literature dating from the 1980s to the present. My search, with few exceptions, was limited to articles in peer-reviewed journals and to papers presented at the American Education Research Association [AERA] conferences. I reviewed some articles because the authors’ names were cited frequently in other references I found useful. Reports by researchers from other countries are cited when their work is mentioned throughout the literature on teacher identities. My review of the literature was limited to articles and studies pertaining to K-12 teachers. Deeper into my

search, I selected articles because the information enhanced what other authors said about a particular topic I was addressing in the review. Many of these authors also teach preservice teachers, adding to their credibility and connections to my research.

Clarification of Terms

A brief explanation of several of the terms I use may enhance readers' understanding of this review. I use the plural of "teacher identity" [teacher identities] since most of the literature considers teachers as having multiple teacher identities. For example, within a teacher's identities, there may be a teacher who is also a mother, a daughter and a wife. A teacher's identities vary depending on the circumstances at any given moment. For example, a teacher who meets one of her students at the grocery store, then meets friends for a public Friday afternoon Happy Hour, and at another time is a graduate student at the local university, assumes different identities depending on the situation. Roles and identities are determined by the social context of each interaction.

The term preservice teacher is used in the literature as it applies to any stage of the teacher education program. The use of the term "student teacher" in this study comes under the broad category of preservice teacher, the term most often used in the literature. I use the term "teacher candidate" or "candidate" in Chapters Five and Six since that is the term used by the university which the participants in the study were attending.

The term "professional identities" is used by several authors whose works are included in the review. Some authors used "professional identities" and "teacher identities" interchangeably. It appeared from the articles I reviewed that the term "professional identities," used to mean the same as "teacher identities," is often seen in articles written by educators in Australia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Following the lead of the terms most frequently used in the literature, I use the term “teaching identities” instead of the term “professional identities.”

Teacher Identities Defined

Etienne Wenger’s (1999) landmark book *Communities of Practice; Learning, Meaning, and Identity* was perhaps the title most frequently mentioned in the literature on teacher identities. Wenger provides this definition of identity:

An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections. Bringing the two together through the negotiation of meaning, we construct who we are. In the same way that meaning exists in its negotiation, identity exists—not as an object in of itself—but in the constant work of negotiating the self. It is in this cascading interplay of participation and reification that our experience of life becomes one of identity, and indeed of human existence and consciousness (p. 151).

Identity (or as others write “identities”) then is a continue process of social experiences, how we interpret these experiences, and how we construct our own meaning of the experiences.

Beijjard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) provide an alternative definition of identity: “Identity can generally be defined as who or what someone is, the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed to them by others” (p. 750). In another article, Beijjard, Meiger and Verloop (2004) consider identity to be

an ongoing process of interpreting one's self as a certain kind of person and being recognized as such in a given context. In that context, according to these authors, identity can be seen as an answer to the recurrent question, "Who am I at this moment?" (p. 108).

Danielewicz (2001) defines identity as "our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people's understanding of themselves and others (which includes us)" (p. 10). Sachs (2001) uses the term "professional identities" where others use the term "teacher identities." She explains identities to be all the attributes that are assigned to the teaching profession by either those outside the profession or by teachers themselves. Individual professional identities are determined in the context of educational institutions and by the decisions the teachers make as these relate to teaching.

Leaders in the field of teacher research, Connelly and Clandinin (1999), view identities as the stories teachers tell; teachers' stories are their identities. Teachers' identities, according to these researchers, lie in the stories teachers share about their lives in their classrooms. Soreide (2006), like Connelly and Clandinin, suggests that in sharing their stories, teachers negotiate and construct their identities.

Taking into consideration various discussions from the literature, I explain my understanding of teacher identities. For me, a teacher identity [or teacher identities] is who each of us is in the classroom as we interact with students. Each teacher constructs his or her teacher identities as opposed to these identities being "something that happens to us." We decide who are in the classroom along with considering who we want to become as educators. Teachers determine the beliefs that will influence their teaching practices, all while making intentional decisions about how social interactions within

teaching contexts will (or will not) affect who each of us is as a teacher. In my thinking about teaching identities, I rely on Danielewicz's (2001) concept that a teaching identity involves our knowing who we are as teachers, and Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) thinking that we determine our identities in the process of creating stories about our lives in the classroom. Essential to a teaching identity is being in control of defining ourselves as teachers and an awareness of how our teaching contexts are critical to teacher identity construction.

The Importance of Identity Work with Preservice Teachers

Of critical importance to teachers entering the profession is an understanding of their own identities (Graham & Phelps, 2003). It is important that preservice teachers understand how different experiences will impact their identities and that they understand the challenges to their identities they will face throughout their careers. Sachs (2001) adds, "The search for a new identity sometimes assumes such an identity already exists and wants to be discovered. This may be correct only if the new identity is to be written by someone else" (p. 159). A question, then, is who determines the teacher's identities--the teacher or "others?"

The preservice teacher's images of self-as-person and self-as-teacher will determine how he or she interprets new information and experiences. The old concept of teacher education as a series of obtaining skills is changing to a recognition that learning to teach involves an understanding of the complex personal and interpersonal dynamics involved in becoming a teacher (McClean, 1999). The image of "self" is a determining factor in identity, and identity in turn influences self images. "Becoming a teacher," writes Danielewicz (2001), "is an identity-forming process whereby individuals define

themselves as teachers and are viewed by others as teachers” (p. 3). As they create their identities, preservice teachers are also working through the complicated processes involved in learning to teach as they begin to connect theory with practice.

A professional identity provides a framework for teachers that makes it possible for them to construct their own ideas about how to be a teacher and how to understand their work as educators. When a teacher answers the question, “Who am I?” she identifies her beliefs, values, and attitudes toward how children learn. In the current education climate of mandates, standardization and directives, teacher identities are more and more formed and regulated by others outside the field of education, others including legislators and some boards of education (Graham and Phelps, 2003). Without their own teaching identities, educators are open to having “others” assign identities to them (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007), or as Sachs (2001) suggests, “The new identity will be written by someone else” (p. 159). The constantly changing role of teachers along with increasing demands and expectations being placed on them are also noted in Graham and Phelps (2003). Teachers’ decisions about teaching are constricted as they are required to use mandated programs of instruction. As teacher identities are constructed, the results play out in the classroom as some teachers conform to programs and scripts (Graham & Phelps).

Coldron and Smith (1999), education researchers from England, address the issue of “the rigid, mean-end model of teaching” that is a result of some national governments’ approaches to education in recent years (p. 716). The overemphasis on narrowly defined curriculum is at the cost of a loss to the status of teachers. The authors suggest that given these circumstances, the difference in how teachers respond and how well they manage

coping strategies lies in their identities-- in their sense of self. Therefore, how a teacher views her own identity determines her effectiveness in the classroom and her future professional development. In addition, a teacher's sense of identity impacts her willingness to make innovative changes in the classroom and determines how she will cope with changes in education. A teacher's identity is directly linked to her ability to take risks in implementing new ideas and strategies into the classroom (Cohen, 2000).

Cattley (2007) addresses the importance of understanding teacher identities as it relates to the high dropout rate of beginning teachers. The author suggests that a strong sense of identity may support a new teacher as she experiences disenchantment in the profession. A strong identity can help a teacher meet the challenges, demands and complexities of the profession. Alsup (2006) found that teachers entering the profession without a strong sense of who they are will most likely leave teaching, or if they remain in the classroom, they will not find the profession rewarding and personally gratifying.

The importance of identity and its impact on a teacher's ability to deal with change is noted by McDougall (2010). This author writes about the crisis in professional identities based on his study of primary teachers in Australia. McDougall considered the narratives the teachers shared in response to questions asking them how they responded to their schools' changing views on literacy instruction. In conclusion, the author suggests ways of supporting teacher identities during periods of change in curriculum and in instruction. McDougall suggests that professional learning be supported through teamwork and collaboration. In addition, teachers need opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with one another. The author believes that sharing knowledge and skills provides the emotional support needed to deal with the anxieties that may arise

when professional identities are challenged as often occurs during times of change. The critical importance of a teacher's understanding of her own identity is also addressed by Danielewicz (2001). The author writes, "What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves as if teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving" (p. 3).

Identity as A Process

Researchers differ in their definitions of teacher identities, but all agree that constructing teacher identities is a process (Beijaard et al, 2004). Many authors agree that identity is not a fixed attribute and is instead an ongoing process of interpreting and re-interpreting one's self as a certain kind of person. Danielewicz (2001) views identity as continually "reformed, added to, eroded, reconstructed, integrated, dissolved, or expanded" (p. 4).

My introduction to the literature on teaching identities was *Teaching Identity Discourses* by Alsup (2006). Suggesting that identity is a process, Alsup writes, "Identities are shaped and reshaped through the discourses in which teachers engage" (p. 236). Alsup explains that each teacher has a number of identities, including those outside the school as well as those within the school. We all engage in discourses particular to our memberships in various groups or communities, all of these discourses contributing to the identity process. Alsup continues and explains that each community to which we belong has a discourse particular to that group. Borrowing a term from James Gee (1999), Alsup labels the spaces between these various discourses as "borderlands." If, for example, I am present at a dinner attended by agriculture bankers, there is "space"

between the discourses I know as an educator and the unfamiliar discourse of those working in agricultural finance. This space between the familiar and unfamiliar discourses can create dissonance. This dissonance may then lead to metacognitive awareness of the tensions between discourses and possibly to a change in my identity. Without the dissonance and tensions between the discourses, there is no change in identity. Therefore, “Identity is activated when dissonance occurs. . . the activation of self is an occurrence of the need to produce a description of self” (Alsup, 2006, p. 236). The author views the borderland, the in-between ground, as the place of “becoming,” the space of ambiguity and reflection, and the space where an identity evolves. Identity, affirms Alsup, is a continual process influenced by the discourses in which we engage and how these discourses influence us.

Building on Vygotsky’s notion that human consciousness is found in culture, Smagorinsky et al (2004) suggest that the construction of a teacher identity is “a function of action within social settings whose values embody the settings’ cultural histories” (p. 9). Where Alsup (2006) talks about “borderlands of discourses,” these authors refer to “the tensions felt by student teachers as they inhabit two worlds,” (p. 10) the world of the college preservice teacher and the classroom teacher. It is when a teacher responds to these tensions that identities are being constructed (Smagorinsky et. al., 2004).

The development of a professional identity is an ongoing and dynamic process that involves interpreting and making sense of one’s own values and experiences (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2007). Discussing identity as a process, Clarke (2009) notes that learning to teach is framed in terms of gaining knowledge of and naming themselves as teachers. Clarke suggests also that teachers are agents constantly in search of ways to

determine their identities, sometimes through negotiation and also in efforts to justify actions, both processes within the identity process.

My review of the literature found that researchers use various terms in labeling the identity process. These terms used included “constructing an identity,” “creating an identity,” and “evolving identities.” In this review, as in all the literature I read, teacher identities are considered continual, “in process,” and always changing.

The “Role of Teacher” versus “Being a Teacher”

Distinguishing between the “role of teacher” and “a teaching identity” [“being a teacher”], Britzman (1991) writes: “Role speaks to function whereas identity voices investments and commitments” (p. 29). Clarke (2009) adds that learning to be a teacher simply indicates learning to teach as a matter of acquiring knowledge and a set of skills. Being a teacher is developing a sense of self, a teacher identity. Britzman (1994) argues that a problem exists in education when it is assumed that a teacher already has a teaching identity, as when a role of teacher is assigned to the individual. There is a problem also, according to Britzman, when a teacher’s identity is viewed as a function of the teaching experience. According to the author, studies show that teachers easily recognize the role of teacher as assigned to them by others, but “taking up of an identity is a constant and tricky social negotiation” (p. 54). Being a teacher is a complex process of developing a sense of self: a teacher identity.

Adding to a discussion regarding the “role of the teacher” vs. “having a teacher identity,” Danielewicz (2001) describes roles as “flimsy and superficial, transitory and easily adopted or discarded” (p. 10). Roles tend to be complete (as opposed to identities that are continual in their development), and are viewed as having a standard set of

attributes. Identities, on the other hand, necessitate a commitment of the self in ways that fulfilling a role does not. A comparison between “the role of teacher” and “teacher identity” is offered by Sexton (2008). The “role of teacher,” according to this author, “is a set of understandings of what it means to be a teacher in a given context” (p. 75). Role is historically constructed and maintained by the institution of school. The role of teacher is shaped by public demands and perceptions. A “teacher identity,” suggests Sexton, requires active participation by the teacher in creating the identity. The teacher has the agency to act in ways she chooses and the capability to be responsive to others, both made possible through identity.

Identity Work in Teacher Education Programs

Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self-as-teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making. . . . Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self (Bullough, 1997, p. 21).

Since the concept of teacher identities was first considered by educators in the 1980s, researchers and teacher educators have focused on the importance of teachers’ identities and their effect on teaching practices. Researchers continue to argue that teacher education programs must provide avenues for preservice teachers to engage in experiences leading to an understanding of the identity process and to an understanding of how they are becoming teachers.

Challenges Faced by Teacher Educators

Efforts to introduce identity work into teacher education programs are met with the challenges of the current climate in the field of education. In her president’s address

at the American Educational Research Association [AERA], Cochran-Smith (2005) reported that since the late 1990s, teacher education programs have responded to calls for change. However, efforts for change are challenged by the current dominant narratives in teacher education, narratives that are now constructed as public policy, based on research evidence and driven by outcomes. In more recent years, the dominant narratives have taken on the terms of teacher incompetence and teacher education program ineffectiveness. Increasingly, the discourse in teacher education is controlled by political and special interest groups. School change is now seen as accomplished best through mandated standards and accountability measures. This movement towards standards-based teacher education leaves many teacher educators with less and less control over their teaching (Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness, 2005).

It is within this current education environment that teacher educators who wish to make changes in their teaching must make difficult decisions and determine their willingness to “step outside the mold” (Bullough, 2008) “Clearly, education suffers when teachers must . . . consistently find themselves needing to engage in actions contrary to their most fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning in order to satisfy one or another set of externally imposed mandates” (p. 5). Recognizing the difficulty of initiating change in traditional teacher education programs, Bullough et. al. (1991) suggest that significant changes can and must take place in order to prepare future teachers to negotiate the processes of developing a sense of self, or in other words, developing their teacher identities.

Addressing Former Beliefs and Prior Experiences

Knowles and Crow (1991) suggest that preservice teachers have schema for teaching that they have developed over the years based on their experiences as students. Most often, the preservice teachers respond to new content information through the lens of their past experiences and often hold tightly to their prior beliefs. When preservice teachers bring their prior beliefs about teaching to the teacher education program, their belief systems often serve as filters for incoming information (Flores and Day, 2006). These authors suggest also that future teachers respond to teacher education courses by working to confirm (instead of question) what they already believe. Flores and Day argue that preservice teacher education appears to have little impact on the ways in which new teachers approach their teaching and in the ways they view themselves as teachers. Bullough et al (1991) suggest that many teacher candidates leave education programs having changed little from when they entered. These teachers, once in their own classrooms, are vulnerable to the pressures of the ever-changing field of education. Teachers new to the profession are faced with defining their lives as teachers, and without a clear concept of themselves as teachers, the tasks of planning and carrying out curriculum are difficult and sometimes impossible transitions into teaching.

Once a preservice teacher is aware of his or her beliefs, it is sometimes necessary to consider “un-doing” some of these prior beliefs. Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) explain a term they use in the title of their article, “un(becoming a teacher).” These researchers suggest that “un(becoming)” refers to the need for preservice teachers to reconsider the beliefs about who they are as they enter the world of teaching, and then to consider how they will change or alter these beliefs as they become teachers. Becoming

a teacher means changing who you are, and sometimes it involves “unbecoming” aspects of the identities brought to the practice of teaching.

Community in the Teacher Education Classroom

Teacher educators must provide the environments in which preservice teachers can learn to engage in educational discourses (Danielewicz, 2001). A sense of belonging in the college classroom is essential in the process of “becoming a teacher.” A college setting where the preservice teacher can learn “to participate in the discourse community of education” can be a powerful influence in evolving teacher identities (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 14). Participation in an educational discourse supports the preservice teacher in developing her collective identity as a member of the profession as well as her personal teaching identity as a classroom teacher.

Teacher Educators Support for Life-Long Learning

The importance of preservice teachers understanding their own identities requires that they be lifelong learners (Graham and Phelps, 2003). An understanding of their own learning and how they learn as well as an understanding of their values and beliefs are all essential to understandings one’s identities. This metacognitive awareness along with the understanding that learning is a lifelong process make it possible for teachers to learn to reflect in ways that influence their identities. Because of the changing demands on teachers and the complex nature of teaching, it is essential, believe Graham and Phelps, that an identity agenda be incorporated into the teacher education program. By doing so, support is given to the teacher in creating her own identities as opposed to her identity being shaped by the institution of the school and those outside of education.

Teacher Education Course Work

Graham and Phelps (2003), teacher educators in New South Wales, describe a course they offer to first-year Bachelor of Education students at Southern Cross University. The goal of the course is to immerse preservice teachers in learning the practical know-how of teaching while at the same time facilitating their learning about their developing teacher identities. A key component of this course is helping students learn how to reflect since, according to the authors, reflection is often used in teacher education in superficial ways. When teachers do not understand how to reflect on their teaching practices, the opportunities for developing a teacher identity are limited. Since reflection is necessary in bringing about change in teaching practices and changes in teaching practice influence identities, then learning how to reflect is essential to constructing one's teaching identities.

Consideration by teacher educators of the personal lives and beliefs these future teachers bring to their college course work is essential (Flores & Day, 2006). The authors suggest that preservice programs include opportunities for students to reflect on their personal life stories. Facilitating dialogues for sharing life stories supports preservice teachers in exploring their own biographies while interacting with others, thereby opening another avenue for identity work.

Using her analysis of the reflective talk of a group of mid-western teachers, Cohen (2008) identifies three important implications for teacher education programs regarding identity work. First, one must acknowledge that teacher education often focuses on teaching practices. Cohen argues that equally important is helping preservice teachers understand the effect of these practices on their teaching identities. Second,

preservice teachers need support in learning how to reflect and support in developing the habit of reflecting. Third, Cohen suggests that preservice teachers be provided opportunities to share their reflections back in the college classroom. Reflections on classroom observations should be discussed, challenged for assumptions that may not be valid, and questioned for hidden biases. Too often, the reflections required of preservice teachers are simply assigned and then written in isolation, eliminating opportunities to critically assess surface-level observations and eliminating the questions that might come of conversations that explore the various perspectives brought to light in a class discussion.

The Need to Share Narrative Experiences

Opportunities for preservice teachers to share narratives about their classroom experiences as well as narratives about themselves are critical to teacher identities (Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 1996). The authors share the story of a beginning teacher and the dissonance she experienced after confronting a student in her classroom. At the moment of the incident, this teacher found herself being torn between being the kind of teacher she thought she could be and the teacher she had become during her interaction with the student. Narratives of this kind, when shared in the teacher education classroom, help future teachers explore the question, “Who am I becoming?” Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) suggest that narrations of lived classroom experiences will open discussions for preservice teachers, discussions that help them challenge and perhaps discard aspects of their identities that are in conflict with who they want to be as a teacher. “Rather than uncritically celebrating the process of becoming a teacher, we [the authors] strongly believe that teacher-education programs must create common places for

interpretations that make explicit the various discursive practices and competing identities one brings to the process of learning to teach” (p. 68). In other words, narratives provide an avenue through which preservice teachers become aware of who they are as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

The Concept of Identity in Other Academic Disciplines

Here I review the work of four theorists whose ideas, some of which emerged in the 1930s, impact current research relating to teacher identities. In order of their contributions to their respective fields, I include George Herbert Mead (1930s), Michail Bakhtin (1930s to early 1940s), Michel Foucault (1960s to 1970s), and Jerome Bruner (1980s). My discussions of John Dewey’s work from the 1930s as it relates to factors that impact teacher identities are shared in later sections. I discuss the work of Basil Bernstein as it relates to the connection between knowledge and identity in a later section on teacher knowledge.

George Herbert Mead: Identities in Sociology

George Herbert Mead, American sociologist and philosopher, studied at the University of Chicago. His seminal work was *Mind, Self and Society*, was published in 1934. Mead’s ideas on the concept of the “self” have had a great impact on the social sciences, including education. According to Mead, the “self,” or identity, is the connection between the person and social situations (Malhotra, 1987). A person’s identity is a result of social interactions with others and at the center of these interactions is the process of communicating (Kazemek, 1988). According to Mead, the “self” emerges, along with the mind, in a process of communication (Malhotra, 1987).

Mead viewed the self as a cognitive process, a process that is always working toward “becoming.” This process occurs within and through the community in which he is a member. Mead (1964) offers, “One has to be a member of a community to be a self” (p. 162). In other words, the self exists only in relationship to others. The self, interacting and reacting in social situations, is constantly changing as a result of these interactions (Kazemek, 1988). Mead (1934) writes:

We are one thing to one man and another thing to another. . . We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. . . There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. It is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self (p. 142).

Mead is recognized for his concept of the self as “Me” and “I.” The Me is the socialized self-- what is learned in social interactions and then internalized. The Me is the part of self that one is aware of and the Me is able to see one’s self as viewed by others. The “I” then is the self who takes action and responds to the Me (Kazemek, 1988). In his effort to help the reader understand his concept of the “I” and “me” in terms of a “self,” Mead (1934) provides the example of the “self” who is a member of a ball team. The “me” is in place when the player, during a game, knows there are demands on him from other members of the team. The “me” in the player is aware of the attitudes of the others and knows what they want him to do. Given the situation and the player’s awareness of the attitudes of his teammates, the “I” responds. The “I” determines the action he will take. Then, once the player carries out his response, (perhaps throws the ball to the second baseman) he then becomes aware of his action. At this point, aware of his action and the results, the player is into the experience of having carried out his act. That experience,

taken in and internalized, now is part of the “me” (Mead, 1934). The “me” is all that one has learned and internalized through interactions with others. The “I” is the reaction to the “me” as played out through responses. “ ‘I’ is in a certain sense that which we do to identify ourselves” (p. 174, 175).

The self is not completely determined by a person’s social interactions with others; society alone does not determine one’s self (Mead, 1934). The author suggests that once the individual has a self, he reflects on his community, and sometimes makes the decision to try and affect changes in that community. When the self works to change his community and change takes place, he in turn is influenced by those changes in the community. When applied to teachers, this means a teacher who facilitates changes in her own teaching environment and those changes occur, she is in turn affected by this new modified learning community.

Mikhail Bakhtin: Identity in Linguistics

Bakhtin was a Russian theorist writing mainly between 1934 and 1941. Identity, when considered through the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, is a dialogical process, and as such, is constituted by words, language, and the forms of discourse that are shared through social interactions. These interactions, taking place in cultural contexts, involve ways in which the individual is positioned in relation to others. This development of an identity through discourse is what Bakhtin terms “ideological becoming” (Tappan, 2005).

Ideological becoming.

Ideological becoming, according to Freedman’s and Ball’s (2004) interpretation of Bakhtin’s writings, is a process of reflecting on the words of others and then

determining for ourselves what meaning we make of these words. The coming together of various voices from different individuals and in varied environments are all-important to a person's growth and "becoming." The voices of others provide the basis of our ideological interrelations and are the basis of our behavior. Freedman and Ball suggest that Bakhtin believed identities are formed as individuals make decisions about what meanings they choose to assign to the words of others. "The ideological becoming of a human being . . . is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (Holquist, 1994, p. 340).

Our ideological becoming, continue Freedman & Ball (2004), is a result of the interactions that cause us to deal with the tensions and conflicts between authoritative [incoming voices] and internally [our own voices] persuasive discourses. "The gap between the authority of a discourse and the internally persuasive discourse results in a struggle between the two; the process of ideological becoming" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). The ideological becoming is the process of bringing a new dialogue into contact with all previous dialogues and coming to terms with the tensions this creates. In this process, we are "becoming." "It is in the choices one makes toward these discourses that one's identity is formed" (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 111). Ideological becoming, for Bakhtin, is the process of reflecting on the words of others and in turn determining for ourselves what meaning we make of the experience.

Ideological becoming is premised on the assumption that the self is developed in social contexts and the development is mediated by words, voices, and various forms of discourse. Identity development, as ideological becoming, "is the gradual claim of one's own voice while at the same time remaining in constant dialogue with other voices"

(Tappan, 2005, p. 54). Those “voices” involve dialogues with ourselves as well as dialogues with others.

Heteroglossia: authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

Bakhtin applied the term “heteroglossia” to his concept of the different voices an individual encounters through interactions with others. These many voices are a result of the various historical and cultural backgrounds people bring to a dialogue. “Verbal moments are multi-voiced, infused with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Landay (2004) suggests that each speaker comes with multiple languages, languages that reflect different aspects of our lives. Heteroglossia, then, is the coming together of a variety of languages in a given language event. Heteroglossia, write Morson and Emerson (1997), exists for each of us as we participate in a dialogue. The voice we bring to a dialogue may be influenced by our age, social class, geographic location, and perhaps our work in a certain profession. In heteroglossia, “different tongues” interact “making it possible for multiple perspectives and unknown possibilities” (Fecho & Bitzajus, 2007, p. 551).

The words spoken in one context may have quite different meanings in other circumstances. Holquist (1994) argues that a word uttered in a given time and place will never have the exact same meaning when spoken at another time. Within heteroglossia, Bakhtin determines two categories of discourse: authoritative and internally persuasive discourse. Rule (2006) describes authoritative discourse as a prior “given,” such as a religious or political discourse, or the discourse of teachers and adults who demand unconditional allegiance. Morson and Emerson (1997) explain authoritative discourse as one that remains fully authoritative and allows for no argument. The authoritative

discourse “demands that we acknowledge it. . . we encounter it with the authority already fused to it” (p. 219). The authors suggest that authoritative words are compelling because of the authority attached to them (Morson & Emerson, 1997). Tappan (2005) views the authoritative discourse as one that cannot be changed or altered, nor can it be doubted; its authority has already been acknowledged in the past. According to Landay (2004), authoritative discourse is what others (Delpit and Gee) refer to as “the languages of power.” This discourse assumes an understanding of a single meaning and as such is not open to dialogue and questioning.

Internally persuasive discourses, by contrast, shape our own thinking and are constantly changing as we interact with others. The internally persuasive discourse is “half ours and half-someone else’s’ and it is ours to determine how we orchestrate the voices of others and how we construct our own inner discourse” (Morson & Emerson, 1997, p. 221). The internally persuasive discourse is developed by people for themselves in relation to the words of their own; it is the discourse that is “the evolution of the individual’s consciousness” (Rule, 2006, p. 87). It is a discourse intermingled with one’s own words that enter into existing internal voices (Rule, 2006). Morson and Emerson (1997) suggest that an internally persuasive discourse thrives “when it has opportunities to grow and change in response to experience and our other inner voices” (p. 223). The internally persuasive discourse is in a state of constant renegotiation (Dentith, 1995).

Heteroglossia then, including both authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, determines the meanings one constructs as multiple voices are experienced in multiple contexts. These prior voices, along with the contexts in which they are encountered, organize the construction of meanings as well as one’s interpretation of

experiences. Thus, according to Bakhtin, identities are formed through various kinds of discourse and in cultural spaces.

Michel Foucault: Identity in Philosophy and History

Michel Foucault, French philosopher-historian, was a post-structuralist who believed that the use of power as resistance leads to self-identity. Foucault's work from the 1960s and 1970s has important implications for teacher identities and how identities are formed. Of particular importance is his idea "care of self" and his views on subjectivities. For Foucault, "care of self" means getting to know one's self and who one is as an individual. Foucault is suggesting, "Know thyself." Subjectivity, Foucault's term for self-identity (2003a), has two aspects. The first occurs when one is *being subjected to* the power of someone or something. The second aspect occurs when the subject *actively resists being subjected* (subjugated); the subject resists the power being imposed on him. As the subjugated person (being subjected to), one is assigned an identity by others. As a subject contesting the power imposed by others, one is in the process of creating his or her own identity.

How identities are formed.

Although well known for his work on power and power within institutions, Foucault, in an interview a year before his death, "confessed" that his real interests lie in the ways in which humans are constructed as subjects and the role of power in this construction (Peters, 2003). Since the "construction of subjects" is for Foucault identity work, he was actually stating that his life's work was really an effort in determining how identities are formed. For Foucault, identity and power are closely linked in a complex process involving an individual's resistance to power. Power, then, according to

Foucault, is productive when it opens up new possibilities; it is a positive force when it is the end result of one's resisting (Gunzenhauser, 2007).

Foucault viewed the subject (identity) as historically constructed, or in other words, construction of the subject is considered in the ways one uses discourses in telling about his or her experiences. Foucault suggests, therefore, that identities are “produced, negotiated, and reshaped through discursive practices” (Zembylas, 2003a, p. 113). According to Foucault, we form ourselves through narrative by telling others about ourselves and our experiences. Creating one's identity, is for Foucault, the discourse of experience and not the experience itself and it is through sharing stories for others that we take part in constructing of selves (Zembylas, 2003a).

Articles written by Infinito were important to my understanding Foucault's work. Her article “Ethical Self-Formation: A Look at the Later Foucault” published in 2003 provides a reader-friendly discussion of Foucault's concept of “care of the self,” and offers a clear explanation of Foucault's ideas on the critical importance of discourse in forming the self, or one's identity. In this article, Infinito (2003b) offers implications for educators in terms of Foucault's ideas on how identities are formed.

Care of the self.

Addressing the concept of identity in terms of Foucault's work, Infinito (2003a) suggests that the teacher, as a subject, may be under the power of the institution of school, the school leadership, or perhaps others in the school environment. In these situations, the teacher is normalized to meet the expectations of others and to meet the dispositions determined by others. The subjugated teacher assumes an identity determined by others; she is made a subject of someone or something else. However,

when a teacher, as a subject, acts upon herself and resists the imposition of power from others, she is in the process of moving from being subjected *to* and instead is creating herself as the subject who takes action, thereby creating her own identity. Adding to the discussion of Foucault, Zembylas (2003b) believes that the subject, or identity, is a form of power that is a result of one's resistance to certain other powers; identity is constituted through power relations.

Subjugation (being subjected to) does not necessarily mean a person is forced to adopt a certain identity, but may instead hold back from achieving the freedom that results when one determines her own actions (Infinito, 2003a). "Who one is (and who one might become) is produced mainly out of one's struggles" (p. 160, 161) in moving from being subjugated to becoming a subject. Foucault believes that individuals must transgress the limitations placed on them and activate their human capacities; they must resist being subjugated. This process of "transgressing the limitations and activating human capacities" is what Foucault terms "care of self" (Infinito 2003a). Care of self, for Foucault, is "knowing the self" (Zembylas, 2003b).

Foucault's "care of the self" calls for the individual to place him or her self as a primary focus of attention (Infinito, 2003a). In "care of the self," Foucault's intent is for individuals to "think critically and imaginatively about who we wish to be and the actions we will perform" (Infinito, 2003b, p. 163). In this process, we are in dialogue with others, we are self-reflective, and "we are intimately involved in making judgments, in thinking critically and imaginatively about who it is we wish to be and the actions we will perform" (Infinito, 2003b, p. 70). We are, therefore, in control of the self that emerges; we are "brought into being" (p. 162). "To care for one's self, to work on the self, is the

means by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being” (Foucault, 1984, p. 282). In caring for the self, the individual is exercising her freedom to create an identity and is actively resisting the “other” from being in control. “ ‘Care of the self’ should be practiced as resistance to that which threatens to control one’s identity” (Infinito, 2003a, p. 158).

In his concept of “caring for the self,” Foucault’s intent is not that we forget our concern for others, but we must remember it is crucial that we not sacrifice our freedom to live our lives as we want. Foucault contends that “caring for the self” does not negate caring for others, nor does it mean that “caring for others negates caring for ourselves. “Care of self” ultimately, is all that we do in the construction of our identities. The practice of caring for one self then results in freedom for the individual, freedom to live our lives as we determine (Infinito, 2003a).

Closely related to “care of self” is Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self. Technologies of the self are the tools, knowledge and skills the individual has at his disposal for use in coming to know himself (Peters, 2003). “Technologies of the self include those activities that permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their. . .souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves” (Infinito, 2003a). When technologies of the self facilitate reflection and critical and creative thinking, the self offers resistance in a move to “transgress the limitations” that have been placed on him. It is at this point that one transforms one’s self, attains a way of being, and a new subject (identity) emerges (Infinito, 2003b). Care of the self facilitated through technologies of the self make possible the envisioning of what can be and allows one to live life as one wants.

Jerome Bruner: Identity in Modern Cognitive Psychology

Jerome Bruner is an American cognitive psychologist whose writings span from the 1940s to the present. His later works focused on the construction of the self and in particular the role of narrative in forming one's identity. Bruner (2004) views identity as the person we become as a result of "the autobiographical narratives by which we tell about our lives" (p. 694). These narratives are a result of the cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the telling of a life story, processes that have the power to structure experience and organize memory. Bruner suggests that as our way of telling stories changes, the new accounts begin to take control of the lives we lead. The ways we tell our stories and the ways in which we conceptualize through our stories, suggests Bruner, begin to structure our experiences and begin to direct our life narratives in the future. "I have argued that a life as led is inseparable from a life as told. . . a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (p. 708).

Bruner (2004) uses the term "autobiographies" when referring to identities. Although he uses the term "narrative" frequently, the term is interchangeable with "story" in his writing. When referring to an individual person, Bruner applies the "self," always capitalizing the word in his writings. For Bruner, our identities are the narratives we tell about our "Selves."

McAdams (1993) discusses his views of Bruner's concept of story. He writes that in narrative, we seek to understand our experience through analyses, logical proof, and empirical observation. Continuing his discussion of Bruner's work, McAdams suggests that it is through stories that "we make sense of human desires, goals and social conduct" (p. 29). In essence, our stories are our foundation for identity work.

Rio (2003) suggests that for Bruner there is not an essential “self to know” and that one’s identity is constantly evolving as a result of our experiences. “Because much of our experience is formed through listening to and telling stories, selfhood and narrative are inextricably interlinked” (p. 559). Through language, we turn our experiences into stories, stories that give the experiences cohesion and continuity. As we tell and retell our stories to ourselves and to others, we make sense of our lives and our relationships with others; we create our identities.

Bruner (2002) believes that narrative is at the center of culture and it is through the stories people tell that they come to know how to act within their culture and how to conduct relationships. Life stories, Bruner (2004) suggests, mesh and blend in a community of life stories. Through shared stories, we begin to understand the stories of others and in turn they begin to understand our stories. Bruner (2004) adds, “A life as led is inseparable from a life as told. . . a life is not how it was, but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (p. 699). Smith and Sparks (2008) suggest also that for Bruner, narrative is how we create our identities and the Self. In an inquiry into how preservice teachers construct their identities, and in keeping with Bruner’s beliefs, it stands to reason that the narratives of these future teachers will provide insights into their identity construction processes.

These four theorists, then, writing in earlier times and in several countries and cultures, continue to be highly relevant to current consideration of how identities are formed.

Influences on Preservice Teachers' Identities

Preservice teachers' identities are influenced by life experiences, how individuals construct their own narratives, and the social interactions, past and present, that are part of their worlds. The history and the culture of the contexts of their interactions impact identities, and as they construct their identities, the teachers in turn impact the social worlds around them. Influences on identity are addressed by teacher researchers and theorists with some influences receiving more attention than others in the literature I reviewed. Missing from the articles and books, however, was a comprehensive list of influences. The list of influences I created framed the organization of this section of the literature review. The influences I discuss were determined by three factors: (a) a particular influence on identity was discussed at length by teacher researchers well-known for their work on identity, (b) an influence was discussed across the literature I read and was common to many of the readings, and (c) the influences on the list I generated appeared to run parallel to what I was finding in the data from the interviews.

The Embodiment of Teaching

Embodiment refers to the connections between an individual's mind and his or her body. The mind, as part of the human body, sends messages that make possible the body's actions. The body, involved in experiences and interactions, in turn contributes to the brain's cognitive functions. My introduction to the term "embodiment" was Alsup's (2006) book on teacher identities. Based on her study of first-year teachers and on the work of James Gee (1990), Alsup concludes that these teachers' ability to embody teaching is directly related to their success in the profession, and indeed, determines whether or not they remain in the profession.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John Dewey as “the two greatest philosophers of the embodied mind” (p. xi). Merleau-Ponty used the word “flesh” instead of body and suggested that we understand and feel the world as we live in and experience it. Dewey, the authors write, is credited with recognizing the importance of the body in thinking, knowing and communicating. Dewey (1929) used the hyphenated term “body-mind” and suggested, “Body-mind simply designates what actually takes place when a living body is implicated in situations of discourse, communication and participation” (p. 232).

Cognitive researchers began questioning the mind and body connection (previous beliefs pointed to the two being separate; there was no connection) in the 1970s when their research indicated that concept structures come from sensorimotor experiences. Researchers were learning that that our mental structures are meaningful because of the experiences our bodies encounter. Reasoning, therefore, is possible because of sensorimotor experience (Lakoff, John, 1999). “Embodiment,” according to Gibbs (2005), “refers to understanding the role of an agent’s own body in its everyday, situated cognition” (p. 3). Goschler’ (2005) adds that thinking is embodied since it is inseparably linked to functions of the brain. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) conclude that reason is shaped by functions of the body, by the neural structure of the brain, along with our everyday functioning in the world.

In more recent years, embodiment is seen as vital to learning as educators realize that knowledge is acquired through interactions with others and through physical engagement in activities. The physical body also makes possible the creation of shared

understandings with others through communication and social interaction (Rambusch and Ziemke, 2005).

Connections between embodiment and teachers' practical knowledge are suggested by Johnson (1989). Teacher knowledge, according to this author, is how teachers understand their world. Their understanding comes as a result of "sensory experiences, bodily interactions, moods, feelings and spatio-temporal orientations (where and when they are "in the world")" (p. 362-364). Teacher knowledge emphasizes continual construction, ongoing adjustments in the environment, and emerges from the process of experiencing (Johnson, 1989).

Using the context of environmental education, LeGrange (2004) explains three approaches to environment education; *learning about*, *learning in*, and *learning for* the environment. In the first approach in *about* the environment, one learns about the environment through an emphasis on acquiring knowledge. For example, the student learns from direct instruction and/or text materials. The second approach is learning *in* the environment by actual placement in that environment. For example, learning about native vegetation might occur by taking students on nature hikes. The third approach, learning *for* the environment, follows an agenda whose goal is to promote change and involvement in environmental issues. This third aspect necessitates that students be actively engaged in environment work (LeGrange, 2004). I suggest that at the third stage, *learning for*, is the point at which preservice teachers embody teaching.

The physical embodiment of teaching, addressed by some researchers as it relates to teachers' emotions (see "Emotions" in this review), is perhaps more easily recognized than other aspects of embodiment. Due in large to my review of the literature on

embodiment, I was able to identify in their transcripts the many ways in which the students were embodying their teaching lives throughout the year. As Alsup (2006) suggests, the extent to which a student is able to embody being a teacher will greatly impact his or her teaching identity.

The Influence of Contexts

Dewey (1963) believes that all learning is a result of personal experience. Students learn, according to Dewey, when they engage with others in real-life activities. Dewey qualifies this idea by saying that in order for an experience to be meaningful, it must connect back to prior experiences and must influence future experiences. Every learning activity enacted in turn changes the person and results in that person coming away a different individual. Educators, and I suggest teacher educators in particular, must ensure that the experiences provided in teacher education programs provide authentic learning opportunities such as extended time in classrooms directly engaged with students that in turn provide new learning experiences. The “continuity of experiences” is one criterion for determining whether an experience is “educative,” Dewey’s (1963) term for experiences that provide meaningful learning opportunities. The educative experience draws on the learner’s prior knowledge and allows for new understandings through experiences encountered.

Wenger (1999) writes of the critical importance of a community in which members engage with one another and recognize each other as participants. Within a “community of practice,” Wenger suggests the critical importance of establishing the context in which preservice teachers build relationships with colleagues and with students as they develop their teaching practices. Teaching identities are negotiated through

experience, membership in the school and local community, social interactions, and mediated by knowledge of themselves and their profession. Communities of practice are social worlds in which decisions are made regarding the interactions with others (Wenger, 1999). As a result of these interactions, Mead (1934) suggests that a “self” is created, a self that is a composite and a result of relationships with others.

Flores and Day (2006) report findings from their longitudinal study of 14 teachers in their first two years of teaching. In this study, the researchers considered key influences that shape teachers’ identities, including the influence of teaching contexts. Flores and Day concluded that teachers working in contexts where there was collaboration were the ones most likely to possess positive attitudes towards teaching. Opportunities for collaborations provide support and meaningful development opportunities for the beginning teacher.

Another aspect of learning communities and professional development is the claim by Geijesel and Meijers (2005) that “What teachers do together outside of the classroom can be as important as what they do inside” (p.422). According to these authors, professional learning communities (the authors use the term “professional learning communities” in a generic way and is not the same as the current and popular “Professional Learning Communities” seen in many schools today) are those in which teachers share a common purpose and share a collective interest in student learning. Within this professional community, there is trust and respect for one another. Reflective practices are made possible through dialogue within a culture that supports this type of shared practice.

The term “professional landscapes” is used by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) when talking about contexts and school settings. These teacher researchers reported on the professional landscape of one of the schools they studied and suggest that the life stories or identities of teachers are impacted by the context in which they are situated. Within this particular school, Connelly and Clandinin found that through collaboration and storytelling, teachers were being less prescriptive in their practices and were instead engaging students in more meaningful learning activities. The authors report that this environment also led to critical reflection on the part of the teachers. These teachers developed an understanding of the term “collaboration” since they were located in a professional landscape that made it possible for them to construct their own meaning of the term as they actually engaged in collaboration.

A professional development cohort for new teachers was the object of study for Cuddapah and Clayton (2011). The goals of the cohort, located in an urban school district, were to improve instructional practices for teachers coming into the profession through alternative routes and to improve teacher retention rates at the school, a retention rate currently at 50% turnover each year. The purpose of their study, according to Cuddapah and Clayton, was to determine how a professional cohort serving as a community of practice provides support for new teachers. The authors use the term “peripheral participation” to describe newcomers entering the community. Through this peripheral participation, the preservice teachers “undergo identity transformation into full participation” (p. 63). It is through their participation that new teachers learn how to think and act like a teacher.

A teacher's identity is "partly given and partly achieved" through participation in a social space. Social space, as indicated by Coldron and Smith (1999), includes the context and all the possibilities for relationships a teacher can have with others within that context. These relationships are to some extent determined by existing social structures and the history of the school's culture. A teacher's identity depends, to a great extent, on all the possibilities available.

The perception that one is now a teacher places him or her in the collective identities of other teachers. Collective identity includes recognition from peers and students that one is a teacher, this transformation into a collective identity often most intense during student teaching. Danielewicz (2001) suggests, "We come to know who we are through social relationships with others" (p. 38).

Narrating a Teacher Identity

The literature on narrative identities in the teaching profession suggests the critical importance of the community and its impact on narratives. Teaching communities provide opportunities for stories to be shared and opportunities for responses from colleagues. Stories told in a community create a shared history for members, and McAdams (1993) continues, these stories are "less about facts and more about making meanings" (p. 28). Within a teaching community, teachers engage in story telling while acknowledging each other as members of the community (Wenger, 1999). Teacher identities are a result of a "layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other" (p. 151). In her discussion of identities and narrative, Elbaz-Luwisch (2005) references Bakhtin when she

suggests that within a community of stories, we listen to the stories of others and then rework those stories and appropriate a meaning for ourselves.

My review of the literature indicates that the most recent and most extensive research on teachers' narrative identities comes from Connelly and Clandinin (1999). Early in their careers as teacher-researchers, they realized the role of narrative in teachers creating their teaching identities and in constructing their knowledge of teaching. Connelly and Clandinin acknowledge that stories differ according to the contexts, or landscapes, in which they are told, and narratives serve to support teachers when it is necessary for them to adapt to new and different landscapes. For Connelly and Clandinin, "the stories to live by" provide links among knowledge, experience, context, and social interactions, links that make identities possible.

Considering Foucault's work and its implications for identities, Orner (1998) suggests that we "act upon ourselves in the very narrative formulation of a self" (p. 281). The author suggests the stories we tell as part of "caring for the self," a concept Foucault suggests is vital to one's identity (discussed earlier in this review). Elbaz (2005) believes that we create our identities as we tell stories about ourselves to those around us. McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich (2006) argue also that we define who we are for ourselves and for others through narrative.

Reviewed earlier was Bakhtin's idea that identity is "ideological becoming" (Freedman and Ball, 2004, p. 6). Constructing an identity through narrative, according to Bakhtin, involves working through the various dialogues and voices to which one is exposed. Attempts to achieve a balance among these voices and dialogues is, writes Barressi (2006) identity work. Even though Bahktin uses the term "dialogue," I suggest

that what he writes regarding dialogue applies to narratives as well since dialogue is often in the form of narrative. The term narrative could then, I suggest, be used in the same way that Bakhtin refers to dialogue in his concept of “ideological becoming.” In her article “A Bakhtinian Perspective on Narrative Identity,” Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) argues that it was Bakhtin’s thinking that led the way for others to consider the concept of identities being formed through self-narrative, even though Bakhtin himself did not use the term “narrative identity.”

The importance of story and its connection with identity are suggested by McAdams (1993). The author writes, “Identity is a life story” (p. 5). As we come to know ourselves through the stories we narrative about our lives, we create our identities. Human beings are natural storytellers and are drawn to stories for many reasons; they entertain us, make us laugh and cry, and hold us in suspense until we learn how it ends. McAdams writes:

If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my life, then I, too, must come to know my own story (p. 11).

Denman (1991) suggests stories are essential for understanding the meaning of our lives and provide the lens through which we view human experience. Through stories we see ourselves and realize the meaning of events in our lives. For Taylor (2001), stories teach us that there is a place in life for us and in telling our stories, we find answers to the questions, “Who am I?” and “Why am I here?” (p. 28).

Reflective Thinking in Narratives

The role of narratives in reflective thinking, and ultimately in identity work, is noted by Atkinson (2010). Narratives, the author believes, are especially fitting for teaching since they are often open-ended and therefore do not provide conclusions or solutions to questions about teaching practices. As such, the narrative stimulates reflective thinking as opposed to answering a question or explaining a phenomena. The narrative poses a question rather than offering solutions. Teachers' experiences are storied and therefore "trouble and interrogate traditional conceptions of knowledge and what counts as knowledge" (p. 92, 93). Adding to what Atkinson offers, Moen (2006) notes the complexity and multidimensional aspects of teaching and the difficulty in making classroom reality easy to understand. It is through narrative that teachers make sense of their teaching lives.

Reflective thinking: Dewey and Foucault.

The literature traces the history of reflection in teaching practices back to the work of John Dewey (1993/1998.) Reflective thought, suggests Dewey (1910/1997), is the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought" (p. 6). Reflecting thinking, suggests Dewey, implies a belief in something, not of its own accord, but through evidence or witnessing of some other manner of providing information. The reflective process takes place in "a state of perplexity or doubt" (p. 9) through a search for information that may support or nullify the belief. Without a question or without having identified a problem to be solved, Dewey argues, there can be no reflection.

Dewey (1997) suggests that reflective thinking can be troublesome and involves overcoming the inclination to accept things as they are. Reflection necessitates a willingness to accept discomfort in one's thinking and to face the possibilities that prior thinking will need to be suspended. Similarly, Loughran (1996) provides a discussion of the three attitudes Dewey considers important to reflection; first, open-mindedness and the ability to consider problems in new and different ways, second, whole-heartedness, or being thoroughly involved in the question or cause, and third, responsibility, or the need to think about the consequences of our actions. These attitudes, suggested by Dewey, are essential for reflection.

Foucault links reflective thinking to ethical behaviors. Discussing the work of Foucault, Infinito (2003, a.) writes, "By problematizing our actions and considering them as objects for reflection. . . . in order to transform our future actions, we are brought into being---a being that is fundamentally ethical" (p. 161). When reflective thinking is applied to our looking back at what we did in an effort to determine who we want to be and how we want to act in the future, according to Infinito, Foucault is suggesting that we are we are behaving in an ethical manner.

The practice of reflection.

The work of Donald Schon stands at the forefront of the research on reflective thinking. His three books published in 1982, 1987 and 1991 continue to be cited frequently in the literature on reflective thinking. For Schon (1982), the best teachers know more than they can put into words, and to meet the challenges of their work, they rely on what they learn in their teaching practice as opposed to the knowledge they gain from academic work. What they know, suggests Schon, is what they learn through

reflection. The author suggests also that when teachers are forced to work in isolation from peers, their reflective thinking is inhibited as they are cut off from interactions with peers, interactions that are critical to their reflecting process.

Reflections leading to self understanding require time and space. It is also necessary for a teacher to have the strategies in knowing *how* to reflect. The process is developmental and continues throughout one's teaching career. Critical to reflecting are dialogue, collaboration, and trusting relationships with colleagues, along with the ability to tolerate and accommodate uncertainty. Knowing how to reflect and having the means for engaging in reflective practices are critical to the teaching profession (Warin, Maddock, Pell & Hargreaves, 2006).

The process of reflection can help a teacher determine what changes in instruction may be necessary in order to help a child learn. According to Schon (1982), through reflection, the teacher identifies a problem in the instruction as opposed to viewing a child's difficulty in learning as a defect within the child. The teacher must, right there in the classroom, conduct her own research in working with the child in an effort to develop a way of helping the child. Reflecting on her instruction leads the teacher to take action.

The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (Schon, 1982) was written over thirty years ago and, even then, Schon raised the questions: (a) "What happens in an educational bureaucracy when teachers begin thinking for themselves?" and (b) "What happens when teachers act as reflective practitioners instead of technical experts?" (p. 333). Responding to his own questions, Schon suggests that the curriculum becomes an "inventory of understandings to be addressed" (p. 333) as opposed to a set of materials to be learned.

Reflexive thinking.

Danielewicz (2001) explains the distinction between reflective and reflexive thinking. Reflection is “the experience of contemplation, moments of quiet thinking” (p. 156). Reflexive thinking is a means to an end. Reflexive thinking involves active analysis of the situation with the inherent goal of revising our actions for the explicit purpose of achieving a change in thought or behavior. The author suggests that it is reflexive practice that changes a teachers’ understanding and impacts how she acts and thinks, and in this way, influences her teacher identity.

From my review of the literature, I concluded that reflexive thinking is “something beyond reflective thinking” and involves some kind of action being taken, but in the sources I checked, the term was often used without a meaningful explanation. In an article describing a whole language classroom, Watson (1990) tells the story of a student and his teacher in an actual classroom situation and in this way provides an authentic example of reflective and reflexive thinking. Reflective thinking, according to the author, occurred after the student read a book and was invited to engage in thinking about the book by relating his own ideas and experiences to the events in the story. “Reflection,” writes Watson, “involves the personal and systematic exploration of possibilities” (p. 8). Reflexivity occurs when the student can then “step back” from his own reflection, consider his thinking, and then act toward a new goal he himself has identified as it relates to the current endeavor. Watson illustrates the process of moving from reflective to reflexive thinking through her description of the interaction between the student and the teacher.

The teacher asked the student to respond to what he had learned from a study of Machu Pichu. The student considered [reflected] in a journal entry on what he had learned. The teacher in turn noted in his journal, “This is like a poem; I feel like I’m there.” The student, Doug, revisited his writing piece, “stepped back” in order to reflect on what he had previously written, and then chose to create a poem about Machu Pichu. By acting on his reflection in creating a poem, Doug transitioned from reflective to reflexive thinking. The student’s reasoning, suggests Watson, “facilitated the restructuring of knowledge and allowed him to present what he knew and felt” (p. 11). In the abstract for her article, Watson suggests that reflexive thinking is the “forging of new ideas” that can result from independence, initiative, and creativity when facilitated in supportive environments.

Teaching identities are impacted when a teacher acts, causing something to occur. When the teacher then acts on her reflections, her thinking and actions become reflexive.

Teacher Practical Knowledge

The shift in research from a view of teaching as a behaviorist set of skills and methods to a view of teaching as a complex cognitive process of decision-making began in the 1960s. Attempts to identify cognitive skills and personality traits specific to teaching led to the realization that what teachers know is tacit and specific to each individual teacher. The latest research into teacher knowledge now considers the influences of contextual, cultural and historical aspects of a teacher’s practice as well as the life history of any particular teacher (Cole and Knowles, 2000).

Although not the first to study teacher knowledge, Connelly & Clandinin (1988) were the first to apply the term “teacher practical knowledge” to the unique knowledge

teachers develop as they carry out their teaching practices in the classroom. Working side-by-side with teachers in their classrooms and listening to the narratives teachers share, these researchers defined teacher practical knowledge as being “in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher’s practice” (p. 25). These researchers report that as their study of teachers and teaching practices progressed, they came to view teacher knowledge in terms of the stories teachers shared. Teacher practical knowledge, according to Connelly and Clandinin, is both formed and expressed in the context and within the stories teachers tell. The concept of “stories to live by” served as a link for connecting knowledge, context and identity. For the remainder of the discussion, I use the term “teacher practical knowledge” and “teacher knowledge” interchangeably.

Identity and teacher knowledge.

The connection between identity and professional knowledge was first explored by British sociologist Basil Bernstein. Bernstein is perhaps best known for his controversial work in the 1950s regarding language codes and the distinction he made between the language children from middle school families (the language of schools) and language from children of working class families (language of the streets). Less well known is his work regarding knowledge construction and its connection with identity.

Bernstein addresses the use of language in social interactions and its influence on the creation of knowledge. He also draws the connection between social interactions and language in forming knowledge, and ultimately how teacher identities are influenced. Bernstein argued that a professional identity is due in large part to a teacher’s relationship

with knowledge and how that knowledge is constructed (Beck & Young, 2005).

Bernstein also considered how pedagogic communications lead to knowledge of the curriculum and thereby produce identities in the context of teaching (Singh, 1997). As teachers, we acquire the knowledge necessary to carry out our teaching practices, and in the acquisition of this knowledge, our identities are impacted (Bernstein, 1999).

Teacher knowledge as unique to the profession

Recognizing that teachers' knowledge, to a great extent, can not be articulated, Elbaz (1981) assumes that teachers have a broad range of knowledge that guides their work; knowledge of the subject content, of instructional strategies, of how to structure learning experiences, and knowledge of students' needs and abilities. Teachers also possess, according to Elbaz, knowledge of the social context of the school and community. The goal of the author's case study of an experienced high school English teacher was to look at the particular kinds of knowledge a teacher exercises in her profession. Elbaz, as a result of that study, defined teachers' practical knowledge as "knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction" (p. 45).

Elbaz (1981) conducted her study in an effort to dispel the negative view of teachers as simply passive transmitters of knowledge, thereby presenting the process of teaching as simplistic. Noting the paradox of teachers being denied active roles in the creation of instruction while at the same time being held responsible for failures in education, Elbaz approached her study with the assumption that teachers have a range of knowledge specific to the work they do. Beattie (1995) views Elbaz's study as a turning point in the research on teacher thinking and credits Elbaz for providing the basis for the

concept of teacher's practical knowledge. Prior to that time, adds Beattie, teacher thinking was considered cognitive knowledge, or acquired knowledge as opposed to knowledge gained through experience and reflection. As a result of Elbaz's study, Beattie further suggests that a teacher's knowledge is defined on its own terms rather than on terms derived from theory.

In addition to his landmark work on teacher reflection, Schon (1983) also discusses teachers' practical knowledge as the practitioner's way of "dealing with the swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution" and he continues, "the problems of greatest human concern lie in the swamp where the teacher engages in the most important and challenging problems" (p. 42). When asked to talk about their methods and practice, teachers speak of "experiences, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through" (p. 43).

Teaching knowledge is a result of a teacher's response to problems and is created through discourse. This educational discourse is the means by which knowledge is created, knowledge that is defined by the structure and practices of the discourse. Offering his ideas on discourse based on the work of Foucault, Petrosky (1994) believes that knowledge is located in discourse and argues that in the process of using language to create knowledge, teachers also create themselves as teachers.

The concept of teacher Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) was introduced by Shulman and his colleagues at Stanford University in the 1980s. Shulman (1986) and others addressed the questions "What are the sources of teacher knowledge?" and "What does a teacher know and when did he or she come to know it?" These researchers identified three categories of content knowledge: First, subject content knowledge

(knowledge of the subject being taught), second, pedagogical content knowledge, (knowledge of how to represent the content to be taught in a way that students will understand), and third, curricular knowledge (knowledge of materials and tools available for teaching). Ball et al (2008) credit Shulman and his colleagues with looking at teacher knowledge in terms of how the content is taught as well as recognizing that understanding the content is a special kind of knowledge that is key to teaching. For Shulman, PCK is “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (p. 9).

Johnson and Golombek (2002) write: “How teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work” (p. 2). The authors add that teachers process as well as create knowledge. Johnson and Golombek conclude by saying that teacher knowledge and how that knowledge is used is individual to each teacher and depends on the teacher’s knowledge of herself, her students, the curriculum and the school environment.

Agency and Identity

Agency and identity are reciprocal in their relationships with one another. Using the story of “Ellen,” Danielewicz (2001) demonstrates this relationship. As Ellen increasingly views herself as a teacher (her identity), the more confidence she has as an agent with the power to act. Ellen comes to believe she knows how to take action and she believes that she will do so in ways that will have a positive influence on her students. Ellen’s sense of agency in turn reinforces her feelings of identity as a teacher.

Danielewicz (2001) quotes Oakeshott (1975, p. 32) when she writes, “Agency is the starting place of doing” (p. 161). Adding her own definition of agency, Danielewicz suggests that agency is a quality of an individual that makes it possible for him or her to “do” by believing that one is capable of taking action. Agency might be considered as the power and the freedom to act and to make decisions. Agency may, at times, be seen in the decision to remain strategically silent. A person in possession of agency, continues Danielewicz (2001), has an understanding of herself (her identity) and her desires and power. The belief that one “can do” fuels teachers’ efforts and motivates them in their teaching lives. Agency is central to teaching if a teacher is to survive since agency allows the teacher to feel empowered and to have a sense of efficacy.

Wilson and Deaney (2010) define agency as the combination of intention and action that results in something happening. Agency determines the directions we take and our courses of actions. In terms of teaching, agency provides alternative courses of action in response to the ambiguities of teaching. The tensions that often result as teachers struggle with what alternatives to pursue may in turn cause them to enact a course of action that changes previous practices. Personal agency is required to carry out these transformations in teaching practices (Wilson and Deaney).

A study of preservice elementary science teachers’ emerging identities revealed how much agency they believed they had in the process of executing change in the classroom. (Moore, 2008). The author describes agency as “gaining control over one’s behavior and having the power to act purposively and reflectively” (p. 581). In terms of teaching, agency is the conscious role teachers play in their efforts to bring about change

in their classrooms. Agency is how teachers use their power and influence in their decision-making processes.

Bandura (2006) identifies four core properties of human agency. The first property, *intentionality*, includes making plans for action and devising the strategies for carrying out the action. The second property is *forethought*, or setting goals for one's self and anticipating possible outcomes. Through visualization, possible futures are realized and serve as guides for the agent's behaviors. The third agentic property is *self-reactiveness*. This property entails the regulation of a course of execution of the action plan. The fourth property, *self-reflectiveness*, engages the person in close self-examination of his thoughts and actions, including the meaning of his pursuits and whether or not corrective adjustments are needed. This fourth aspect requires the capability of reflecting on one's thoughts and actions.

Agency is exercised within a context of resistance and power and is therefore not a matter of individual autonomy. Agency is grounded in social circumstances and within the practice of teaching. A teacher's capacity to intervene in his or her world depends on the individual's ability to interpret what is happening along with the ability to make decisions of intervention. Through agency, people have a say in determining their life's path, but the circumstances directly related must be considered a factor in agency (Britzman, 2003).

The foundation to human agency, according to Bandura (2006), is personal efficacy and a teacher's belief that she can produce the results she wants through her actions. Without a belief in one's ability to affect results, there is little incentive to act or to confront the challenges ahead. "Belief in one's efficacy is a key personal resource in

personal development and change” (p. 170). Personal efficacy shapes one’s expectations for outcomes and the extent to which a teacher is optimistic about those outcomes.

Efficacy beliefs influence the choices people make at critical decision points during the course of action. Efficacy then, is essential in determining human agency and the ability to implement and complete a plan of action. Agency is the combination of capacity and potential that assist in making it possible for the teacher to have some control over his or her own life (Bandura, 2006).

Emotions and Teacher Identities

Teachers’ emotions are sites of resistance and self-transformation that lead to changes in identity (Zembylas, 2003b). Identities, “fraught with emotions,” (p. 108), are in a state of constant change while embedded in power relations, social interactions, and culture. An understanding of teacher identity depends on the connections between emotions and one’s knowledge of one’s self. Zembylas (2003b) continues by saying that despite its being the least investigated aspect of research on teacher, emotions are probably the aspect most often mentioned as being important and deserving of more attention. Attention to the emotional lives of teachers, and in particular the emotions involved in learning to teach, have only recently received attention from educators and researchers (Bullough, 2005).

Bullough (2008) views emotions not as reactions but as interpretations of the world. Emotions are interpreted as they are embedded in the stories teachers tell and are therefore discursive in nature. Zembylas (2003a) writes that it is through discourse and story that we create and describe our realities and experiences while engaged in social interactions. Through these discourses, we assign to ourselves feelings and emotions, all

attributing to a unified self. Kelchtermans (1996) suggests that as teachers talk about their work, their talk “immediately reveals that emotions are at the heart of teaching” (p. 307). Identity formation and emotion are inextricably linked as they inform each other and re-define interpretations of each other. “The search for identity requires the connection of emotion with self-knowledge” (Zembylas, 2003b, p. 223). It is, argues Zembylas, impossible to talk about identity construction without considering the meanings of our experience, including our emotions.

Emotions are constituted through language in social life. Inherent in the language of emotion are power relations that in turn shape how we express our emotions, sometimes allowing us to feel some emotions while prohibiting others. In addition, emotions can be used to create social and political resistance. Decision-making is impacted by our emotions since emotions are an intricate part of cognition. Reason presupposes emotion; what is rational depends on emotional preferences and our emotions require rational interpretation. What we think then, according to Zembylas (2003b) is to a great extent impacted by our emotions. Since emotions are rooted in cognition, our feelings cannot be separate from our perceptions (Kelchtermans, 2005).

The emotional climate of a school affects teachers’ emotions. Flores and Day (2006) mention among the emotions teachers experience are love, caring, job satisfaction, joy, excitement and pride. Negative emotions may arise from challenges from parents, feelings of vulnerability, and as a response to unrealistic expectations under difficult circumstances. Investment of one’s emotional self as required by teaching can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, stress and blame.

Emotions are a part of the fabric that constitutes the self. They are socially organized and managed through social conventions and community norms. “Emotions inform and define identity in the process of becoming” (Zembylas, 2003b, p. 223).

Discourse (Talk) and Teacher Identities

The literature on teaching identities offers numerous references to the critical role of social interactions, discourses, discussion and self-narratives in the creation of teaching identities. For the purpose of this section of the review, I refer to all of these forms of verbal communication as “talk.”

Talk is the essential aspect of the influences on identity discussed in this review. Talk in the form of self-narration is identity (Bruner, 1997). Talk and language determine emotions as well as how emotions are expressed. Teacher knowledge is created through talk, and talk is at the core of teacher reflective and reflexive thinking. As an influence on identity, the teaching context is greatly impacted by talk and the context in turn determines the talk in which teachers engage. Talk is the means by which identities are constructed. Danielewicz (2001) writes, “All teachers know that nothing significant in education ever happens without a lot of talk” (p. 134). For Danielewicz, talk is essential across teaching practices, from the role of talk in how we help students learn to the evolution of our own teaching identities.

Cohen (2010) uses the specific term “talk” in her research on how teachers negotiate their identities through talk. The author analyzed the talk of teachers in an effort to learn how teachers negotiate their identities in terms of the significances of the local teaching context. Cohen worked with the teachers as a participant observer for over a year and a half during times when they engaged in activities involving talk: planning

sessions, workshops and informal conversations. Talk, continues Cohen (2010), is how teachers establish understandings of their classroom practices. It is through talk that teachers wrestle with the challenges of their profession and address questions about curriculum. Talk, suggests Cohen, “is the discursive site for the construction, negotiation, and contextualization of teacher professional identity” (p. 474). The author’s attention to talk is based on her understanding of talk as the primary means for grounding social relationships in the construction of a learning community. As a result of her study, Cohen (2010) argues for a greater understanding of the ways in which teachers use talk in creating knowledge, reflecting on their teaching practices, and ultimately in establishing their identities.

In our interactions with others we engage in “recognition work” through our use of language. Using the term “discourse,” Gee writes that it is through discourse [talk] that we make ourselves known to others and in turn recognize who others are (Gee, 1999). Using the term “identity bids,” Cohen (2010) believes it is through the give and take of conversations that much of the recognition of ourselves and by others occurs.

“Discursive meaning-making” is the process of trying to provide logically and emotionally satisfying explanations as to what is happening through talk, talking with others and with one’s self (Geijsel and Meijers, 2005). Talking with others necessitates that one enters into a discourse with others engaged in that same discourse. Preservice teachers who have opportunities to engage in a variety of discourses and genres are able to develop a more holistic teaching identity, thereby making it easier to enter what may be the most difficult profession today. Participation in different kinds of talk within the context of the school and engagement with a variety of other educators offer options for

exposure to various perspectives and more opportunities for transforming a teacher's identity (Alsup, 2006).

Obstacles to Constructing Teaching Identities

The distinction between “being a teacher” and “becoming a teacher” is noted by Britzman (2003), a distinction between remaining static and fitting the mold of teacher [being] as opposed to engaging in dialogues that recognize that teaching identities are open to change [becoming]. *Becoming* a teacher is the “continually shaping and being shaped by the dynamics of social practice, social structure, and history” (p. 49). *Being* a teacher is a result of an “assembly-line” path to teaching and is a result of repressive models of teaching that offer little chance of engaging in interactions that make possible changes in identity. Teachers live within the contradictions of those who believe education can and should serve the interests of democracy and social justice while others believe education must serve the interest of business and social conformity. Those in support of education for furthering democracy and social justice value dialogue in education that invites evolving identities. Britzman proposes that preservice teachers be exposed to multiple realities and to discourses that provide moments of conflict and tension that can result in changing identities, or in other words, result in a teacher's “becoming.”

The prevalent thinking that identities are already “out there” presents a hindrance to “becoming” and engenders the notion that identity is a given (Britzman, 2003). When a teacher's identity is assumed, then the identity is viewed as a set of pedagogical skills and an aftermath of experience in the classroom where teaching is viewed as a role and function. In these situations, the need for identity work is not recognized (Britzman,

1990). “The problem of identity in learning to teach begins when it is positioned as a place of arrival” (p. 42).

Several factors that may serve as hindrances to constructing teacher identities are suggested by Clarke (2008). First, Clarke writes that it is necessary for the teacher to realize that identities are not predetermined and should be under continual negotiation and must be open to being transformed through encounters in teaching experiences. Second, identities happen as a result of dissonance and differences that the teacher strives to resolve. Without challenges to her thinking and beliefs, there is no purpose to put an identity into play. Third, any restrictions to self-narratives will hinder identities since it is the stories teachers share that are the foundation of their identities. According to Britzman (1990), experience does not inform who we are, but instead, it is in the telling of the experience that we create our identities.

The same influences that support the construction of a teacher's identities may also serve to hinder development of one's identities. The institutional context may place restrictions on the identity process by limiting access to supportive dialogues. In any given time and place, there will be those [some in positions of power] whose goal it is to construct the teacher as opposed to her constructing herself (McLean, 1999). Prior beliefs and perceptions of past experiences can put restraints on identities. As Wenger (1999) points out, we tend to notice what we expect to see, we hear what we want to hear, and what we hear is interpreted by our understanding of the message, and our actions are determined by the ways we view the world. Possibilities for identity transformation may be constrained by prior beliefs that limit the possibilities of discourse that could lead to change (Cohen, 2010).

Reflecting on her own classroom teaching experiences prior to returning to graduate school, Gratch (2001) remembers feelings of isolation and came to realize that this isolation was an obstacle to her becoming a teacher. Gratch reports that her most significant thinking about her teaching practices was a result of conversations with others. The author believes that the discourse needed in order to reach new understandings of herself were not available to her in the context of her elementary school situation. Restrictions to sharing self-narratives hinder identity development since it is the stories teachers share that are the foundation of their identities. Later, as a graduate student and in her position of supervising preservice teachers, Gratch reported that the student teachers she supervised simply adopted attitudes and practices of the teachers they observed. Her voice, along with the voices of her student teachers were silenced in an environment where only voices of authority were heard. Gratch argues that when time and space for reflective thinking are restricted, teachers' opportunities to examine and restructure their images of themselves are also restricted.

The call for teacher professionalism and identity comes at a time when teachers are being deskilled as their work intensifies. As teachers are asked to reflect and rethink their practices, fewer resources are available to support their work. At a time when teachers are encouraged to be autonomous, they are under increasing pressure to be accountable to standards (Sachs, 2001). This author adds that in many cases, those making the decisions about teacher identities do not see it in their own best interests to have teachers engage in identity construction dialogues. Those interested in the standardizations of practice and in performance indicators are not interested in establishing ongoing dialogues among teachers about their developing identities. When

teaching becomes technical and requires little investment of the self, little allowance is made for identity development. Prescribed outcomes in teaching contradict commitments to identities as teachers become trainers and managers (Bullough, 2008).

Conclusion

The literature suggests a number of influences that impact how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities. Critical to teacher education programs is an awareness by both teacher educators and preservice teachers of the importance of identity work for those entering the teaching profession

Chapter Three: Methodology

Humans make sense of their worlds and the events in their lives by interpreting these events for themselves and for others through narrative (Bruner, 1991). Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that it is through narratives that we link our actions together and create meaningful structures in order to understand our lives. The narratives teachers tell help them make sense of their lives as well as provide researchers with valuable information and insights into the social and cultural aspects of teaching (Sikes and Gale, 2006). Narrative inquiry, as described by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), is the study of experience through the stories people share about their experiences. Narrative inquirers think about experience in terms of stories and conduct their inquiries by engaging participants in sharing their stories. Narrative inquiry in this study draws on the stories of preservice teachers in an effort to understand how they interpret their teaching lives and what influences determine their teaching identities. A narrative inquiry approach was employed to gather the data for this study and narrative is the form of the data collected (Kramp, 2004).

Rationale

Teacher identities determine classroom-teaching practices and ultimately impact the students in the classroom as well as education in general. This study focuses on the narratives of five preservice teachers in an effort to understand how teachers construct their teacher identities and what factors influence the identity construction process.

Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people’s lives” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 137). The term

qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The authors also suggest that the qualitative researcher recognizes that reality and relationships are socially constructed through interactions with others. The qualitative researcher seeks answers to the *how* of experience. Considering these aspects of qualitative research, I determined that a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study.

Influences of the Poststructuralist Movement

Poststructuralism is described in the literature in various ways. Some researchers view the movement as similar to postmodernism or as a sub-category of postmodernism. Others use the terms postmodernism and poststructuralism interchangeably and a few write “postmodern/poststructuralism.” Grbich (2007) describes poststructuralism as “an important subset of postmodernism” (p. 13). There is agreement, however, that the movement originated with Foucault and Derrida in France in the 1970s about the same time the postmodern movement was coming into its own in the United States.

Poststructuralist theorists believe that meanings are produced and realities are created through language (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005). Richardson and St. Pierre suggest that poststructuralism recognizes the self as continually being created and that one knows himself or herself through interactions with others. The poststructuralist researcher creates the lives he or she hears in the stories told, processes the stories through his own perspective, and puts these lives into texts (Hatch, 2002). Clandinin and Rosick (2007) argue that narrative approaches to research fall within the guidelines of poststructuralism since the focus is on the narrative structure of knowledge. Poststructuralists seek to examine experience in hopes of finding new possibilities.

According to Grbich (2007), the poststructuralist warns against efforts to define a methodology for narrative inquiry and instead argues for “free play in determining relationships in the data,” (p. 176), thereby allowing for new possibilities and meanings to occur.

Narrative Inquiry as A Paradigm

Discussions about narrative inquiry in the literature and among researchers often refer to narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Articles about narrative inquiry talk about borrowing theories and research practices from a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) approach. In response to these ideas, Spector-Mersel (2010) asks researchers to consider narrative inquiry as a paradigm rather than a research method. In other words, Spector-Mersel suggests that researchers frame their inquiry within the theories of narrative and inquiry as opposed to following a set of procedures or methodology. According to this author, other research methods may be involved, but the methods used in narrative inquiry “emerge from a well-established theoretical framework” (p. 220). Within a narrative paradigm, the determination of the themes in the stories is driven more by the data themselves than by procedures suggested by particular research methodologies. The narrative researcher is most likely aware of analysis processes suggested in various methodologies, but the data from the stories receives priority over compliance with procedures in how the researcher identifies themes.

Narrative inquiry is based on the premise that humans come to understand their own lives and the world around them through story (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008). Narrative inquiry involves the gathering of these stories and focuses on the

meanings people assign to their experiences (Josselson, 2006). Polkinghorne (1988) views narratives as the way we render meaning to our existence and suggests that stories are not gathered to determine if events really happened but for the meaning people ascribe to these events. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggest that in narrative inquiry it is the researcher's desire to "understand rather than control and predict" (p. 30). These authors believe that narrative inquiry recognizes that there are various ways of knowing and various ways of questioning what is knowledge and how it is constructed. Within a narrative paradigm, researchers recognize there is never a single way of knowing and there will always be other interpretations and other ways of explaining things (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007).

An important distinction of narrative inquiry is the belief that narratives do not reflect a reality but instead reality is constructed in the telling of the narrative; realities are created during the telling of a story. Narratives, therefore, have "enormous power to shape reality" (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 208). This author draws a distinction between the telling of a *life history*, the facts and events of one's life, and *life stories*, the ways in which people represent themselves. Spector-Mersel refers to the interview as "inviting" life stories. These stories are then shared under the influence of the interviewer and in the context of the time and place of the interview.

Riessman (2008) contributes to our understanding of a narrative inquiry paradigm by suggesting principles that characterize narrative inquiry. She notes that stories need to be considered as a whole unit and analyzed with a holistic approach as opposed to a categorical analysis. In addition, Riessman writes that in narrative inquiry, attention is given to contexts and how the context influences the narrative. She proposes also that the

reality being studied is often created during the inquiry and that the stories being shared did not exist prior to the telling. Therefore, the story is created in the telling. According to Riessman, the researcher recognizes the variable and tentative nature of knowledge and accepts the tentativeness and wanderings during an interview. Narrative inquiry, continues Riessman, considers each individual case and therefore the focus is on the individual participant.

John Dewey and Inquiry

John Dewey wrote extensively about inquiry and in 1938 published *Logic; The Theory of Inquiry*. Dewey places experience at the center of inquiry since, in his view, inquiry is the study of a social phenomena, an experience. Further more, such a study of experience is possible through the experiences of the inquirer during the inquiry process.

According to Dewey (1938), instead of answering questions to a clearly defined problem, inquiry is the process of subjecting a problematic or confusing situation to the inquiry process, a process that leaves us open to new possibilities for further inquiry. Dewey saw inquiry as synonymous with “reflective conversations” and described these as a conscious reflection on a situation while at the same time thinking and acting on the situation. Instead, inquiry suggests opportunities for continuing the process since each step uncovers new questions to consider and the process is turned back on itself. Knowledge, for Dewey, is gained through the ongoing questions that are part of an inquiry. Knowledge, therefore, is a result of a continual concern as opposed to being a final conclusion.

Ontological and Epistemological Beliefs within a Narrative Paradigm

Ontological beliefs answer the question, “What is the nature of reality?” (Hatch, 2002, p. 11). Narrative inquiry, suggests Hatch (2002), falls within the boundaries of constructivism since the focus of this type of research is on constructing meanings and realities as participants tell their stories. In addition, the researcher and the researched co-construct their realities and understandings of the stories as they engage in social meaning-making discourses, often doing so in the interview process. Spector-Mersel (2010) purposes that since people create their realities through narratives, realities are essentially a narrated reality.

Epistemological beliefs answer the question, “What can be know, and what is the relationship of the knower to what is to be known?” (Hatch, 2002, p. 11). According to Hatch, knowledge is a human construction; the knower himself constructs what is to be known. Spector-Mersel (2010) writes that reality is how we understand the world and how we interpret the events of our lives. A narrative epistemology recognizes that stories are determined by the individual’s circumstances, one’s biographical and cultural histories, and related to the social interactions in which the stories are shared. It is through narrative that we present our understandings and our realities of the world as we see it (Sikes & Gale, 2006). Our stories are told through our perspectives and through the other stories we tell, and are constructed through the lenses of other experiences and beliefs. Our stories are biased in their telling and therefore influence our realities and views of the world (Worth, 2004).

Within a narrative paradigm, researchers recognize there is never a single way of knowing and that there will always be other interpretations and other ways of explaining

things. Human experience is fundamental to how we construct our realities, and researchers develop their understandings of people's realities as these experiences are related through narrative (Clandinin & Rosick, 2007). Narratives then, according to Spector-Mersel (2010), help us see our social worlds and the ways we think and conduct ourselves in that world.

The Position of the Researcher

Perhaps more than in any other studies, the position of the researcher is critical in the process of gathering data. Even though I used open-ended questions, often allowing and encouraging a participant to take the lead in a conversation, never the less, the interview was framed by my questions and for my purposes as the researcher. The interview prompts were often stated to elicit stories. For example, I posed, "Tell me a story about a time when" or "Tell me about. . . ." I found the OSSYP students to be eager and enthusiastic in telling their stories and my hope was to offer encouragement and to indicate my interest in their stories. There seemed to be a need for the OSSYP students to talk about what was happening in their classrooms and our conversations provided an opportunity for them to process their classroom experiences. I understood that as the researcher, my position was not to *find* narratives but to instead participate in the creation of the stories (Riessman, 2008). As Riessman suggests, I was looking for accounts of the OSSYP students' experiences in their classrooms. After reading the transcripts from the pilot study, it was obvious to me that I had talked too much and made comments that appeared to limit what the OSSYP student might have gone on to say. During the interviews following the pilot study, I attempted to have the participants take the lead in the conversations resulting in data that showed the extent to which many of

the topics they discussed were intuitive and were topics they initiated. I approached the data collection process with the question, “What will they talk about?”

Another aspect of narrative inquiry is the reflexivity of the researcher throughout the inquiry. Throughout the data collection process, I engaged in thinking about how I was collecting their stories, what stories I was collected, and how their stories were changing over time. I believed that the positive interactions with the preservice teachers while they were students in my classes facilitated the ease with which they shared their stories, often stories that were personal and emotional. After the interviews, I considered what I might have said to prompt particular stories and themes, or what I might have said that stopped a participant from sharing more or sharing a different story. I continued to read the literature on narrative inquiry and to learn about the responsibilities and impact of the researcher in this kind of study. My reading at this time raised my awareness as to my influence on the study and how I approached the sessions. Throughout the interview process, I looked back at what had been shared during an interview, what I might had said or done to prompt a story, and I considered approaches and prompts for following interviews.

The “Narrative Turn” in Research

Numerous references to the term “narrative turn” are made in the literature on narratives in research. “Narrative turn” is the term used to describe the movement away from quantitative studies to the use of personal narratives as sociologists and researchers realized the value of people’s stories. Berger and Quinney (2005) discuss the turn toward narratives in the Postmodern era. According to these authors, sociologists noted that quantitative approaches to research were far removed from people’s lived experiences.

As a result of the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Rights Movement, and other marginalized groups organizing and speaking out in the 1960s, social scientists recognized the power of individual's stories in these movements and began to look at narrative as an approach to research. It was the personal stories from the Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement that became the rhetorical basis for grassroots movements and served to unit members of these movements. This change in approaches to research is what Berger and Quinney and others refer to as the "Narrative Turn."

Clandinin (2006) suggests four themes in this "turn" toward narrative inquiry: First, the change in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. In this turn, the researcher and the researched realize their relationships will change, they will learn with and from one another, and the focus is on interpretation and making meaning. The second turn is seen in the change from numbers as data to language as data. Clandinin (2006) notes the problem with trying to capture human experience through numbers and standardization and recognizes that researchers were beginning to question the ability of numbers to reveal deep understandings of human interactions. When numbers are used in research, there is no way to expand the meaning of the data collected. The trustworthiness and authenticity of findings are supported in narrative inquiry as participants share from their perspectives and in their own voices. The third turn to narrative was a move from "the general to the particular" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 22). A focus on "the particular" signals the researcher's understanding of a value of a particular experience in a particular setting and involving particular people. Making the particular the focus of a study signals an understanding of the value of that experience. And finally, the fourth turn toward narrative in research was the recognition by some

researchers that there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding the world.

Narrative inquirers are able to accept and value the tentativeness and alternative views that are a result of accounts of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006).

Describing Narrative Inquiry

Savin-Baden and Van Niekert (2007) suggest that narrative inquiry must go beyond just the telling of stories. These authors make the distinction between *the analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis*. The analysis of narratives refers to studies in which the data consists of narratives to be analyzed and the use of narratives to create categories. Narrative analysis is the stories whose data produce actions and in turn the analysis of these actions produces stories. In other words, narrative inquiry is “the story of stories.”

Moen (2006) views a narrative approach to research in terms of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Bakhtin’s theory on dialogue. Considering Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, Moen notes the theorist’s belief that to understand human mental functioning we must consider where and how this function comes about. Using the words of Bakhtin, Moen writes: “All human action is dialogic in nature; we conduct dialogues with those in the world around us and we conduct dialogues with ourselves in our consciousness” (p. 2). Given the beliefs of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, Moen suggests that nothing we do, think, or say happens in a vacuum.

Four basic claims about narrative research are outlined by Moen (2006). First, human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives. Second, the stories people tell depend on their past and present experiences, their values, the people to whom they are telling their stories, and the context in which the stories are told. Third, narrative

research realizes the multivoicedness in narratives. Fourth, narrative research focuses on how individuals make meaning of their lives through the stories they tell.

Clandinin (2007) provides a list of factors that distinguish narrative inquiry from other qualitative methodologies based on her interviews with researchers Don Polkinghorne, Elliot Mishler and Amia Lieblich, all leaders in the field of narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin, narrative inquiry deals with individual lives as opposed to efforts to look for commonalities across interviews. The narrative captures the “temporal development of lives and the unique histories of people” (p. 633). The knowledge obtained from narrative is unique and in narrative inquiry, we honor this uniqueness. Narrative is “storied” and changes that take place over time are explained. Reality is described in ways that are not possible when the focus is on concepts and commonalities. Narrative analysis (as opposed to the analysis of narratives) lies within the boundaries of narrative inquiry and the final story told is the narrative about the narratives.

Narrative Inquiry in Educational Studies

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), current practitioners, claim to be the first to use the term “narrative inquiry” in educational research. Expressing an interest in the lived experiences of teachers, they thought of narrative and inquiry as the phenomenon and the method and realized the importance of narrative inquiry as a research methodology for educators. Frequently referencing the work of John Dewey, Clandinin and Connelly suggest that narrative inquiry is the study of experience through the stories people share.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) believe also that it is through the stories teachers tell one another about their educational experiences that they come to know what they

know about teaching. Because teaching and educational studies are a form of experience, then narrative is the best way of representing and understanding these experiences.

Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest also that narratives give us a better way of understanding teaching and learning. Moen (2006) notes that narratives make it possible to study teachers in their environment and within their cultural and institutional settings. Narratives make possible the telling of teachers' lives by teachers themselves.

Narrative inquiry has the potential to capture the complex reality and multidimensional nature of the classroom. Narratives make it possible for others to access the worlds of teaching and thereby an understanding of the profession. It is through the life stories of teachers that researchers learn how individuals make meaning of their teaching and their lives and how they come to understand their chosen profession (Atkinson, 2007). Kim and Latta (2010) share recollections of telling their own teacher stories and describe their feelings of empowerment in having the opportunity to have their voices heard. Their stories were a way of sharing values and beliefs and feelings about their teaching. The narratives provided an avenue for conceptualizing their teaching identities, and in the process they attended to the complexities of relationships as teachers. Kim and Latta suggest also that narrative inquirers strive to honor teachers by honoring their stories. As educators and researchers consider the narratives of teaching practices that teachers share, at the center of the inquiry aspect of the process are the new questions uncovered and the new insights that are realized (Sikes & Gale, 2010).

Clandinin (2007) discusses the experience studied in narrative inquiry and explains the concept of experience in terms of Dewey's idea of experience. Experience, according to Dewey (1939), "is continuous interaction of human thought with our

personal, social and material environment” (p. 39). Continuing to build on Dewey’s concept of experience, the author notes the experience is continual and that new experiences come out of old experiences and all experience lead to further experiences. “From a Deweyan perspective, narrative inquiry is seen as an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (Clandinin, 2007, p. 42). The author adds that to use a narrative inquiry method means the researcher adopts a Deweyan view of experience as well as keeping in mind Dewey’s idea that experience is the center of all inquiry.

Chase (2005) views narrative inquiry as a combination of diverse disciplinary approaches that center around an interest in stories as told by the individuals who lived them. For researchers Schaafsma and Vinz (2011), inquiry begins when there is something in a story that draws attention, something that is puzzling. A cycle is created when narratives are in turn used to resolve the puzzle. Through narrative, Schaafsma and Vinz strive to invite dialogue, create understanding, and present various perspectives. Narratives help resolve complex issues and reveal before unseen or unacknowledged issues. Perhaps most critical to the inquiry process, Schaafsma and Vinz suggest, is that narratives reveal contradictions and present new questions.

A theme in the literature on narrative inquiry is that the analysis of data should be ongoing from the beginning of the data collection process. Another theme is the common belief about narratives that inquirers bring to this methodology. Clandinin (2006) writes that narrative researchers embrace the assumption that story is fundamental to explaining human experiences. Narrative inquiry offers the greatest potential for insights and understandings of human experiences and, adds Clandinin, narrative inquiry has emerged

as a compelling way to study human interactions. A researcher becomes a narrative inquirer when she embraces the relationships between herself and the researched and views stories as the primary source of data.

Chase (2005) notes specific aspects of narrative inquiry. One, narrative is a distinct discourse of its own. It is “retrospective meaning making; the shaping or ordering of past experience” (p. 657). Second, narrative researchers view narratives as explaining or informing. Whatever the story, the teller is shaping and constructing the self, his experience and his reality. Third, the researcher views narratives as being told in social contexts. Fourth, narratives are socially situated and stories are interactive. Fifth, the researcher sees herself as a narrator as she develops interpretations of the stories told and decides on ways to re-present these stories for others.

Final Perspective on Narrative Inquiry

Savin-Baden and Van Niekert (2007) suggest that narrative inquiry must go beyond just the telling of stories. These authors make the distinction between *the analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis*. The analysis of narratives refers to studies in which the data consists of narratives to be analyzed and the use of narratives to create categories. Narrative analysis is the stories whose data produce actions and in turn the analysis of these actions produces stories. In other words, narrative inquiry is “the story of stories.”

The Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in the spring of 2009. Twenty-three juniors in the reading methods course I was teaching at the time volunteered to be interviewed and to share their stories about becoming teachers. Institutional Review Board [IRB] informed

consent (APPENDIX A) was obtained from each student and I informed the students that their names would be changed and their identifies would be confidential. The IRM granted approval for the pilot study and subsequent dissertation study (APPENDIX B). The data from the pilot study interviews became a factor in the selection of the participants for the dissertation study. I discuss the selection process in the “Participants” section that follows.

The pilot study was conducted near the end of the second semester these students were in classes I taught. I had established a rapport with the students and they were receptive to participating in the study. The time and place of the interviews were decided by each participant and most met with me at my home. There were no time limits set for the interviews and most lasted about an hour. Participants responded to questions such as, “Who has been the greatest influence in your life?” and “Why did you choose to become a teacher?” One prompt asked them to recall positive and negative memories of their elementary school years and in particular their teachers’ roles in these memories. Transcribing of the interviews was completed by the fall of 2009, prior to their beginning their OSSYP year. I coded the transcripts from the pilot study at a later time in order to code the pilot study transcripts at the same time I coded the transcripts from the OSSYP year. In this way, all of the transcripts were considered at the same time throughout each stage of the analysis processes.

The pilot study supported the dissertation study in several ways. First, I had the opportunity to consider the logistics of the interview process, including what recording device to use, how to schedule interviews, and how to establish record keeping procedures. Second, I realized that the ways in which I presented and worded the

prompts had significant influence on the extent to which the OOSYP students shared more detailed stories. Third, the transcripts from the pilot study served as guidelines for selecting the participants for the dissertation study. During the pilot study interviews and in reading those transcripts, there were some OOSYP students who shared more stories and stories that indicated data for a study of teacher identities. In addition, the transcripts helped me determine questions for the first interviews in the fall. Fourth, and most important, the initial interviews provided rich data about the preservice teachers' families and background experiences. The decision by the students to come to my home for their interviews during the pilot study indicated their comfort level in doing so. By their coming to my home, I was able to prepare for the interviews ahead of time and organize materials following the interviews, including the immediate uploading of the recordings to my computer.

Participants

A review of the transcripts from the pilot study along with my impressions as to which preservice teachers shared stories indicating their evolving teaching identities served as guidelines for narrowing the list of participants from twenty-three in the pilot study to ten participants. (The number of participants was later narrowed to five.) The ten participants were selected in early August, 2009. At this point in time, I knew their school placements for the OSSYP year. At the suggestion of my advisor, I considered several factors relating to the schools to which each was assigned. I considered the socioeconomic status and the geographic locations of the schools in an effort to collect data from OSSYP students in various school settings. Two of the OSSYP students were assigned to rural districts. Three were placed in urban districts with one of the three urban

schools in a low socio-economic community. Three participants were placed in the community where the university is located, two in schools serving a lower socioeconomic population and one in a school located in a higher socioeconomic area of the community. Two of the ten participants were single mothers. One participant was male, and the remaining seven were traditional, white, middle-class elementary education majors.

The list of participants was narrowed from ten to five in October 2010. I narrowed the list to five participants in an effort to keep the study more manageable and to limit the amount of data to be considered. Narrowing the list of participants from ten down to five was done five months after completing data collection and after reading all the transcripts from the original ten participants two times. By October, having read all the transcripts twice, I had also completed initial coding (explained in “Thematic Coding section of this chapter). The selection of the five participants was determined by several factors. First, after reading the transcripts from each of the original ten participants, (six transcripts including the pilot study), it was clear which participants’ stories offered more data to review for the study. Second, by October, of the five I chose *not* to include in my dissertation, two did not have teaching positions, one had moved out of state to attend graduate school, and one entered the university Teaching Fellows Program as a middle school math teacher, therefore leaving the elementary classroom. A fifth original participant also entered the Teaching Fellows program but was placed in an urban district over 100 miles away. Even though the formal data collection was completed, the logistics of keeping open communication with this teacher were going to be difficult, and therefore the decision not to continue to include her data in the study.

Collecting Data during the OSSYP Year

Gaining Access

Each of the ten OSSYP students I asked to participate in the dissertation study accepted my invitation to do so in early August 2009. The next step was to contact the principals at the schools where they were assigned and ask for access to the school, inform the principals of my study, and answer any questions they had. I obtained permission to be in the schools to meet with the OSSYP students.

Soon after the start of the 2009-2010 school year, I visited the OSSYP students at their schools. Although this visit was brief and there were no interviews conducted at that time, I gained a sense of the school environment, confirmed the school locations, and determined driving time to each building. During these initial visits to the schools, each OSSYP signed a second IRB permission form with an Addendum (See Appendix C) granting me permission to use any artifacts, emails or writing pieces they might share with me during the study.

In an effort to facilitate and organize the interview process, I created a folder for each participant, hanging files for related documents, calendars for scheduling interviews, and lists of all the contact information for each OSSYP student and his or her school. A few of the interviews were conducted in the urban schools since asking the OSSYP students to drive to my home, now a two-hour drive, was not a reasonable request. A few interviews were scheduled over a weekend when a OSSYP student returned for a visit to the university.

Data Collection

Five rounds of interviews were conducted with each of the ten OSSYP students, two in the fall and three in the spring with the fifth and final interview taking place just after the end of the school year. These five interviews were in addition to the interviews that took place during the pilot study. At the time of the final interviews in the spring of 2010, the OSSYP students had graduated from the university.

Interview Schedule

Pilot Study	Spring, 2009	May
Interview 1	Fall, 2009	September, October
Interview 2	Fall, 2009	October, November
Interview 3	Winter, 2010	January, February
Interview 4	Spring, 2010	March, April
Interview 5	Spring, 2010	May

Since three of the OSSYP students were now 100 miles from my home, I met with them at their schools. Interviews at the schools were less satisfactory than the ones in my home. Finding a quiet place to talk took time away from the interviews since the candidate's time was limited. In addition, the candidates appeared more relaxed during the interviews outside of school, most likely due to their being accustomed to coming to my home and having no time constraints at my home.

In my effort to keep the scheduling process easy for the OSSYP students, I did not at any time cancel an interview nor did I request a change in the scheduled time once an interview was on the calendar. The interviews were planned to accommodate the OSSYP students' schedules. Only one candidate cancelled an interview during the entire study

due to a dead car battery. The interview was rescheduled for a few days later. All the candidates preferred to meet for the final interview after graduation from the University in May. The timing of the final interview made it possible for them to reflect on the entire OSSYP experience.

Prior to each interview, I reviewed the transcript from the previous interview and noted any stories I wanted to ask the OSSYP student to revisit. I also noted passages in the interviews where I had questions regarding something that was said. I prepared a list of questions for each interview, and once into the interview process, the list of questions for each interview included some questions specific to each candidate. By the third interview, I was handing the list of prompts to the candidates and asking them to answer any or all of the questions and in whatever order they chose. This procedure gave them more ownership and control in responding to the prompts and I followed this process for the remaining interviews. This change in how the interview questions were posed appeared to facilitate their telling their stories.

Examples of the open-ended questions I asked include “What changes are you noticing in yourself?” and “What are the biggest surprises about yourself now that you are in the OSSYP year?” Other prompts included, “Tell me a story about a student” or “Tell me about a lesson you have learned since last year.” One question asked of all the candidates was “When did you first feel you had become a teacher?” The questions for the interviews were adapted to individual participants depending on their focus at the time of the interview and on prior interviews. The questions from one of the participant’s final interview are shown in Appendix D.

Chase (2005) suggests, “the idea of a particular story can not be known, predicted, or prepared for in advance” (p. 662). In other words, the stories the OSSYP students shared were created within the context of the interview. Chase suggests also that in her own effort to “bring them to the point” of a question, she learned that storytellers would instead break through her structure and offer instead their own stories of experiences. My hope as I considered questions and prompts for the interviews was for the OSSYP students to “break through my structures” and share the stories important to them and unique to each, and as Chase (2005) notes, “stories that were not predicted or prepared for in advance” (p. 662).

The recordings from the interviews were transcribed by several college students in order to have the transcripts in a timely manner and in time to review prior to the next interviews. The transcripts were printed with a wide margin on the right side of each page allowing space for notes and codings. Hard copies were placed in hanging files along with backup copies saved to flash drives.

Additional data were collected in the form of photos. I gave each participant a camera and asked her to take six to ten pictures of anything that she viewed as representing her as a teacher. During the fourth interview, each OSSYP student talked about her photos and how the photo served as a metaphor for her teaching. By incorporating photography, data were produced through an artistic expression that asked the preservice teachers to think about their teaching identities through a different lens. This data, therefore, produced in a different medium, is what Richardson (2008) terms “crystallized data.” According to this author, crystallized data are any data collected that provides a different way of knowing and a different re-presentation of their identities.

Photography taken by the participants, poetry written by the participants, or data presented through art mediums are examples of crystallized data.

Crystallization applied to the data analysis process allows the researcher to encounter and interpret the data in more than one way of knowing (Ellingson, 2009). After completing the final analysis of the data, I revisited the original transcripts and selected specific phrases from the interviews, phrases I believed further supported the narratives I had created about each of the OSSYP students. The poems about each of the preservice teachers re-presented each participant through the genre of poetry. These poems also provided a brief summary of each participant's stories told in the language of the participant.

Initial Data Analysis

According to Grbich (2007), analysis begins with a generative question. My generative question was, "What do the OSSYP students talk about in their stories?" This was the broad lens through which I initially considered the stories.

The *first reading* of the transcripts was a horizontal read; for example, I read all ten of the participants' transcripts from the pilot study at the same time, then I read the ten transcripts from the first interview, and so forth. For these initial "read-throughs," I recorded notes in pencil along the wide margin on the right side of each page of the transcripts. In these notes I documented first thoughts, reactions, and in general anything that stood out to me or caught my attention. I focused on what the OSSYP students talked about in the interviews. The *second reading*, a vertical one, was considering all of the transcripts from each individual participant in chronological order. For example, I read all six of Kari's transcripts beginning with the pilot study interview and then the

transcripts of Kari's five interviews during the OSSYP year in chronological order. For this reading, I recorded my thoughts in the margins using a red pen. I allowed at least one week between readings in order to have fresh perspectives on the next readings.

The *third reading*, another vertical reading, was completed after the list of participants was narrowed to five. Again, I read all the transcripts for each participant in chronological order according to when the interviews occurred. During this third reading, I recorded notes in green ink, again in the margins. Not initially intending to do so, I found myself noting passages I believed to be significant by drawing a green star beside the quote or story. Sometimes a green star identified a quote I wanted to ensure was not lost, or the star identified a comment specific to the candidate's teacher identity. At other times, a green star simply indicated something I believed to be significant at the time of the reading. I was at this point adhering to the guidelines for "open coding" since I was reading the transcripts "word by word and line by line" (Grbich, 2007, p. 74). With each subsequent reading, my notes were moving away from specifics and toward more generalized ideas and concepts. By now I had crossed out sections of the transcripts not directly related to the study, for example, conversations about the family dog, what kind of sandwiches to order from Jimmy Johns' sandwich shop, and so on. Had I transcribed the interviews myself, I most likely would not have spent the time transcribing the entire conversations and probably would not have continued to transcribe once it seemed the interview was completed. Since the recordings were transcribed by others, I had the entire conversation from the moment the recorder was turned on until turning it off. Reflecting on this aspect of the data collection, I realized there were wonderfully rich

passages that might have been lost had the entire interview not been transcribed, especially the insights sometimes shared at the end of the interviews.

Identifying and Naming Categories

A Thematic Approach to Narrative Inquiry Data Analysis

I turn to the work of Riessman (2008) for a discussion of a thematic approach to narrative analysis. This discussion includes the distinction she makes between a thematic approach to narrative analysis as compared to a thematic approach in other kinds of studies. Riessman acknowledges the confusion in the literature about thematic approaches, confusion often regarding grounded theory approaches. This author distinguishes approaches to narrative analysis from approaches in other research. First, narrative researchers consider the whole story and do not break a story into segments. When a story is broken into segments, according to Riessman, these segments may be given concise terms that are then applied to further interpretation of the data. Within a narrative inquiry, researchers continue to search for new insights and themes from the data throughout the entire analysis process. Second, narrative inquirers develop a theory for each individual case as opposed to identifying themes across multiple cases. Third, themes are determined by the researcher in terms of prior theories, in terms of the purposes of the study, and in terms of the data themselves. A fourth aspect of a thematic approach in narrative inquiry is the attention given to the time and place of the narrative by placing the narrative in a social, cultural, and historic frame. According to Riessman most fundamental to a thematic approach in narrative studies is the focus on the individual case. This author adds that the story itself is the object of study, not an avenue to some kind of knowledge or finding that is “out there.” For Riessman language is not

seen as something to be analyzed in a thematic approach; language is the source of the data.

Grbich (2007) offers additional thoughts about a thematic approach when she writes that thematic analysis takes place after all the data are gathered. This form of analysis is specific to the perspectives and decisions of the researcher. Grbich suggests also that a thematic analysis can be influenced by previous research, information about the topic being considered, and she adds, “by your gut feelings and the views of those being interviewed” (p. 32). This author writes that in a thematic approach, the data should speak for themselves before categories and themes are determined.

My Approach to the Data

Once the list of candidates was narrowed to five, I read the transcripts for the *fourth* time and now recorded my notes on the small margin on the left side of each transcript page. Then I divided a spiral notebook into five sections, each tabbed with the name of a participant. In each section of the spiral, I noted significant themes or comments I was seeing in my notes on the transcripts. Drawing from what I recorded in the spirals, I typed a continuous list of *all* the notes. using a large font and double-spacing. I printed this list of notes and cut the items on the lists into strips. These strips make it possible to move the notes around and physically manipulate them. Spreading the strips of paper over a large area, I arranged and rearranged as I considered what notes (ideas) might connect in some way and come together to form a theme. Once I determined the groups, I needed labels on the envelopes. At this point I named, for the first time, the themes I had determined. I created “theoretical memos” when I labeled the envelopes (Grbich, 2007, p. 77).

I identified 19 categories and placed the strips in the labeled envelopes. It became evident that some themes (envelopes) contained far more strips of paper (notes from the transcripts) than others. The envelopes containing the most ideas included, “collaboration and grade level teams,” “relationships with students,” “insights into their own identities,” and “the OSSYP experience.” Some envelopes (themes) contained far fewer ideas, but I deemed these ideas significant and made the decision at that time to retain the categories. The theme “critical incidents” appeared at first to have only a few notes. This I believed was due in part to my not always recognizing the critical incidents in their stories. After returning to the literature and reading about critical events, I gained a better understanding of critical incidents and their importance in teaching identities. In addition, I began to recognize critical incidents in the transcripts that I previously overlooked. The theme “self-concept” was found less frequently in the data than other themes, but I believed self-concept to be important to teacher identity. In further review of the transcripts, I found indications of self-concept I previously overlooked.

After I identified themes in the data, I realized their alignment with the influences on teacher identities found in the literature I was reading. My review of the literature, I believe, was not a prominent factor in the initial process of identifying the themes in the data. I put drafts of the literature review and reading materials aside, literally “boxing” and setting aside anything having to do with the literature review. I turned my attention to the data and was faced with deciding where to begin with the notes and lists I had created. Up to this point, it seemed my review of the literature on teacher identities and the initial naming of the themes were parallel processes. The two began to merge as I recorded the theoretical memos on the envelopes and realized the connections between

the two. My reviews of the literature, from this point on, influenced further reviews of the data as I recognized comments and stories I previously overlooked.

I designed a grid (Appendix E) to include the 19 themes from the data and in some cases, applying terms from the literature in naming the themes.

- Context
- Former beliefs
- Reflection
- Subjective/Agency
- Social interactions
- Emotions
- Restrictions
- Tensions and border crossings
- Myths and stereotypes
- Critical incidents
- Embodiment
- Self-concept
- Interactions with students
- Teacher knowledge
- Morals and ethics
- Stories told (topics)
- Metaphors and visuals
- Discourses
- Others

Data Shows the Influences on Teacher Identities

Copies of the grid were printed on bright-colored paper for the purpose of providing some system of organization to my analysis process. I revisited each of the transcripts again. I recorded any references to influences on their identity in the corresponding sections on the grid. Transcript page numbers were also recorded on the grid. A completed grid was attached to each transcript. Use of the grid in revisiting the transcripts heightened my awareness of influences I had previously overlooked. I was refining my thinking about the data and coming to decisions about my findings (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber, 1998). The next step in analyzing the data was to compile the notes from all the grids for each participant onto a single grid. I then had a final grid for each preservice teacher. These final grids, printed on bright yellow paper, proved to be invaluable for the remainder of the study.

In-Depth Data Analysis

An in-depth analysis of the data came as a result of preparing to write the stories of each of the five participants. This in-depth analysis occurred as I went back into the data in preparation for writing Chapter Five, "Recurring Themes in The Stories."

In preparation for writing Chapter Five, I revisited the original spiral notebooks since they were the initial documentation of my open coding. Combining a review of my notes in the spiral notebook with the stories from the interviews that came to the forefront of my memory, I created a list of stories told by each participant. I titled these stories with a brief phrase that identified the story for me; giving the stories some kind of identifying label was for my purposes only. The codings documented in the spiral notebooks seemed, in my thinking, more closely connected to the transcripts, and in

addition, this step in the process created a “safety network” in an effort not to lose any significant data. The list of stories provided the framework for Chapter Five. In writing Chapter Five, it was apparent that many of the themes in the stories were similar, but each OSSYP student told very different stories within these themes.

Using this list of stories from each participant, I cross referenced the stories with the list of influences to determine if I had a story or stories to serve as examples for the influences on identity I had listed. I also cross-referenced the stories to determine if there was a balance in the number of stories I would share from each participant. I listed the influences on identity I had developed, and under each noted the supporting stories. I did not want my attempts to find a balance in the number of stories that I would share to influence how I selected the stories, nor did I want the list of influences on identity to determine the stories I chose. As it turned out, neither issue was a concern. This process was, however, an important factor in bringing to light the “findings” from the study. In organizing how I would tell their stories, I discovered new insights into how each preservice teacher was constructing her teaching identities.

Preparing to write Chapter Five, “Recurring Themes in Their Stories,” I revisited the five culminating grids from the candidates’ transcripts. Using the information on these grids, and having identified seven of the most significant influences on their evolving teacher identities, I developed new grids. In a space for each candidate on these grids, I noted the stories each shared that related to a particular influence. Eight grids were completed, one for each influence. This process revealed the similarities and differences among the stories shared. Although the influences on their identities were

common among the five candidates, this process revealed the similarities and differences among the stories.

Validation of Narrative Studies

Reismann (2008) acknowledges the long debate among social scientists regarding trustworthiness in narrative studies and at the same time notes the increasing interest among many researchers to put a human face on their research findings. Reismann, currently a leader in the field of narrative research, continues by offering that there are no formal rules for validating narrative studies. She adds however, that researchers must make their arguments in order to convince readers of the validity of their data and the validity of their interpretations of the data.

Trustworthiness as a Factor in Validation

In their discussion of trustworthiness, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) discuss the critical importance of making the documents from the data collection and analysis processes easily accessible to others as evidence of what is reported. Throughout the research process, I maintained files and documentation of my analysis procedures. In accordance with Silverman and Marvasti, I established a retrieval system that facilitates easy access to the data. Also in keeping with Silverman and Marvasti's suggestions, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, thereby assuring that no information was lost. Each participant was provided a draft of her story and asked to verify the contents. Another aspect of trustworthiness suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is that the researcher has a keen interest and a sense of significance of the study for its implications for larger social concerns. In accordance with Clandinin and Connelly, this study was of

great interest to me and led to my recognition of the significance of an understanding as to how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities.

Discussions of Validation

Mishler on validation and trustworthiness.

Mishler (1990) claims to “reformulate validation” and describes validation as “the social construction of knowledge” (p. 417). According to Mishler, validity lies in the community of people evaluating the findings and it is these people who determine whether or not they can rely on the study for use in their own work. Mishler argues that validity is not assured by following certain procedures; abstract rules and standard procedures cannot be applied. “There are no rules for assessing validity” (p. 418). The goal of validation, continues Mishler, is understanding. Valuation is determined by the available information for the study, information that includes social values and the consideration of the contexts of the study.

Mishler (1990) defines validation as “the process(es) through which we make claims . . . for the ‘trustworthiness’ of a study” (p. 419). This involves the trustworthiness of the observations and interpretations; the criterion for judging these is the extent to which we can trust the concepts and findings of the study and the manner in which these were determined. Mishler argues that when trustworthiness of a study is such that it causes us to act, we thereby grant validity to the findings. By focusing on trustworthiness rather than a defined “truth,” we move a narrative study to the social world, a world constructed through actions and discourse. Mishler contends that we arrive at validation through social discourses that establish trustworthiness.

Polkinghorne, validation, and storied evidence.

Polkinghorne (2005) argues that there are aspects of social sciences that do not fall within the limitations of what has been considered evidence and proof. Narrative inquirers are among the researchers who believe that descriptions of life experiences provide knowledge and understanding of human lives in ways that other research approaches cannot achieve. Stories make possible the observation and analysis of unexpected and changing aspects of peoples' lives. Claims to understanding human behaviors are possible through the reflective stories shared in the teller's own language. Narrative research then is conducted in order for the researcher to "say something to readers about the human condition" (p. 6). Polkinghorne writes, "Storied evidence is gathered. . . about the meanings experienced by people whether or not the events are accurately described" (p. 6). Stories, this author adds, are about personal meanings and not the actual facts of the events; stories are the best evidence available about how people experience their lives. Verisimilitude is described by Polkinghorne as "the appearance or likelihood that something is or could be true or real" (p. 5). Verisimilitude, in Polkinghorne's view, is more important than verification of proof since in narrative studies, the goal is to understand rather than to gain facts or information. Narratives are about making sense of lives as they are lived.

Validity, according to Polkinghorne (2005), is determined by the believability of claims to knowledge. Conclusions are valid when there is sufficient evidence to believe the claims that are offered. Just as Mishler (1990) suggests, validation is the ability to convince readers that the claim is strong enough to provide the basis for understanding of human experience.

Borrowing Criteria for Validation from Autoethnography and Ethnography

Validity in autoethnography.

Spry (2001) suggests criteria for what he terms “effective autoethnography,” criteria that, in my view, apply also to narrative inquiry. First, Spry purposes, the report of the findings must be well written and must have the ability to transform readers to looking back on their own lives and experiences. When an autoethnography is well written, we learn things we did not know before about ourselves and about the world in which we live. Second, a good ethnography is emotionally engaging and written in a way so as to engage the reader in a dialogue with the author. Spry proposes also that the author makes a convincing argument in telling the story and brings the reader into “being there” in the account. It is my goal that in sharing my narratives of their stories I do so by engaging readers in the lives and experiences of the preservice teachers as well as engaging readers in a dialogue with the text as they read.

Validity in ethnography.

From her perspective as an ethnographer, Richardson (2005) offers four criteria that she uses when reviewing papers for social science publications. First, the ethnographer must make a significant contribution to the understanding of some phenomenon. In my study, I contribute to the understanding of how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities. Adding to this, Richardson asks the question, “Is the writing a credible account?” Second, the ethnography must have aesthetic merit as seen in the ability of the writer to invite interpretive responses from the readers. The third criteria is reflexivity, or the author’s ability to show herself as the producer of the account as well as a product of the story. And fourth, Richardson notes that the writing must

affect the reader both emotionally and intellectually, and she asks, “Does the writing generate new questions” and “Does it move the reader to in some way take action?” (p. 961). The criteria Richardson suggests apply, in my view, to narrative inquiry as well.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is the sense of authenticity that a reader feels in response to the narrative. If the text resonates with a reader’s experience, they are likely to find value in the story. Peshkin (1985) writes:

When I disclose what I have seen, my results invite other researchers to look where I did and see what I saw. My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries (p. 280).

Peshkin’s view, I purpose, offers another perspective on validity in narrative.

Chapter Four: The Stories They Told

The data for this narrative inquiry were the stories shared by five preservice teachers in a yearlong study. Data were collected during a pilot study at the end of their junior year at the university, and data collection continued throughout their OSSYP experience that ended with student teaching. The stories were recorded during a series of six interviews. A thematic approach was applied to determine what stories were told and what these stories revealed about each individual preservice teacher.

In this chapter, I share my narrative of the stories from each participant as she was constructing her teacher identity during the OSSYP year. My narrative is the story I created of their stories. Although the decision as to which stories to tell was at my discretion, careful consideration was given to the selection process. Several criteria influenced how I chose these particular stories to tell: (a) the manner in which the story was shared indicated the story's significance to the preservice teacher, (b) the story indicated an event that influenced the preservice teacher's identity, (c) the story indicated a change in the preservice teacher or in her beliefs, and (d) the theme of the story reoccurred during several interviews, and (e), for whatever reason, the story stood out as one I determined needed to be told. At the end of each of the participant's stories, I share a poem I wrote about each of them. The language in the poems is taken directly from the transcripts of their interviews.

Lisa, Kara, and Leann were certain they always wanted to be teachers. Anya's decision to become a teacher came during her senior year in high school and Elin's decision to enter an education program came the summer after her freshman year in

college. In many ways, these five preservice teachers represent the teaching force we see in today's classrooms.

Lisa grew up in a suburban area with both parents and two sisters. She confronts difficult personal challenges in ways that appear to make her a stronger individual. Elin was raised in a home with both parents and a younger brother. She said she was "raised by a village," a village that included extended family and close family friends. She described her hometown as a small city. Kara's childhood home included both parents and an older sister. Kara and her family lived in Texas until she was in sixth grade when her parents moved the family to a suburban area to be closer to other family members. Anya grew up in a suburban area with her parents and an older sister who is also a teacher. Her mom worked as a teacher's aid for many years. Leann was raised in a rural community where "everyone knew everyone" and teachers at school were family friends outside of school. Her family included mom, a dad with whom she continues to be very close, and an older sister.

In this chapter, I narrate the stories of five preservice teachers. Schaafasm et al write, "Research is the story someone gets to tell. What counts is who gets to tell the story" (Schaafasm, Pagnucci, Wallace, Stock, 2007, p. 282). It was my hope that in telling the stories of these five preservice teachers that I do so in a way that readers gain an understanding of the process of "becoming a teacher." I hope also that in telling their stories I am true, as much as possible through the perspectives as a researcher, to who each is as a person as well as a teacher.

At the end of each of the preservice teacher's stories, I share a poem using language taken directly from the interview transcriptions.

Kara's Stories

Kara was enrolled in two courses that I taught at the university during her junior year as an elementary education major. Blond and beautiful, she quickly revealed the depth of her beauty both inside and out. Her vitality and positive energy permeated the classroom. As her instructor and then in my role as a researcher I observed the changes in Kara over a period of two years, the time during which she evolved from preservice teacher to teacher. Then, within months of completing her OSSYP experience, Kara, had her own classroom of first graders. The transition from preservice teacher to teacher was remarkable, and Kara engaged with her students as their teacher with the same intensity with which she met life as an undergraduate.

My initial assessment of Kara's upbeat, positive attitude matched with her enthusiasm for living life to the fullest led me to assume she had undertaken a huge burden in fulfilling the role of "always being happy, upbeat, and enthusiastic" and her never revealing any emotions indicating otherwise. I wondered how much responsibility for the happiness of others she assumed. As I came to know and understand her, I realized this was indeed not the case, a realization Kara confirmed in one of her interviews. Kara is Kara; she knows herself and she is comfortable with who she is.

During our first interview at the end of her junior year, Kara talked about the importance of her parents' influence on her. She recalled a comment her mother made to her when Kara was in high school: "That's one thing; you've never gone through a phase. You have just always been you." When her father was diagnosed with cancer midway through our second semester together, Kara's wish was to handle the news in her own private way. She dealt with the crisis privately but did request that the university

change her OSSYP placement from Collegeville to the urban area where she would be closer to her family (Pilot Study).

During the time Kara was enrolled in my class, she was also enrolled in a course taught by a good friend of mine. Susan and I talked often about Kara, including our concerns over her 21st birthday celebration. (We are still convinced the celebration lasted the entire week.) Together, Linda and I passed along a reminder to Kara to “be safe.” A year later, in preparation for writing “Kara’s Stories,” I asked Linda how she remembered Kara. In an email to me, (Feb. 15, 2011) Linda shared, “Kara’s presence was always felt; she entered the room and without saying a word you knew she was there. She could always reduce a tense moment to a humorous one—made us see the silly side.” Linda added, “Now, sometimes there was some excessive chatter coming from her side of the room -” Linda and I recognized the value of this excessive chatter and viewed it as contributing to a positive learning environment with that group of preservice teachers.

Most important, Linda and I remember the amazing growth Kara made during the time she was in our classes. We recognized Kara’s maturity in always accepting responsibility for her own actions, a trait that set her apart from some of her peers. To this day, I walk the halls of Bartley Hall and still think I hear, coming from the far end of the hallway, “Hi, Mrs. D!” as only Kara could say it. I believe that every teaching staff needs “a Kara” because of her ability to impact the climate and morale of an entire school in very positive ways.

The Stories I Chose to Tell

Four themes in Kara’s stories highlight her experiences and the insights she shared about herself. The first theme is seen in the indications of her family’s influence

and early childhood experiences on her teaching identity. The second theme is in the stories of her experiences during the OSSYP year. The third theme is identified in the stories that reflect how Kara was constructing her teacher identity. The fourth theme is drawn from the stories Kara shared about how she was constructing her teacher knowledge.

Family Influences and Early School Experiences: Theme One

“I loved school and always looked forward to it. . .I loved going to school and I feel that shaped me as a teacher” (Pilot Study).

Kara’s own school experiences were a major influence in her decision to become a teacher. From her memories, Kara described her kindergarten teachers as someone she loved dearly. She had clear memories of events from kindergarten along with memories of her classmates. Kara’s favorite memory was from third grade when the class converted their room into the Mayflower as the students learned about the Pilgrims. Her third grade teacher, in Kara’s words, “was about letting us express ourselves.” Kara remembered this teacher always found time for students to share things they brought from home and to share their writing with one another. She commented, “I had fun and I want my own students to remember that school was fun.” From her memories of third grade, Kara noted how important it is for her, as the teacher, to always let students know that what they shared with her is important and that she always took time to listen to a child.

Kara realized her best school memories are from hands-on experiences and she again mentioned building the Mayflower in third grade. Highlights from the gifted classes she attended were the hands-on lessons, lessons when students created projects.

Kara's interest in possibly pursuing a graduate program in gifted education goes back to the positive experiences she remembered from her time in gifted classes.

When I asked Kara what had been her worst school experience—ever—she replied without hesitation, “My first grade teacher.” Kara said her first grade year was a bad experience and she described the teacher as “just horrible.” Remembering one particular incident, Kara related an event that happened at Christmas time. The teacher gave each student a book with the student's photo on the cover along with the student's name. Kara remembered how upset she was when she realized her book had the wrong name on it. She commented, “She didn't even know me.” Kara went on to describe the teacher as having no empathy and as caring only about herself (Pilot Study).

The influence of Montessori schools.

Montessori schools were important to Kara's teaching identity, both from her experiences as a preschooler while her family lived in Texas, and in later years when she worked in Montessori schools in Missouri. Montessori schools operate on the philosophy that education should focus on the child's natural development. The schools foster independence by providing children with choices and responsibility. Learning activities are based on a constructivist philosophy. Kara's memories of the Montessori preschool in Texas were positive. In an email (April 25, 2011), Kara shared specific memories of her preschool. She remembered having the opportunity to select her own activities. At the age of 4, her teacher, Miss Sarah, pulled her aside and began teaching her to read, because, as Kara said, “I was ready to read!” The extra attention her teacher gave Kara made her feel “special and smart.”

Family influences.

During the interview of the my pilot study, I asked Kara who had been the greatest influence in making her who she is, and she said it was her parents. She described her family, her parents and older sister, as “tight-knit.” She explained that she had always been able to lean on them and there were never any major problems at home. Their home was always open to Kara’s friends, and during high school, friends came after school for snacks, talked with her parents, and just hung out. Kara shared that her friends referred to her parents as their “second mom and dad” (Pilot Study).

Kara has fond memories of living in Dallas and remarked, “I grew up there.” Her neighborhood was large, had many homes, and the elementary school was located in the middle of the development. There were tennis courts and swimming pools, a golf course and a large lake with swans. Kara remembers the trees behind her friend’s house and a large open field that was part of an abandoned summer camp. She and her friend Lindsay rode their bikes at the old camp, and she remembered being free to ride anywhere she wanted. The bicycle rides included trips to the local Kroeger store where Kara and Lindsay spent their allowances. The only restriction on riding her bike was that she needed to be home in time for dinner (Pilot Study).

During her junior year, Kara contributed the following poem to a collection of poems written by members of the class.

I am from. . .

- Kara

I am from big hair, lipstick teeth, and Winn Dixie
Walking to high school football games and
Prayers over the loud speakers.
That flag waving from every flagpole,
Right under the familiar red white and blue
Bumper stickers and Wranglers at every glance.

Chasing my friends to the swimming pool
 Rusty diving board, one hundred ten degrees
 Cannon balls until dinnertime.
 Bike riding through wet grass
 Sounded just like bacon frying
 To get to the ice cream man
 CiCi's Pizza after every soccer game
 Yellow dirty Stingers jerseys and messy pony tails
 Proud daddies and tired little brothers.
 Sunday school with Wendy
 Afterwards it was Hersey's pie for us.
 Trampolines
 Giggles
 Childhood
 I am from Allen, Texas.

Kara was angry when her family left Dallas and moved back to her parents' home town, but also realized the importance to her parents of being close to their parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Once the family moved, Kara enrolled in 6th grade at a middle school and recalled not knowing how to use the lock on her locker. Her new school, according to Kara, "was horrible." She continued:

I could tell the popular kids wanted me to sit by them, but they were fake and I didn't like them and I don't know, I just couldn't find my niche. But I feel like that shaped me for high school and how I got along with everyone. I didn't have a strict set of friends; I was just friends with everybody and hung out with different groups (Pilot Study).

Kara believed she eventually found a niche with students who attended the same classes she did, and she commented that she made friends with anyone she sat beside. While listening to Kara share this story, it occurred to me that "making friends with everyone she sat beside" might serve well as a metaphor for Kara's teaching and how she interacts with children because of the way she reaches out to people and appears to put everyone in her presence at ease.

Influences of the OSSYP Experiences on Kara's Teaching Identity: Theme Two

Children's artwork, beautifully displayed on the front doors and immediately inside the entrance to McHenry, greeted everyone coming into the school. The artwork appeared to reflect the talents and dedication of an amazing art teacher. The professional and tasteful manner in which the work was displayed indicates both a commitment of time in displaying the work and a recognition of the importance of sharing the students' talents. The older building's multiple levels required a number of staircases, all used to showcase students' artwork. Kara's placement at McHenry for her OSSYP experience provided opportunities for her growth as a teacher and support for the construction of her teaching identity.

Kara described the school culture at McHenry as different from a suburban, white-collar neighborhood school. "We have tons of apartments around the school; it's basically all apartments and we are the biggest elementary school in Martin Hills. Kara added, "If you saw the kids coming off the bus—like someone just commented the other day—the school is extremely diverse. I would say three-fourths of the children are not Caucasian." It's like the home life and the socioeconomic status and the culture that our kids have that's different" (Final Interview). I asked Kara for clarification on the student population at her school and she described the population as including Indian (Asian), African American, Latino, Russian, Bosnian and children from other Asian countries and added, "It's a League of Nations." Kara described what she learned working with children from these diverse populations:

I learned that parental support is not as strong among the Indian, Latino and African American children. And the most involved parents were those of the

Asian children. I thought that it would be very different or tricky teaching children of different cultures, but they are exactly the same as American kids! They play, interact and learn in mostly the exact same ways. I loved learning about their customs, too! (Personal Communication, January 27, 2012).

McHenry did not meet AYP (Annual Yearly Progress defined by the No Child Left Behind law) standards the year prior to Kara's being in the school. During her year there, Kara witnessed the affects that standardized testing mandates had on the staff. She observed teachers making changes in their instruction and realized the pressure the teachers faced because of the testing. Kara viewed testing as unfair because it seemed to penalize the teachers.

The high transiency rate at the school further complicated the challenges McHenry faced in raising test scores. Students moved in and out of the school throughout the year, and in addition, the school had a number of ESL learners (English as Second Language). Despite the obstacles, Kara believed that "What we do at McHenry is amazing," and she continued "the kids do so well (Final Interview).

The principal at McHenry was instrumental to the network of support for Kara at the school. At the beginning of her year a, Kara met with the principal on a regular basis, and at her principal's request, Kara created a list of goals for the year and then discussed these with her principal. The principal was, in Kara's words, "the best I have ever seen" and she indicated the value she placed on the principal's efforts to communicate with her and follow her progress.

Kate's influence on Kara.

Kara's host teacher during her student teaching experience second semester was Kate. Having attended the same university, Kate had also been a OSSYP student a few years earlier. In addition, she had participated in the Teaching Fellows' Program her first year of teaching. Kara's stories indicated strong support from Kate through encouragement and a gradual release of responsibilities. The two developed a close personal relationship and continued to correspond during Kara's first year of teaching.

I asked Kara what the most important lessons were that she learned from Kate. Her response was the classroom management strategies she was learning and in the same sentence she added, "Just Kate's way of conducting herself." She explained that Kate was always calm and never raised her voice. Observing closely how Kate interacted with the students, Kara drew the conclusion that because of Kate's positive attitude and the manner in which she conducted herself, the students wanted to cooperative, to work with her, and meet her expectations. In Kara's words, "The students wanted to do the right thing."

One of the most affective aspects of Kate's mentoring was her "think aloud" processing. Kara described how Kate "thinks aloud" as she makes her teaching decisions. By articulating her thinking process while she was teaching, Kate made her processing transparent. Kara added,

Kate tells me why she's doing what she does; she'll stop and when the kids are working she'll talk about why she is doing this and that. . . I'll teach a lesson and she'll say, "This is great. Here's something else you can try if this isn't working." It's constant interaction with her (Interview Four).

Kara believed that because Kate went through the OSSYP and the Teaching Fellows' Program, she knew how to mentor Kara and how to provide the needed guidance. In addition to team-teaching much of the time, Kara and Kate met during planning times and sometimes during lunch to talk.

During the six weeks of her student teaching experience when Kara had full responsibility for the classroom, she learned to deal with the everyday demands, struggles and challenges facing a classroom teacher; emailing parents, answering all the students' questions and all the "extras" beyond simply teaching lessons. Left alone without Kate, there were times when problems arose, and Kara remarked, "I would freak out." On several occasions, Kara called Kate from the classroom phone and asked her advice or asked her to return to the classroom. Kate's response was, "Nope! You're on your own." By not coming to her rescue, Kara realized Kate made it possible for her to learn to handle these situations, and in doing so, Kara learned she could indeed do it on her own (Final Interview). A year later, during our conversation over dinner, Kara shared that she constantly thinks back to Kate and asks herself, "How would Kate handle this?" (Personal communication, 2010).

One incident when Kara's call to Kate for help went unheeded had to do with a student's birthday party. Family members attending the party included a mentally-disabled cousin, the student's grandma and the dad. Kara recalled all these people coming into the room and thinking to herself, "What do I do?" She shared: "The family brought balloons and all this stuff and the kids were insane. . . They brought a cake, but no knife for cutting." Kara reached Kate by phone and asked her to return to the classroom to help out, and Kate's response again was, "Nope!" A phone call to the office

finally located a knife, and because students were not to handle even a plastic knife, a knife was delivered, “well wrapped up.” When I asked Kara, “Then what happened,” she responded, “Recess time!” Since it was near the end of the day, Kara’s reprieve was to take the class outside for recess.

Support from colleagues during her OSSYP year.

In addition to the support Kara received from her principal and her host teacher, Kara had the opportunity to work with the building’s literacy coach. While student teaching, the literacy coach came into her classroom and conducted reading conferences with several students. The coach invited Kara to sit with her and listen in on some of the conferences. Kara made special note of telling me about the coach’s writer’s notebook and how the coach had decorated her notebook just as the students did. The coach shared her own writing with the students and let the students know she was writing at home. Kara also worked with the coach during grade-level team meetings during which time the coach facilitated a learning lab. A component of the learning lab model was that teachers observe one another during literacy instruction. Following these observations, the team met with the teacher they observed and the coach facilitated a discussion about the lesson and what new learning the teachers might apply in their classrooms. At the same time the second grade teachers were participating in the learning lab, they were also reading books about literacy instruction by Lucy Caulkins, Debbie Miller, and Patrick Allen. The group talked about mini lessons, teaching points, and the importance of keeping their assessments authentic. There was a focus on the importance of teachers modeling reading and writing for their students (Interview Three).

Kara made note of what she was learning and what new learning was impacting her teaching. One new idea that was significant for Kara was understanding the importance of remaining silent during a reading or writing conference and allowing the student time to think. Kara realized that by listening, she found teaching points that were good matches for individual students. As a result of her literacy experiences with her second grade teammates and with the literacy coach, Kara had a new perspective on the importance of conferring, and for the first time she understood how she wanted to frame her interactions with her students during reading conferences. Kara always shared her stories about what she was learning in the literacy lab with great enthusiasm and during the fourth interview remarked, “Mrs. D! I’m learning so much [in the literacy lab]” (Interview Four).

Kara always felt welcomed at McHenry, and from early in the year, she noted, “They treat me as if I am a teacher. . . I feel like I can talk to anybody about anything.” The positive attitude toward the OSSYP students might have been due in part to the school’s history with OSSYP students and Teaching Fellows. The presence of these university students in the school had become part of the school’s culture. Kara recognized the opportunities available to her at McHenry, and most importantly, she took full advantage of the opportunities to learn all that she could. From my perspective as a researcher visiting the school and from the stories Kara shared throughout the year, it seemed McHenry was a haven in midst of the current chaos and confusion in public education. In this environment, Kara was supported in the construction of her teaching identity

Kara Constructs Her Teacher Identity: Theme Three

“My parents let me be who I want to be. . . Mom told me, ‘You have always been you’” (Pilot study).

Kara viewed herself as outgoing and said she doesn't have any problem talking with people and getting to know them. Remembering back to high school, she said that if she sat beside someone, she became their friend. Kara used the term “established herself” when talking about high school and said she didn't play sports nor did she join clubs. She was never, using her word, “artsy.” She remembered being willing to help others. Kara served on the student council of a very large high school and teachers at the school were fond of her because she was outgoing. She made a point of getting to know her principals, the custodians, the secretaries, the hall monitors, and the cafeteria workers. She concluded, “I think that's [knowing all the people] important.” In what appeared to be an afterthought, Kara shared that she ran for president of her class for two years, but she could never beat Andrew! (Pilot Study).

At the time of Kara's interview for the pilot study, I recognized the depth of her caring for others and her strong sense of who she is. I knew Kara's influence on her classmates had been powerful in very positive ways. Her enthusiasm was not just about her; it spread throughout the class. Kara was a role model in how she respected me and her classmates during the two semesters we were together. All these factors pointed to her becoming a good teacher and an asset to the teaching profession (Pilot Study).

Feeling she has become a teacher.

In a later interview, I asked Kara at what point she felt she had become a teacher.

Kara related:

I think the moment I realized I was finally a teacher was when I was teaching math [adding and subtracting with an open number line] and one of my students kept constantly struggling. She seemed to have no concept of numbers or any number sense at all. I kept trying and trying new ways to teach her how to think about numbers until one day she looked up at me and said, "Miss Davis. . . I'VE GOT IT!" She completed her whole work page perfectly and I was so excited for her. Her mom even came in after school to praise my efforts and ask how I taught it to her so they could practice it at home. I was so excited that something finally clicked and I really felt like a teacher (Interview Four).

Responding to my question asking Kara what she hoped people might say at her retirement celebration, Kara said she wanted to be remembered as vibrant and for doing things for other people. She wanted to be remembered as being positive and always having a smile on her face. Kara hoped her students remember having fun and remember they had good friendships in her classroom (Interview Four).

Reflecting on her teacher identity.

During our interview in October, I asked Kara what revelations about herself were most surprising. She quickly responded that she was much more capable than she thought she was. Another revelation had to do with how Kara viewed her connections with some students with whom she interacted early in her OSSYP experience. Thinking back to the beginning of the year, Kara said she gravitated toward the students who did well. She wondered if perhaps this was due to her own memories of being in gifted classes. Then, during the second semester, she was in a classroom for an extended period of time, making it possible to get to know the students better. She shared, "I discovered I love

every kid.” Kara recognized she was now beginning to gravitate towards the students who struggled as well. She wondered if being more comfortable with the struggling students was due to knowing more about how to help them.

Several parents affirmed Kara’s teaching identity. When a mother told Kara how excited she was that her daughter understood math for the first time and asked Kara what strategies she was using, Kara remembered the incident as “a moment that changed her teaching.” Referring to other times when parents had come in and praised Kara for doing a great job, she shared, “That made me feel really good and really confident” (Final Interview).

Kara’s first graders were also affirming her identity as a teacher. Asked to identify top moments of the school year, Kara shared stories of two students who affirmed her teacher identity. Tanisha, a little African-American girl in her classroom, had been reading, and rereading the same book with Kara, day after day. Each day Tanisha brought the book to Kara to reread once again, still struggling with the text. Kara recalls:

So one day we sat down and she’s like, “Ms. Lewis, I just read it myself” and I was like, “I don’t believe you,” and Tanisha said, and she’s like, “Yes I did” and I was like, “OK, show me.”

Tanisha sat down with Kara and read the entire book. The little girl had continued to revisit the same book over and over in her determination to conquer the story and because she liked the story so much. Kara told stories similar to Tanisha, stories about students’ determination to succeed and wanting to share their successes with Kara (Interview Four).

Dana, an African American boy, used to sneak Waldo books to read under his desk. Kara read with Dana and, in her words, “we struggled through the text.” Then one day, in the midst of their reading together, Dana told Kara, “Ms. Davis, I can do it,” and indeed he did. Kara talked about Dana’s continued progress from that point on, and reflecting back over her months of working with him, Kara concluded:

It was almost not the reading that he seemed to love. He would snuggle up against me, just wanted that kind of closeness and attention. He was just a completely different kid when I would sit down with him; it was about the relationship (Final Interview)

Just as Tanisha had done, Dana was influencing Kara’s concept of herself as a teacher by affirming her identity as a teacher.

Learning experiences in the classrooms.

The opportunity to be in various classrooms at the different grade levels exposed the OSSYP students to a range of teaching styles and personalities. Kara’s experience in a fourth grade classroom added to the construction of her teaching identity when she recognized a teaching style that she knew would *not* work for her. This fourth-grade teacher had been teaching for a number of years and was still using basal readers, unlike most of the other teachers in the school. The desks in this grade classroom were arranged in rows and students did not work in groups or engage in activities that involved talking. The students read together out of textbooks and instruction was not differentiated. Kara recognized this manner of teaching would not work for her. Receiving an indication from this teacher that she wanted Kara to student teach with her, Kara realized her teaching style was not a good match and she added, “I couldn’t teach like that” (Interview two).

One particular quote of Kara's remains clear in my memory. Perhaps the manner in which she presented her comment had a lot to do with the impact of her remark on me. We were discussing the apparent need many preservice teachers have for college instructors to simply "teach us *how* to do it." Our particular conversation that day related to reading instruction. I remember, somewhere in the course of that conversation, Kara paused, tilted her head just slightly, and stated with conviction, "Mrs. D., no one can teach us *how*. We learn by being with the kids" (Interview four). As I reflected on what she said, it occurred to me that Kara's comment revealed a great deal about her evolving teacher identity. Kara understood her own role in the process of learning to teach. And she accepted responsibility for her own learning.

When asked how she carved out time for herself outside of school, Kara's response caught me by surprise. She shared that her planning came while she was teaching. While teaching, Kara considered what her students were doing, what they knew, and she thought about what to do next, right then and in the moment of teaching. Kara reflected as she taught and she put a plan of action into place while teaching. For Kara, planning for the next day came as she was teaching and with collaborative planning with her host teacher. Whether or not Kara was familiar with the term "child-centered instruction," she clearly understood the concept as she made her instructional decisions based on what she knew about her students (Interview Four).

Kara revealed an insight into her evolving identity when she talked about the excitement and enthusiasm she experienced from teaching. She realized that when she was excited about teaching, her students were excited about learning. And when her students were excited, she in turn was excited; the cycle was complete. Kara used the

term, “gaining excitement from learning with the kids.” Kara’s knowledge *about* teaching and her excitement *for* teaching had come together as a result of, in her words, “Being with the kids” (Interview Four).

Entering the profession.

Staying true to her identity. In the process of interviewing for a teaching position, Kara encountered a principal who seemed to challenge her to be someone other than who she is. Following the preliminary interview, this principal pulled Kara aside and told her to “take it down five or six notches.” As Kara shared this story, I had a vision of Kara’s interview. She was indeed enthusiastic and, using Kara’s word, “vibrant.” Clearly, this principal did not know Kara, nor did she realize Kara has only one “notch,” her very own “Kara’s notch.”

Following the next interview with this same principal and a group of teachers, the principal told Kara that if she had she been any more energetic they would have said “no.” In telling me about the second interview, Kara added, “I am who I am and I’m not going to change.” Many beginning teachers might have been angry and upset by the principal’s comments, but Kara was determined: “I don’t want to be somewhere where they’re going to try to change who I am because that is just who I am.” The experience seemed to reassure Kara of her strength and her determination to remain “true to herself” (Final Interview).

Final steps in the OSSYP experience.

Kara had initially considered the Teaching Fellows’ program and had taken some of the necessary steps to apply. She also expressed an interest in a master’s degree in gifted education or administration, options that are not available in the Teaching Fellows’

Program. She used the phrase “wanting to maximize her other interests,” saying she wanted to have time to figure out what she really wants to do. She believed there may come a time when she regrets not doing Fellows, and almost as an after-thought, she added that perhaps she just wanted to start making money. She did, however, make it clear she planned to pursue graduate studies.

During the final interview in May, Kara reflected on her OSSYP experiences. In her words, the experience made her “more appreciative of the small triumphs. She was looking at what was happening in her class and getting excited when, for example, a student wanted to figure out a word on his own. As a result of her experiences, she believed celebrating the small triumphs has carried over into other parts of my life too. A reason to celebrate, for Kara, was “just the power of being excited for school every day and inspiring the kids to feel that same enthusiasm and excitement that I do (Final Interview).

Kara Constructs Her Knowledge of Teaching: Theme Four

“I learned that if I’m not down there with the kids and listening to their conversations, I might as well go sit at my desk. . . you have to be down there with them” (Interview Four).

Preservice teachers talk with excitement about their experiences in classrooms as they interact directly with students and observe various teaching practices. Kara was specific in what she was learning as well as sharing *how* she was learning. As she spent time in various classrooms at different grade levels, Kara recognized the connections she was making between what she learned in her methods courses at the university and what she was observing during her OSSYP year. Sometimes the knowledge she was acquiring

was noted in response to a specific interview question. Most often, however, Kara initiated comments about her learning in the normal course of our conversations. Kara realized she was learning *how to teach* as she is *engaged in teaching*. Significant to her teaching knowledge was learning that her relationships with her students, more than any other factor, determine learning outcomes.

Montessori school experiences add to her teacher knowledge.

Kara was constructing her knowledge of teaching during the time she worked at Montessori schools, both in high school and while in college. Kara learned behavior management strategies and believed in the school's philosophy for handling problematic behaviors. For examples, while working at a Montessori school, Kara observed how teachers responded when a child bit a classmate. Kara explained:

We'd remove the child from the classroom and give him a cup of carrots and say "This is what you can bite. You can not bite your friends." If a child hit someone, she was asked to hit a drum and if a child pinched someone, she was given Playdoh to pinch. After awhile, the child was brought back to the classroom and asked to apologize to the other student.

Kara views the Montessori approach to addressing behavior issues as appropriate for the age of the child and as a way of turning a problem into an opportunity to teach. As Kara observed teacher responses to problematic behaviors, she was constructing her own teacher knowledge.

Constructing teacher knowledge through observation of teachers.

I asked Kara what she had seen teachers doing that really disturbed her. She responded immediately, "dismissal." At first I assumed Kara was referring to dismissal

time at the end of the day, but this was clearly not what she meant. Kara was referring to the times when a child's attempts to talk with a teacher are ignored. She explained, "What the child wanted to say was probably something very important to the child." Kara observed verbal responses and body language from teachers who she believed communicated to the child an attitude of, "whatever" or "don't bother me." Sometimes a teacher said she would get back to the child and did not. Kara's use of the term "dismissal" meant a teacher's refusal to acknowledge what a child said, and in this way, was "dismissing" the child. The teacher was withholding support, encouragement, and the emotional connections the student needed (Pilot Study).

Kara shared the story of a fifth grader in the class where she served her junior year field experience. The girl was not an academically strong student, and from Kara's perspective, the classroom teacher treated her with disrespect and was constantly reprimanding her. Kara believed there was never any positive reinforcement from the teacher. Kara's mention of this story in several interviews indicated that the experience left quite an impression on her and in particular because of her empathy for the child's feelings.

A very positive experience for Kara came during her rotation time in a third grade classroom. During this time, Kara observed a teacher who, in her words, "taught me more than anyone else [to this point in the OSSYP experience]." This particular teacher, like Kara's host teacher second semester, had been a Teaching Fellow. Kara wanted to "mirror" what she observed this teaching doing. This was the same teacher, mentioned earlier, who shared her own writing with the students. Kara described this teacher as authentic and "learning with the kids" (Interview Three).

Acquiring knowledge of teaching children from diverse backgrounds.

Adding to Kara's knowledge of teaching during her OSSYP year were her experiences teaching children from a low socioeconomic community. Having attended Montessori schools and public schools in upper-middle-class communities both in grade school and in high school, this was Kara's first experience with children from a low socioeconomic area. She was working with students in classrooms with a diverse mix of students. White students were in the minority in most of the classrooms. Many of the minority students struggled with academic work. Kara also witnessed children acting out their anger, including an incident when a student picked up a chair and threw it.

McHenry had not met AYP standards the previous year, and like many schools in low SES communities, the school was under intense pressure to raise test scores. Now that she was an integral part of the day-to-day events of a school, Kara sensed the pressure and stress of standardized testing and recognized the far-reaching affects of the current mandates on public schools. The school focused on preparing for the Mid-State Assessment Program [MSAP] tests and Kara attended staff meetings at which the agenda stressed preparation for the test. Despite the pressure to meet AYP standards during the current school term, the literacy professional development opportunities afforded Kara and all the teachers at McHenry seemed well-established and supported by the administration, both at the school and at the district level. The writing workshop and reading workshop format for literacy instruction were valued and supported as seen through the school's learning labs (Interview Two).

Teaching knowledge influences instructional practices.

On several occasions, Kara noted that she did not like the “leveled” reading materials. During her rotation time in a fourth grade classroom, Kara talked with a student about the book he was reading. The boy explained he had read all the books at his “level” and that there was a book he really wanted to read at another level. When Kara suggested he read book, the student said he couldn’t since it was not his level and the teacher, according to the boy, would yell at him. Kara was learning the negative impact this teacher’s ideas about reading instruction were having, and clearly, this was not in keeping with her beliefs about reading instruction (Interview Two).

Organizational skills are critical and Kara was making note of how Kate organized the classroom and her teaching materials. One of the photos Kara took of her classroom included a picture of a drawer in Kate’s desk as an example of being organized. Kara said the most important organizing tip she learned from Kate was to use large binders for the units of study. The binders included resources, copies of student materials, lesson plans-- anything and everything Kate used for each unit of study (Interview Four).

Constructing teacher knowledge with students.

Building on her observations of Kate’s conduct in the classroom, Kara shared a lesson she learned about how to interact with the class:

What I’ve learned is that when kids are acting up, chatting and not listening, is not to come up to that level and get rowdy - it’s just being quiet and being understated and saying, “This is your choice.” When they get in line and talk and talk, I ask them to go back and sit down and try again. It’s just being patient. My being quiet

and waiting - and I've learned that if I look at the clock and for every minute I wait, I take off a minute of recess. I remind them it's their choice. I am holding them responsible for their choices (Interview Four).

Kara talked about giving students choices but had also decided that there are times when it is the teacher's responsibility to do what she knows will work best for a student. She did not see student choice as always the best course of action. She added that when making decisions for a student, it is important to let the student know what she was doing and why.

Kara added, "Sometimes we have to be the adult" (Interview Four).

Constructing knowledge of professional conduct.

Waiting to learn of their placements for student teaching was a tension filled time for the OSSYP students. Kara had earlier mastered the ability to stay out of the rumor mill and to keep her communications strictly professional. She noted times when she chose to stay out of conversations in the hallway. She had not made attempts, as others did, to maneuver behind closed doors, especially on issues regarding student teacher placements. When it appeared another student was attempting to undermine Kara's preference for placement, Kara remained silent and believed it was best not to get involved (Interview Three).

Interviewing for a teaching position the following year was a frustrating process for Kara and she was not always clear in how to proceed in her job search. She was learning how the hiring process worked, and sometimes appeared not to work. She was cautious in her actions and talked with me about what was the professional way to deal with several issues that arose. Kara was extremely patient when, for example, a principal

did not return a call when she said she would. Kara was cautious in not “over-stepping her bounds” as she made every effort to learn how to navigate the hiring process.

Kara’s reflected on her teacher knowledge.

Kara acknowledged that she learned a great deal from classroom observations and said she had notebooks full of notes. Then she added:

But nothing is as powerful as just being able to teach. I just learned more in the last two weeks [from student teaching] than I did the entire last semester. . . I’m just doing it, trial and error, learning from my mistakes and being reflective (Interview Three).

Kara noted it has been a long time since she was in second grade and now she needed to look at second grade in a different way and think about her teaching from the point of view of a second grader (Interview Four).

I asked Kara how our conversations about her teaching experiences impacted her thinking. At first, Kara believed she was just telling me what she was learning and beyond that she was not thinking about any impact our talks had on her. She seemed to realize, in the midst of her answer, the impact our conversations had on her. My question helped Kara fully appreciate all that she gained from our conversations, leading her to acknowledge the positive influences of the OSSYP program. Our conversations facilitated her understanding of what she gained during the year. Kara’s teacher identity was evolving as she constructed her knowledge of teaching. Reflecting on this knowledge, she provided a description of what her classroom would look like the following year:

You would see the kids all together on the carpet and I would teach a lesson. I would have a ‘teaching point’ and I would tie it to a part of a book we were reading. I would relate to what we learned prior to the lesson and then introduce something new. I would have them practice that teaching point and have them turn and talk with a neighbor. I would get down off my seat, sit and listen with them, listen to what they’re talking about in their partnerships.

Kara reiterated the importance of reviewing the teaching point a number of times and then asking students apply their learning. She concluded by sharing that the students would be comfortable as they were trying out the new lesson because they would be sitting where they wanted (Interview Four).

Perhaps just as important as *what* she was learning is Kara’s realization of *how much* she was learning. When Kara talked about her learning, it was always in the context of her relationships and interactions with teachers and with her students. Kara has a strong understanding of how she learns and assumes responsibility for her learning. The OSSYP program, in the context of her school placement, provided wonderful learning opportunities. Most important, Kara immersed herself in the culture of the school and in learning everything she could about teaching, children, and herself. Kara learned teaching strategies, she learned how her actions set the tone in the classroom, and she learned the importance of collaboration with colleagues. Finally, Kara learned her own identity as she was becoming a teacher.

Kara’s Circular Ending

1995: Kara is in second grade:

“I loved school. . . I loved going to school.”

2010: Fourteen years later. Kara is completing her student teaching:

"I love school. . . I love going to school."

Kara's stories begin with her loving school as a child and came full circle to her loving school as a teacher. Kara explained the need "to be a second grader again" in order to understand how to teach second graders. Also circular for Kara was her realization that when she is excited about teaching, her students get excited about learning, and when the students are excited about learning, she is excited about teaching.

Kara's Poem: becoming a Teacher

Kara becomes a teacher

Mrs. D.,
 We're learning about all these new ways to teach reading.
 Mini-lessons, teaching points and modeling
 We're learning about being quiet
 And allowing them time to think
 And our being listeners instead
 of always trying to find something to teach.
 I felt it was about me trying to find something to teach
 Now I look at them and say, "Tell me what's going well"
 "Take me to a place in the book
 where you are learning
 and where you are thinking.
 The kids should loves books
 And make good choices
 Books to read over and over again.
 We have five minutes before lunch
 and I get out a picture book
 they stop talking.
 they get so entranced.
 They hear me read the book
 Then they all want to read.
 I am learning to teach by doing
 by just being with the kids
 and seeing each individually
 and figuring out their different places
 It's being a learner myself.
 I think about "Why am I teaching this?
 "Why is this important?"
 What are they getting out of it?

“DO they need to know this
It’s about going with the flow
 seeing where the kids are
 and planning in the moment.
It’s thinking in a different way. . . rethinking what I do.
I feel like I am a real teacher now
 I appreciate the small triumphs
 And I get so excited
 when I take a step back and realize that.
Just the power of my being excited for school every day
 and inspiring kids to feel the same way.
There’s so much that goes into teaching
 that I didn’t realize
I’m confident that I can do it.
I just get down there with them
 and talk to them
 and listen to them talk with each other.

Elin's Stories

My decision to ask Elin to be one of the participants in my dissertation study was a result of the depth of thinking I saw in the transcript from her interview for the pilot study. In addition, I spoke with some of Elin's other instructors about including her in my study. Their response: "Yes, include her. There is 'something about her. . .'" That "something about her" became clear as I talked with Elin throughout her OSSYP experience. Reflecting on her senior year, Elin said it herself; "I know in my heart I have what it takes [to be a teacher]."

Elin's participation in my study impacted the study in ways I could never have anticipated. She responded immediately to my request for volunteers to participate in a pilot study with her hand raised and the statement, "Mrs. D., I want to help." Following her lead, other classmates quickly volunteered also. When it came time for the interviews, I told the students it was their choice as to when and where we would meet. I also told them I would love for them to come to my home, thinking at the time this was not an option any undergraduate would choose. Elin's hand again went up and she offered, "Mrs. D., I want to come see you." Most of the students chose to come to my home, I believe, because Elin made it "OK" to do so. The context of a home environment provided a comfortable and "safe" setting for our conversations. Elin took pride in being the first student I interviewed for the pilot study and the first OSSYP student interviewed for the actual dissertation research.

Elin was a strong academic student, but it was how she interacted with others in the class that drew my attention. I had great respect for the way she stood by her beliefs and the thoughtful manner in which she offered perspectives different from her

classmates' thinking. It was apparent that Elin's insightful responses were a result of listening carefully to what others had to say and to her ability to choose her words carefully before responding.

Why These Stories

Elin's strong ties to her family and extended family provide the theme in the first stories I share. The second theme emerged from stories about the emotions Elin experienced. A third theme is seen in the stories that demonstrate Elin's construction of her teaching identity. The fourth theme is Elin's reflections on her teaching experiences. Elin's construction of her teacher knowledge is the fifth theme.

Childhood Influences; Memories of Family, Friends, and School: Theme One

"It's taken a village to raise me. . . I have my village of people" (Pilot Study).

Elin's stories about her family and extended family were prevalent throughout her interviews, beginning with the pilot study. Family backgrounds and prior experiences that preservice teachers bring to their teaching are important in determining how a teacher's identity evolves. Elin recognized the critical role her background played in making her who she is as a person and who she is becoming as a teacher. From her stories, I gained a sense that Elin was, indeed, raised by "a village."

Mom, dad and grandfather.

Elin's Mom and dad provided strong support for her with each parent providing support in ways quite different from the other. Mom, a well-educated professional in the health care field, offered advice from her perspective as a career professional. Dad's support was quiet and unassuming. Dad offered support, in Elin's words, "by being there."

Elin described her father:

Yeah, he's very, very sweet. You would never know that because he acts real tough on occasion when he has to. He doesn't talk a lot about feelings and emotions, but at the same time, that's just his way. If he's down at the barn and messing with the dogs and I had a bad day, I just drive right down there and it all just didn't matter any more. He's really good about that. . . I wouldn't say we talked a whole lot about issues that are happening, but he was just kind of there for support (Final Interview).

Elin remembered that when she was a child, her mother worked long hours in the health care field and also attended school. By the time her Mom got home about ten o'clock in the evening, Elin was already in bed. Despite memories of her Mom being away from home a lot due to her work, Elin has fond memories of times they spent together. Her Mom read in bed on Saturday mornings, and when Elin asked her Mom, "When are you getting up," her Mom responded, "Not yet." Since Mom was reading, Elin decided to get her own book, climb up in bed, and read with Mom. Elin and her Mom shared visits to the bookstore, and while Mom looked at books, Elin looked at books, and because her Mom was getting books, Elin wanted her own books. Elin believed her early memories of reading with Mom had a strong influence on her love of reading. Elin remembered also the times when Mom turned on loud music and the two of them danced around the kitchen, often to the songs of Celine Dion. Shopping trips with Mom continue, and Elin says that shopping with Mom is one of her favorite things to do. The two continued to talk by phone each morning while Elin drove to school.

While Mom was gone, Elin and her brother stayed with their dad, and if they weren't with their dad, they were with their grandfather. Elin remembered her grandfather as caring and quiet. Although her family now lives outside of town, they lived in town and just down the street from her grandfather when Elin was younger. Even though he died when Elin was only in second grade, she has fond memories of her time with him. She loved jumping up on his lap, and she remembered watching cartoons on television with him and her brother (Interview One).

Fear of storms.

Elin's memories of her childhood fears of storms appeared to be quite significant for her, and these early fears left a lasting impression on her. She is unclear as to what incident might have triggered her fears, but she believed it had something to do with her parents once being in danger during a storm. Elin recalled hearing family members talking about a time when her parents had to go down to the basement with the dog and the lights went out. For years after that, any time a storm came, and sometimes if it was only a cloudy day, Elin told her teachers her stomach hurt and that she wanted to go home. She remembers being able to actually convince herself that her stomach hurt (Pilot Study).

Elin's fear of storms along with making herself sick with fear continued until she was in fourth grade. Once, with a storm approaching, Elin called her Mom from school and told her she needed to come get her immediately. Elin recalled her mother asking, "Are you telling me that you want me to leave my work, in this storm, and come and get you and endanger me and endanger you in trying to do that?" Elin's response to her mother was, "Yes." "I don't really remember much about it," continued Elin, "but then,

something after that, it just clicked, and then I didn't feel the need to do it [call Mom] anymore." Elin explained in an email almost two years later how her fear of storms impacted her teaching. She believes the fear helps her understand her students since she can appreciate their fears, especially some students who were also afraid of storms. When Elin shows empathy for a student's fear, she attempts to connect with the child. Students who feel comfortable in the classroom, continued Elin, are more open to learning (Personal Communication, January 12, 2012).

Elin's memories of school.

One particular story Elin told from her early memories of school provided insights into how she believes children should be treated in the classroom. Thinking back to her memories of elementary school, Elin shared:

I'm really careful about calling kids out [humiliating students]. I think that's really important. When we were in grade school, we were called out on the spot. . . . And we felt so dumb. You didn't feel like your teacher really cared about you. When you did something wrong. . . . Calling them out, you know, 'Stop talking!' I think that is the most important thing for me, to remember my patience at all times (Interview Four).

Elin shared her memory of a time she was humiliated in elementary school. The teacher was using a system of "green, yellow and red lights" as an indicator for students to know when their behaviors were a concern. The teacher moved Elin's nametag from green to yellow without any explanation as to why. Elin recalls her behavior as being no different than at other times. She said she cried and cried and recalled how embarrassed she was. The negative impact of the experience left a lasting impression on Elin, a memory that

serves as an important reminder as she formed her beliefs about how children should be treated, and not treated.

The road first taken after high school.

After graduation from high school, Elin enrolled as a fashion design major at a college in another state. She attended this college for one semester before returning to her home state. She explained her reasoning for initially deciding to attend a college in another state:

When I graduated from high school, I had this stupid idea in my head that if I went to the state university near my home, I was a failure. . . I didn't want to be like everyone else! I didn't want to just go there cause that's where the majority of my class went (Pilot Study).

Elin added that never in a million years did she think she would ever come to the university she was attending, and certainly not to major in education. Once in school and out-of-state, however, Elin realized that being so far from home was not going to work for her. She remembers thinking to herself, "No way, Jose. You can't do this. It's [fashion design] not in your heart!"

Elin's introduction to the world of teaching.

A close family friend was responsible for Elin's first teaching experience. This initial experience occurred during the summer after Elin's freshman year in college. By then, Elin was back home, having transferred to the state university at the end of her first semester. Now enrolled in the business department, her plan was to major in textile and apparel management. Lanna, her Mom's best friend and principal of an elementary school, approached Elin about helping with summer school. Lanna told Elin she would

help in the office, answer phones and have other similar responsibilities. Elin agreed to accept the job since she did not have any other offers for summer employment, and the pay of 12 dollars an hour was appealing. Elin related what happened on her first day of summer school:

So. . . the first day I'm walking in, and I'm like, "Okay, this is great" and the lady in the office goes, "Your classroom is just down the hall." And I go, "What?" and she said, "The teacher should have left something for you in there, and you can just open cabinets and look around. . .and I'm going, "What?" and she's like, "It's going to be okay. You're going to be fine," and I'm like, "No, I don't know what I'm doing here." I think they needed someone to cover the spot and Lanna probably suggested, "Oh, Elin would be great at that." She probably did it on purpose because she knew I would freak out, so I walked down to this classroom and was looking around, like, "Oh my gosh. . . what am I doing? I'm in a school! I haven't been in school since elementary." Me, a freshman in college not knowing anything about kids.

Elin's response to her summer school experience was to fall in love with teaching and her students. She realized she came to school in the morning, tired and not wanting to deal with children. Then, the second she was with her students, she was engaged and enjoying what she was doing. As she worked with the students, Elin realized how much energy she had and added, "You know, that's kind of a sign" (Pilot Study). The week after summer school ended, Elin drove to the university and changed her major to elementary education. (Interview Two)

Emotions Experienced during the Year: Theme Two

“Mrs. D! Right now I’m having a big ol’ meltdown! I don’t feel prepared; I’ve never felt like this before” (Interview Three).

Teachers’ emotions play a vital role in determining who they are as teachers, and their emotions impact their well-being. While the main focus of teacher education programs is on learning curriculum content and instructional methods, little or no attention is given to discussions about emotions. A teacher’s ability to recognize the causes and effects of her own emotions and her ability to maintain an emotionally healthy identity may determine the teacher’s success in the classroom, and ultimately determine whether or not she stays in the profession.

Elin’s emotions.

Elin made the decision to transfer to the university back home, and once there, she changed her major to education as a result of her first teaching experience. Earlier she told her Mom, “This [majoring in fashion design] does not feel right. Something’s wrong.” Elin listened to her emotions and allowed them to guide her the decision to become an education major.

However, Elin’s time in a first grade classroom during her OSSYP program caused her to question her decision to teach. While observing the teacher, Elin became apprehensive about her ability to teach as she watched the teacher singing and working with the students. Elin wondered, “How does she know what she is doing and how does she know what to do next?” Elin was thinking to herself, “Oh my God, how am I going to be able to do this?” (Interview One).

This same first grade teacher, Margaret, became Elin’s host for student teaching second semester of her OSSYP year. Early in her student teaching, Margaret asked Elin

to teach a math lesson the following day. Elin recalls thinking she could manage one lesson and everything would be OK; for Elin, it wasn't a big deal. Then, the next day, Elin taught the lesson, and in her words, "The lesson totally bombed." She reported she was ready to cry and commented, "I was a nervous wreck." In the conversation after the lesson, Elin told Margaret the lesson was terrible. Margaret provided reassurance that the lesson "wasn't that bad" and helped Elin think about how to make the lesson the next day go better. Elin reported that indeed the lesson the next day went well and in her words added, "I knocked it [the lesson] out of the park--I was just ecstatic!" Within a period of 24 hours, Elin's emotional state had gone from "being a nervous wreck" to "I was ecstatic." At the end of this story, Elin noted another emotion when she said of her host teacher, "I love her. She is phenomenal."

Elin's emotions involving her students.

Elin's emotional involvement with her students was often due to her empathy with them due to their lives outside of school. From her perspective, some of her students were neglected, some parents did not cooperate with the school's efforts to help their child, and in one case a stepfather was overly critical of a child. By November and time for parent/teacher conferences, Elin and Margaret knew they would be working together second semester, Elin as the student teacher and Margaret as her host. In order for Elin to meet the parents with whom she would be working, Margaret invited her to sit in on the parent/teacher conferences. Elin shared the story of a particular conference with a little boy, his mother, and his stepfather.

The child was new to the school and appeared to be excited about school. The child's records showed he had been hospitalized for emotional issues sometime in the

past. The stepfather's comments during the parent/teacher conference were negative and made in front of the child. Despite her host teacher's attempts to remain positive, the negative comments continued. Elin commented that the stepfather's attitude made her sad and "it broke my heart." After telling her story about the parent conference and a story about another little boy with serious behavior issues, Elin concluded, "There're so many days I've gone home crying because I didn't know what to do and I didn't know how to make it better (Interview Three). Elin's emotional involvement with her students reached outside the classroom and into their lives outside of school.

Other experiences result in emotional responses

Waiting to learn her student teaching placement was an especially emotional time for Elin. On the Tuesday morning she was to learn her placement, Elin waited in the hallway outside the principal's office. She was, in her words, "Dying to know. . . I was like, 'When is this meeting going to happen?' I'm ready to go. . . My heart was racing." Elin was eventually called into the office and informed she would be teaching with Margaret, Elin's first choice for placement. Elin reported thinking, "Thank God!" and feeling as if a huge load had been lifted from her shoulders.

Elin's story about an argument with her boyfriend, Brian, put a new twist on her using negative energy. She explained that when she was angry with Brian, she would go to school and, in her words, "teach the lesson of her life." She was not sure why this was the case and understood it was just the opposite of what one might expect. She said the anger would go away once she was in the classroom and added, "Make me mad and here I go!" (Final Interview). In my conversation with Elin almost a year later, I asked if she could tell me more about this story. Elin explained that about that time, she began caring

more about the problems of her students than her own problems. She began redirecting her anger and instead focused her attention on her students. In her words, Elin said, “I throw myself into teaching them when I’m upset.”

Elin *named her emotions* as she told her stories, and, she *told her stories with great emotion*. During her final interview, when it was obvious to me how excited she was about teaching, I asked if she had always known how excited she would be about being in the classroom. She responded, “No. I didn’t. I didn’t have a clue. . . I get real excited when I talk about it and I get excited about the stupidest stuff” (Final Interview). A year later, Elin explained “stupidest stuff” as the smallest steps that students make, the little steps that no one else might notice (Personal Communication, September, 2010).

Constructing Her Identity: Theme Three

“I’m learning about me; I know I can do it!” (Interview Four).

The village’s influences on Elin’s teacher identity.

During the pilot study, I asked Elin who the greatest influence in her life was. I reread her response in the transcript several times in an attempt to follow her thinking. At first, Elin talked about her Mom being the greatest influence, and then she transitioned to talking about Lanna, the family friend who first introduced her to teaching. From an early age, Elin believed she would be a business woman like her Mom. She seemed to explore her thinking as she talked about her Mom’s ability to be very direct with people and her Mom’s ability to make decisions. Elin shared, as if thinking aloud, that sometimes she allows others to make decisions for her since she does not ever want to offend people. Elin added, “I’m very non-confrontational.” Then, Elin shared a thought about Lanna. Lanna, she said, was a role model for how she works with people. Elin added, “Lanna knows how to talk with people.” As she continued, Elin explored the

influences of both her Mom and Lanna, recognizing the differences in the ways each had influenced her. It appeared that Elin was exploring her thinking about this question for the first time. She had the fortune of growing up under the influence of two women she admired and respected, both caring deeply about her. Her Mom and Lanna demonstrated different strengths and qualities, and as Elin prepared to enter the teaching profession, she considered what learning she might take from each. As she entered the teaching profession, Elin will encounter times when she may need to follow Mom as a model and times when Lanna will serve as her model.

From her perspective as a career professional, Elin's Mom often supported Elin as she processed problematic situations at school. In November, Elin shared with her Mom the frustrations she had with the other OSSYP students in her building. The others were not always completing their assignments for their university course work and sometimes asked Elin to copy her work. From Elin's perspective, they did not share her work ethic. When she talked with her Mom about the issue, her Mother's response was that they weren't willing to work hard and had no desire to exceed expectations set for them. As she shared her frustrations with her Mom, her Mom helped Elin focus on the positives about herself and to recognize her own work ethic and dedication to teaching. Elin learned from Mom to think in terms of *exceeding* expectations and to recognize her own strengths.

Just before beginning her student teaching experience, Elin experienced a period of self-doubt and great apprehension about her ability to accept full responsibility for a first grade classroom. Elin referred to this time as having "A big ol' meltdown." Her Mom was supportive and told Elin about an inspirational speaker she had recently heard.

The speaker, her Mom told her, talked about OSMs, “Oh, Shit Moments,” and Mom explained that these were the Moments that occurred just before someone takes on a new task, an exciting venture but one that also carries with it huge responsibilities. Elin’s Mom provided a video of the speaker, and in the video, the speaker asked people what they were thinking just before they say the words, “I do.” The speaker affirmed the audience’s response: “You were thinking, ‘Oh Shit.’” After watching the video, Elin’s Mom commented, “Elin, you’re having one of those [OSM Moments].” Her Mom’s story made it possible for Emily to label those moments, and in doing so, frame them in a way that made it possible for her to view these moments from a new perspective.

Changes Elin sees in herself.

In our first conversation of the school year, I asked Elin what changes she was seeing in herself. She now viewed herself as more organized and more structured. It was important to have everything have its place in the classroom. By now, she saw herself as more mature and commented that she felt there was no time or room for error in her teaching. She explained that she always needed to be “on top of her game” and added that she spent more time on things like trying to figure out what she was going to wear the next day. Elin viewed herself as being in competition with the other OSSYP students in her building and explained,

I have to look better than them; not only in my appearance but also my attitude, my performance, the way I connect with the kids. It’s an interview everyday and I think it’s pushing me to be a more of a perfectionist and more worried about the things that I say and how I say them. I think that’s a good thing for the most part. I’m exhausted but it’s going really well (Interview Four).

Elin recognized that competition can be positive when it pushes her to do her best. During this same interview, Elin described herself as sarcastic at times. She talked about a third grade teacher in whose class she was during her rotation time. This particular teacher, in Elin's view, was sarcastic with the students, and Elin found herself becoming sarcastic during her time in this classroom. Reflecting on the situation, Elin realized she did not want to allow herself to continue in this manner. Elin's response seemed to offer contradictions. She talked about her appearance, making decisions about what to wear to school, and a few moments later she talked about appearance in terms of how others might view her performance and her interactions with students.

Constructing a Teacher Identity.

In late January, several weeks into her student teaching, Elin shared that her students were not responding to her. They were, in her words, "testing her," and she wondered aloud how her host teacher managed everything on her own. Elin shared that she had no idea how she was supposed to assume all the responsibilities and "be able to do this" by herself; she added that even as she was transitioning into taking over all the teaching responsibilities, she needed help from Margaret in getting them all to their places at the tables. Elin commented,

I'm a little nervous I think. I know it's going to get. . . it's going to get better over time, but it's like, when is that? My thinking is messed up right now. I think it's. . . I know that I can do it, I know that I can, and I know that I will. It's just I think hitting me that, oh my gosh, this is about to happen. So it's like graduation and a job, and I'm there. I'm like what!? I'm a kid. I'm a college kid. What am I doing! (Third Interview).

Affirmation from others.

One of her first graders offered Elin an unexpected boost to her self-esteem at dismissal time one day. Her students were in line at the end of the day and ready to walk to the buses. Elin shared: “One little boy looked up at me and goes, ‘Miss W., I just think you’re going to be the best teacher ever’ and he gave me a big hug. For him to say that. . . he doesn’t know what that means to me. . .” (Interview Two).

Teacher Fan Mail from Students



Figure 1 *Bulletin board in Elin’s Classroom*

Another situation Elin described resulted in positive feedback from her host teacher and from her principal. Margaret was absent for a few days due to illness, and Elin took complete control of the classroom in her absence. Even though there was a substitute in the classroom, Elin felt it was her place to assume responsibility since she knew the students and the routine. She shared, “I felt like I needed to be doing it; it was my job.” Margaret reported to Rachael, the building principal, regarding Elin’s performance during this time. She told Rachael that Elin had worked independently and without any assistance from others and she had not called Margaret for support during this time. Margaret reported to the principal, “I just wanted to let you know, Elin took

over everything, she just took it and ran with it. When I came back today there were no big messes for me to clean up” Rachael in turn shared with Elin that everything she heard about Elin’s performance in all situations was always positive. Elin’s success in the classroom was affirmed by her students and by her supervisors (Interview Four).

Elin knows who she is.

I believed for some time that Elin had a strong sense of who she was, more so than many other preservice teachers. She was mature in her ability to process information and then make decisions about her teaching. Although many of the other OSSYP students with whom she was in contact had decided to apply for the Teaching Fellowship Program at the University, Elin seemed to know before beginning her OSSYP year that the Fellowship program was not in her future. She appeared confident in her decision not to apply, but she had clearly given the question careful consideration. Elin explained that she wanted to take her time with graduate school, and throughout her interviews talked about her options as to what her focus of study might be. She was thinking about possibilities in administration, special education, or perhaps a literacy program. Elin realized she did not know exactly what she wanted at the time, and stated, “I know myself and I know I will go back to school because I’ll think it sounds like fun. I don’t want to fly through it and I’d rather spend the money. I’ll wait and do it differently” (Interview Three).

At the time of our final interview in June and after the school year ended, Elin did not have a teaching position for the following year. She reiterated her strong desire to be a teacher but added that at that point in time she did not feel like a teacher. She believed others viewed her as a teacher by then, but she did not see “teacher” as one of her

identities at that time. Without any prompt from me, she reflected on her statement and went on to talk about the times throughout the school year when she did not feel like a teacher. Elin explained:

This is going to sound really silly; I felt like a teacher when I had a purpose. I felt like I was going to school, and I was doing something and even though I was doing it [the OSSYP program] for my schooling, I still felt I had a purpose. I owed those kids the best experience I could give them and I had a purpose in their lives, and at this point I'm so about the purpose (Interview Four).

She continued and talked about her stress over not finding a teaching position and commented, "I'm tired." A normally self-confident Elin was facing the challenge of not knowing if she would have a teaching position the following year. I believed, without any doubt, that she would find a position, but the best support I could offer was that of a friend and listener (Final Interview).

Tensions, challenges and conflicts.

Preservice teachers face personal and professional tensions and conflicts throughout the process of learning to be a teacher. Tensions may arise as a result of interactions with colleagues, or due to the demands and constraints placed on teachers. Tensions may arise as teachers interact with the families of their students. Preservice teachers also encounter tensions as they face a multitude of instructional decisions. A teacher's greatest tensions may be within herself as she comes to terms with her own evolving teacher identities.

Elin experienced tensions and conflicts over decisions about her future as a teacher. She shared stories of her tensions during the job-search process. During her year

as an OSSYP student, Elin experienced tensions with staff members and other OSSYP students. Waiting to learn her student teaching placement was difficult as was dealing with pressure from one teacher who asked Elin to request placement in her classroom. (Elin wondered if having a student teacher was “a feather in their caps.”) There were tensions as she prepared for student teaching and questioned her ability to take over the class. She also spoke of the conflicts within herself as she struggled to make instructional decisions and as she encountered difficult situations with some of her peers.

Resolving one of the challenges she encountered during the year later resulted in Elin’s identifying the moment as an “Ah-ha” highlight of the year. This “Ah-ha” moment occurred when Elin dealt with a difficult issue involving another staff member. In this story, Elin talked about her interactions with a school counselor and their disagreement as to how a student situation should be handled. According to Elin, the counselor was allowing the student to take advantage of privileges. The student, who had a history of screaming and rolling on the floor, had permission to take a “brain break” during which time he left the classroom. It appeared to Elin that the child was using the “brain breaks” to avoid doing his work. When the counselor over-rode Elin’s decision to keep the child in the classroom and instead removed him, Elin talked with her host teacher and the assistant principal. After careful consideration and advice, Elin put a plan in place if another incident with the counselor occurred. Elin remarked that it was time she took control and did what she believed was in the best interest of the child. After careful thought and processing the issue with others, Elin put a plan in place if there was a ever a need to take action in the future.

Another challenge Elin faced was frustration over not finding a teaching position by the end of the school year. She noted, “I’m doing the right things, and everyone’s saying the right things, and I’ve gotten really great reviews. . . so why isn’t anything happening? . . . I’ve done everything for some people and I’ve put in a lot more time than they have, and I’m getting the short end of the stick” (Final Interview).

Reflecting on Her Teaching: Theme Four

“I drive so much now and all I think about are the kids” (Interview Two). Elin understood the necessity of taking time to reflect. One of the reasons she gave for her decision not to participate in the Teaching Fellows Program was to ensure she had time to reflect, especially as a beginning teacher. She explained, “I want to take my time and I want to learn and reflect and think.” The 45-minute drive to school during her OSSYP year provided time to think about her students and her teaching. She closed this part of her interview by saying, “I’m so much more reflective now than I used to be.” Prior to her OSSYP year, Elin felt she did not fully understand the concept of reflecting. She noted, “I had no clue what they [the instructors] were talking about. Now I look back and I get it” (Interview Three).

While attending a professional development meeting provided by the district, Elin heard a speaker talk about reflection. The speaker suggested that the farther away a teacher lives from the school, the better teacher she will be because of having time to think while driving. Elin related the speaker’s comments to her own reflection times during her drive to school each day and responded, “It’s so true. I mean, I think more now, and I reflect while I’m driving” (Interview Three).

In addition to the story Elin told earlier about “the math lesson than bombed,” she shared her reflection on a social studies lesson she taught, another lesson that “did not go

so well.” Her host teacher had asked Elin to share a book relating to the social studies unit. During the discussion that followed, Elin planned to write the students’ responses on chart paper. The students were engaged while she was reading, but when it came to sharing their ideas, Elin said “I lost them.”

It just didn’t go well. I mean it wasn’t bad, but I didn’t feel really great about it whenever we walked out of the door at the end of the day. It’s hard to keep them engaged at the end of the day, but I felt like the kids weren’t responding to me in the way that I wanted them to (Interview Four).

Elin and Margaret talked about the lesson, and Margaret shared the evaluation form she completed while Elin was teaching. She indicated Elin had met the standards for teaching the lesson and everything was fine. Then Margaret added that there were some things Elin needed to think about and she encouraged her to “make the lesson her own.” Elin had attempted to teach the lesson as she believed Margaret would, and realizing it had not gone well, Elin remembered thinking, “Oh my gosh, I don’t have my own spin, and I don’t know what that is yet.” Elin’s reflection on her lesson told her the lesson could have gone better and Margaret confirmed her thinking. Margaret was also asking Elin to think about changes to consider for future lessons, changes that would be in keeping with Elin’s style and manner as opposed to being a clone of Margaret’s (Interview Three).

Elin was reflecting on the connections she was making between what she learned in her college methods courses and what was happening in the classroom when she said:

Once you get in the classroom and once you figure out your kids, it’s gong to come to you. I did not buy that when I was sitting in those chairs. But use what the teacher does, observe, watch what she’s using with each child. With each

classroom that you go in, observe . . . watch what they do. Do what they do but make it your own. Do your own spin-off (Interview Four).

As Emily reflected on the importance of learning from other teachers, she was keeping the door open to taking what others did and, in Margaret's words, "making it her own."

Elin considered another perspective on her reflections when she remarked, "I reflect on what I do well." Her reflection process had also helped her realize that her best ideas *about* teaching come to her *while* she is teaching. The time after school when Elin was alone in the classroom was a good time for reflecting. After school, she re-thought the day and prepared for the next day. The building was quiet and there was no one around to interrupt her thoughts (Interview Four).

The reflections Elin shared during our interviews were a natural part of our conversations. Most of her references to reflecting came without prompting from a specific question. Elin believed our interviews helped her be more reflective. She was comfortable during the interviews, always at my home or a restaurant where the two of us met for lunch. Elin expressed her feeling that she could talk about anything she wanted during the interviews, and she concluded, "My mouth just flies any time we talk. . . Our conversations really helped me feel better about the situations" (Final Interview).

Constructing Her Teacher Knowledge: Theme Five

"I learn a lot from the kids. . . I learn by observing and talking to other teachers. . ." *"I am learning I can take ideas and make them my own"*
(Final Interview).

The concept of teacher knowledge, the idea that teachers create their own unique knowledge specific to what they do in their classroom, was introduced to the field of

education in the 1970s. As teachers construct their teacher knowledge, their teaching identities are impacted as they integrate this new knowledge into their teacher practices, and as teaching practices change, so too do teacher identities. As I read Elin's transcripts, I noted the times she began a statement with the phrase, "I learned," and sometimes the phrase "I know that. . ." These statements indicated the teacher knowledge Elin was constructing during her OSSYP experience as well as her awareness of her growing knowledge of teaching.

Elin constructs her knowledge of teaching.

During her first interview in the fall, Elin commented on the amount of hard work that goes into teaching. She shared, "My biggest surprise about being in the classroom is all the work and the personal work that are put into teaching. . . I'm learning that the amount of work it takes to do this can be outrageous!" As she often did, Elin seemed to reflect for just a moment, and then added, "But to me it's worth it. If you can get through to that one kid, then you've done a good job" (First Interview).

Elin's knowledge of literacy instruction was enhanced by the opportunities to work with the literacy coach in her school. The district in which Elin completed her OSSYP year provided literacy coaches to each elementary school. These coaches worked in classrooms with individual teachers, they met with grade-level teams, and in general provided support to classroom teachers. Of particular interest to Elin were the comments the coach made regarding the use of the teacher's manual and lesson plans provided by the district. The coach told the teachers that the scripted teacher dialogue provided in the teacher's manuals was there to provide an example of what a teacher might say during the lesson. The coach suggested that teachers use the scripts only as a

guide. What teachers needed to focus on, continued the coach, was what students really needed. Making reference to the scripted dialogue, Elin remarked, “It’s almost like taking the thinking out of teaching.” Elin was learning to discriminate among the materials she used. From our conversations, I knew Elin realized the importance of knowing her students and knowing their academic needs. The coach’s comments affirmed for Elin that the final instructional decisions are hers to make (First Interview).

Elin’s new teacher knowledge included learning how to build positive relationship with the families of students, a top priority for many preservice teachers. Elin joined her host teacher for parent/teacher conferences in November. At that time, Margaret offered the suggestion that parent conferences follow a format of beginning with something positive, then addressing academic reports, and concluding by sharing something positive with the parents. In this way, parents felt comfortable during the conference and it allowed them to know that the teacher cared about their child.

Learning with others.

As teachers, we gain a wealth of knowledge about teaching from the children we teach. It was a second grader who put this into perspective for Elin. Elin related how the classroom teacher had introduced her to the class. One of the students then asked Elin why she was there. Elin told him she was there to learn about him and about teaching. The child responded, “Wow. Then I’m like your teacher?” Elin concluded, “In a way they [the students] really are” (Interview Two).

During her rotation time in a first grade classroom and then again while she was student teaching in first grade, Elin joined her grade-level teammates for planning times. The grade-level team provided support for Elin “above and beyond” the typical

collaborative planning. Her teammates shared positive feedback to her ideas and they posed questions such as, “How might this be done differently?” or “I would encourage you to try . . .” They asked her, “Do you see why this will happen?” or “Do you understand why?” This team of teachers was supporting Elin in being reflective in her teaching and at the same time providing her an audience for articulating her thinking (Interview Four). The first grade team, according to Elin, was the strongest team in the school. Members of the team worked well together, and she added, “The excitement they get from the kids is unbelievable” basing her comment on her observations of students in their classrooms.

Learning about interactions with students.

While observing classroom teachers, Elin was learning how these teachers interacted with individual students. She was aware of the specific language teachers used in keeping their interactions with students positive. Her host also always spoke in a positive manner and Elin provided an example of what Margaret said, “You’re not in trouble. How can we take this situation and learn from it?” It was clear in the stories Elin related that she was using the positive interactions she observed as models for the ways in which she in turn interacted with students. In addition, Elin noted that she was learning the importance of the use of language in making expectations and assignments clearly understood (Interview Four).

Margaret was quite explicit in a piece of advice she shared: “Elin, I’m going to tell you one thing now that you really need to know.” Margaret’s comment came in response to Elin’s question asking why there wasn’t any “discipline stuff” on the walls in her classroom. Margaret explained that she found those types of charts to be waste of

time and a drain on the teacher. She explained further that the same students use the charts and the same students don't care, and the students that do care about it don't need it. Margaret added, "It's so much easier to take the child aside and talk to them."

“Ah-ha” Moments and learning to be a teacher.

About midway into her student teaching, and after the day she took over the classroom in the absence of her host teacher, Elin realized, "I can do this all by myself." Once she started assuming more and more responsibility for the class, it seemed that things started coming together. Once on her own, she shared, "It all kind of clicked." By the time of her final interview in June, just after the school year ended, Elin realized also that her best ideas came while she was teaching and working with the students. She discovered that the school day went more smoothly when the students were on task and when she clearly stated her expectations for the them. One teaching strategy she discovered and was using with great success was writing instructions for the students on the board and reading the instructions with them. In this way, with the instructions in writing, the students could refer back to what they were to do.

In response to the question asking if "learning to teach" and "learning to be a teacher" were the same, Elin responded that *learning to teach* is sitting down with students and working with them. *Learning to be a teacher* encompasses how one dresses, the impression one gives to others, and learning "to have the essence of teacher about you." I wondered what Elin meant by "the essence of a teacher" and asked her to explain her comment a year later. "The essence of teacher," for Elin, is having the presence of being a teacher; acting like a teacher in interactions with peers and with students. It is

being professional. . . it's how they talk and present themselves outside the classrooms. . . in meetings and places like that" (Personal Communication, May 4, 2011).

Elin's most significant new teacher knowledge.

During the final interview, I asked Elin to identify the most significant learning moment of her OSSYP year. Elin returned to a story she shared earlier regarding her concerns about the disruptive behavior of one of her first graders. When Elin disagreed with the recommendations of the counselor, she took a stand and decided the child would not continue to leave the room at his own discretion. Elin's decision to oppose the counselor's plan was later affirmed by her host teacher. For Elin, this "significant moment" was realizing she had made a decision in the best interest of the child, and in her words, "I made a *good* decision." Knowing she had made "a good decision" under difficult circumstances, Elin continued,

That moment made me realize 'I DO know something. . . I really am a teacher. I had the right mindset and I didn't go to somebody else and say, 'What do I do?' I knew what to do and what was right and what was wrong. I went with my gut. . . I still did everything in my power to do the right thing (Final Interview).

The incident seemed to confirm for Elin that she "really is a teacher."

Elin's Circular Story: Becoming a Teacher--Officially

"Mrs. D., I'm scared. How am I going to do this?" (Interview Three)
From a student: "Miss W., we learned all this from you!" (Personal Communication, May 2011).

I assumed from her email in June saying, "Mrs. D., we need to talk!" that Elin had been offered a teaching position. We met for lunch a few days later and she shared the news that she had accepted a teaching position. I had complete confidence that Elin

would find a teaching position, but my assurances could not take the place of the phone call from her principal offering her a third grade classroom.

Elin and I had dinner the following May near the end of the first year of teaching. I asked to meet with her in order to share a draft of what I had written about her. During dinner, Elin shared a story about the third graders she was currently teaching. Her students were studying lizards and Elin was amazed by the comments they made, comments indicating how much they had learned. She shared her excitement with the students over hearing all they had learned, and in a casual manner asked the students how they knew so much. One little girl responded, “We learned because of you.” Elin’s becoming a teacher was a transformation from “I can’t do this,” to “I’m going to be a teacher,” and then, affirmation from a student, “We learned because of you.”

Elin’s Poem: Becoming a Teacher

Elin Becomes A Teacher

I remember sitting there
 Ready to cry because I was like--
 I can’t take over this classroom
 There’s no way I’m going to be able to teach them
 I don’t know anything.
 I had no idea what to do or where to go
 Why am I doing this? What’s going on?
 Why? What? I don’t understand.
 My thinking is messed up right now
 I know that I can do it
 I know that I can, and I know that I will.
 It’s just hitting me--
 Oh my gosh, this is about to happen.
 Then it just all comes to me
 Because I am there with these kids and
 I just roll with it, and it works.

Dear Zach,

*Let’s make today great. I know you can do it.
 Let’s work on this together.*

I left the note on his desk
and you know what he did with it?
He read it and just threw it away.
Like he doesn't care.
He will throw his body down
And say "I'm so bored. . . this is so boring.
But what we're finding is
Whenever something gets challenging
is when he shuts down.
On my last day we were sitting there
and we were all talking.
and Jenny raises her hand and goes
"But why do you have to leave?"
I explained I am going to get a job to teach other kids
to take what I've learned and pass it on.
"But Ms. W. . . ., This *is* your job
You're supposed to be here with us."
Tell them not to worry
Because it will all click
when they get in there.
I mean, once you get into the classroom
once you figure out your kids, it comes to you.
I did not buy that when I was sitting in those chairs.
I did not buy it.
Observe. . . watch what the teachers do.
Do what they do but make it your own.
Do your own spin-off.
And, it all just came to me.

Anya's Stories

For those who know her, Anya is the calm in the midst of the storm. Regardless of what may be happening in her life or what might be occurring around her, she maintains a calm, assured manner. She greets life's challenges and disruptions with a smile on her face and adds, "It will be fine."

One particular image I have of Anya sitting in my class of preservice teachers remains clear, now over two years later. The "storm" raging that day was the stress on the students from assignments due at the same time for several classes. On days like this I sensed their stress as the students entered the room. This class in particular made it known when anxiety levels were high and why. I had learned that allowing a few minutes for the students to vent before moving on with the class made the remainder of the time go more smoothly. Anya was sitting to my right and remained silent. After listening to the stories of woe for a few minutes, I turned to Anya and asked her how she handles stress. Anya paused for a moment, (she always paused before speaking) and then replied, "I just close my eyes, take a deep breath, and smile." Due in part to how she managed stress, Anya was well respected by her peers. Other instructors also noted her calm demeanor and the positive influence her attitude and outlook had on their classes.

Anya spoke often of her grandfather and chose to interview him for the oral history project assigned in our social studies course. She was spending the following summer teaching at a school in Africa and feared her grandfather might not live until she returned. She did see him again before his death, and in an email told me she had taken the picture book about her grandfather to his funeral and shared it with family members. Because of the history project, Anya said "I spent one-on-one time with my

grandfather before he died because of that project” (Personal communication, February, 2012).

My Relationship with Anya

Anya was in my class for the fall semester, but due to a scheduling issue, she did not continue with me for the spring semester. At that time, the junior education majors had to register in December for their spring classes. The office where the preservice teachers registered opened at 8:00 in the morning and students began forming a line outside the door by 4:00 a.m. Anya’s alarm clock did not go off and she was late getting to campus. By the time she reached the registration table, Green Block, the block she had hoped to continue in, was closed. Anya dealt with her disappointment as she always did and remarked, “Oh well, it will be fine.” I am sure I was the one most disappointed when I learned she would not be enrolled in my class the following semester. The students in Green Block were a tightly knit group and were disappointed in learning Anya would not continue with us. From my perspective, Anya’s presence and attitude were a positive influence in this group and her absence would affect the community this group had established.

Because Anya was now in another block, she did not participate in my pilot study. In the back of my mind, however, I continued to wonder what Anya might offer to my dissertation research. Her responses to interview questions, I was certain, would be thoughtful, and Anya’s perspectives would differ from those of other participants in the study. With Anya, I could expect the unexpected. Before selecting participants for my study, I spoke with two of Anya’s other instructors. Their feedback validated my thinking

that I wanted Anya to be part of my study since they saw Anya in the same way that I did. I contacted Anya and she responded immediately “Yes” to working with me.

Neither Anya nor I had any way of knowing at that time just how critical her calm, rational thinking would be to her success and survival as she entered the teaching profession. Anya’s first year in the classroom redefines the term “a difficult year.” Then a graduate of the university, Anya was accepted into the Teaching Fellows Program. She accepted a position in a new school that serves students from low socio-economic populations. At this school, Anya dealt with and observed violent behaviors as children acted out their anger. To make her situation even more challenging, Anya was placed on a grade-level team with teachers coming from another building. These teachers often opposed new teaching ideas and resisted collaboration with others. In addition to the challenges any new school faces as staff members develop relationships and the culture of the school is established, the building was over-crowded from the day the doors opened. I had concerns about Anya being at this school, but with her strong sense of who she is, her extraordinary patience, and the daily support of her mentor, Anya did an amazing job with her group of first graders.

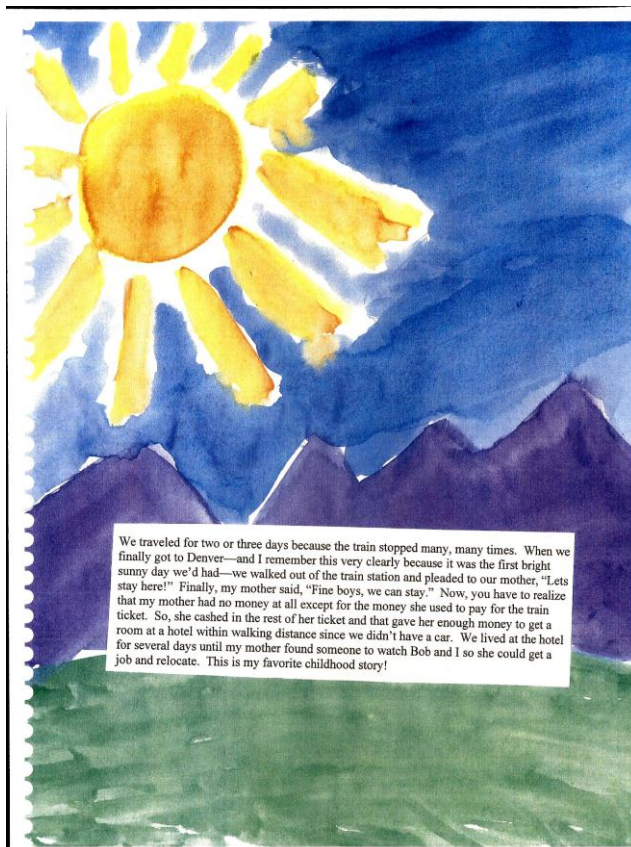


Figure 2

Page from the Book

Why These Stories

I identified five themes from the transcripts of Anya's interviews. The first theme in Anya's stories relates to her becoming a teacher. The second theme is seen in how Anya developed a network of support. The third theme is how Anya built relationships with her first graders. A fourth theme is seen in Anya's insights into how children learn. The fifth theme is her wish that she had taken more risks in her teaching. Just as I had anticipated at the beginning of my study, Anya's stories conveyed her thoughtful insights and unique perspectives about teaching and about children.

Becoming a Teacher: Theme One

"I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I just didn't know how."

(Final Interview)

Becoming a teacher “felt right.”

Anya grew up in a family of teachers that included her mom, aunts, and cousins, and she added they were not the ones who inspired her to become a teacher. Anya explained that the decision to become a teacher came when she enrolled in a child development course in high school and was placed in a kindergarten classroom as a helper. She describes her feeling, “I remember it just felt right working with the kids and being in the classroom.” Anya pictured herself as a teacher and during her senior year in high school decided to enter the teacher education program at the university. She explained, “I just got that gut feeling and went with it. My gut turned out to be right!” (Personal communication, February 2012).

Learning *how* and learning *to be*.

I asked Anya to think about the difference between *learning how to teach* and *learning to be a teacher*. Learning *how* to teach, Anya believed, was writing imaginary lesson plans for imaginary kids as she did for her methods classes. Learning *how* to teach was reading the books that told how to teach. Anya talked about one of her classes in which they learned about teaching being student centered and how to determine where behaviors were coming from in order to deal with the behavior. She felt that at that point, she was learning some of the “how” to teach. She continued, “Now that we’re really doing it, it’s not like that. . . Now I do whatever comes to mind and I’m learning from what I see my host teacher do.” The benefits for Anya are in having the actual experience, handling the situation, and, in Anya’s words, “Seeing how it works.” Through actual experiences, Anya believed she was learning “to be” a teacher. Anya believed what she had learned in her undergraduate courses was “in her head,” but not

always at a conscious level at the moment a situation was evolving. Anya was learning how to deal with behaviors in the process of having to deal with them in the classroom. Although she appeared to say that she was learning to teach by “really doing it,” she did refer to what she learned in her earlier course work. Perhaps Anya was beginning to link her earlier course work to what she was experiencing in her classroom. *Learning to be a teacher* meant making decisions in the classroom intuitively, likely without consciously realizing how and why the decision was made. Learning to be a teacher came with the recognition that the rewards from teaching are intrinsic and come as a result of moments of success with students and in feeling satisfaction from one’s work (Interview Three).

Early in her student teaching experience, Anya felt she was not getting the constructive criticism that she hoped for from her host teacher. Despite her requests for suggestions on how to improve her lessons, suggestions were not forthcoming. When Anya remarked to her host that a lesson she taught “was terrible” and asked what her host thought, the response was that there was nothing wrong with the lesson. Eventually, her host teacher began asking Anya, “What exactly do *you* think about the lesson?” and, “What do *you* want to do better?” When Anya’s host put the responsibility back on her, Anya was compelled to begin identifying her own questions. When she asked for specific suggestions, Anya’s host provided the needed support. A year later, Anya and I reviewed what I had written about her. She reflected on the passage relating this aspect of her experience and looking back, she believed that at the time she was still thinking in terms of “wanting to do everything right.” She believed, a year later, that she really was doing better than she thought at the time and was simply being too hard on herself. During the final interview, Anya reflected on the changes in her student teaching as a result of her

initiating questions with her host teacher. By then, Anya viewed this a turning point in her student teaching. When her communication with her host teacher improved, Anya's confidence increased. By the end of the year Anya and her host teacher had developed a very close relationship (Final Interview). Learning *how to teach* was directly related to Anya's learning how to ask questions about what she wanted to learn and what she needed to do.

Learning to teach through collaboration.

One of Anya's fears about teaching was not knowing how she could ever create all the lessons plans and teaching ideas on her own. Once she started student teaching, she realized she did not have to "create it all." Anya was supported through collaboration with her grade-level team and by the time she was student teaching, she had been working with her team for several weeks. In addition, Anya was going to the teacher next door with questions, and in particular, questions about the math program. By now she was comfortable going to others for help and advice. Anya commented earlier, "I knew I wanted to teach. I just didn't know how I was going to do it and how I could manage it all." Anya was learning *how to teach*, and most important, she was *learning how to learn to teach* through her collaboration with others (Interview Four).

The math program and materials were new to the district in which Anya was teaching and because of this, her host teacher had no experience in using the program. At her host's suggestion, Anya began working with the first grade teacher next door since she was actually implementing the new program also. This one-on-one daily collaboration regarding math provided the guidance Anya needed and led to making her

own instructional decisions about how best to implement the math lessons with her own students.

Doubts about becoming a teacher.

Anya said there were times during her undergraduate classes when she had doubts about becoming a teacher. Prior to her OSSYP year, she was not connecting her learning in the college courses with what teaching looked like in the classroom. She felt she was completing course assignments that had no purpose and no meaning for her; she was only learning *about* teaching. As she learned how to teach, Anya was implementing what she learned in her methods courses into her own teaching. Still reflecting on her methods classes, Anya remembered being required to plan a lesson and then teaching the lesson in her methods class, an assignment she was quite uncomfortable carrying out in front of her peers. A year later as a OSSYP student actually teaching lessons, she found herself far more confident in the classroom. Now when she taught a lesson, according to Ann, the feedback from her students and her host teacher were authentic and she was simply more comfortable teaching her own students in what she termed “authentic” lessons (Interview One).

Anya’s rotation time in a second grade class caused her, for a short time, to rethink her decision to teach. She described the teacher as “very negative and always screaming at the students.” During the time she was in this classroom, Anya’s earlier doubts about being a teacher returned, and she commented, “I felt that was how I was going to turn out and I was scared.” Anya explained that once she began student teaching, and by then having had several very positive experiences in other classrooms, she was again secure in her decision to be a teacher (Final Interview).

In an interview while she was student teaching, I asked Anya to talk about a time she questioned whether or not she wanted to be a teacher. She laughed and immediately responded, “Today!” She went on to describe her students’ behaviors that day and how restless they had been. Thinking about what had happened, Anya wondered if perhaps the “honeymoon phase” of her student teaching time had ended. She realized things were different when it was apparent that her students, in her words, “were no longer hanging on every word I said.” When Anya and I talked about this conversation a year later, she looked back on the day and by then believed things had not gone as badly as it seemed at the time. Perhaps this was a critical moment in Anya’s becoming a teacher as her perspectives about her classroom transitioned from being about her as the teacher and moved instead to a focus on the students and their learning. From this experience, Anya moved forward in her teaching by reflecting on her doubts and concerns and turning them into learning how to teach opportunities.

Gaining confidence in herself.

I had known Anya for almost two years by the time of our last interview and had always viewed her as self-confident. The extent to which she questioned herself early in her OSSYP year came as a surprise to me. I asked Anya if this self-doubting surprised her, and she responded, “Yeah.” Anya felt pressured to “do the right thing” and to do what her host teacher wanted since it was not her classroom. In addition, she recalled her mom’s insistence that Anya “listen to your host teacher and do what she tells you to do.” Anya’s mother worked as a teacher’s aid and was familiar with several negative student teaching situations. Her mom’s stories about student teachers from her own observations

in the school where she worked added to Anya's self-imposed pressure to "do the right thing."

Gaining confidence in herself had a great impact on Anya's learning how to teach and ultimately on her teacher identity. One of Anya's greatest challenges as a student teacher was starting out being very nervous about the responsibilities and being overly concerned about doing the right thing. She viewed the lessons she taught as terrible and she had difficulty earning the respect of her students. Anya had the misconception that her host teacher was not confident in her performance and, in Anya's words, "she was just being nice to me." Anya remembers thinking, "This [her teaching] is terrible." She continually second guessed herself. When communications with her host improved, along with support from team members, her confidence increased. Anya describes her relationship with her host teacher as "very close" by the end of the year (Interview Four).

Realizing she had become a teacher.

I asked Anya if there was a specific time or event when she first felt she had become a teacher. After thinking a moment, she responded:

When I cared so much about them [the students]. . . when I did extra things that I didn't have to do, just because I wanted to . . . That's when I realized how much I cared. I knew I had become a teacher when I cared so much (Final Interview).

By the time she started student teaching, Anya had learned to ask questions and she knew there were many staff members willing to help. She asked former Fellows about the Teaching Fellows program and she found a teacher next door to help with planning math lessons. During her final interview, I asked Anya to revisit our conversation from an earlier interview regarding her feeling that she was not getting the constructive criticism

and advice from her host teacher that she hoped for and felt she needed. Anya recalled the positive changes once she began asking questions. Learning to ask questions was a significant point for Anya in “becoming a teacher” (Interview Four).

Anya and her host learn to teach reading together.

OSSYP students begin their senior year concerned that they do not know how to teach reading, and in particular, “how to do” guided reading groups. Once in classrooms, however, they see first hand what reading instruction and guided reading “look like” and they begin to build confidence in their ability to teach reading. Since Anya’s host, Karen, was new to first grade, she and Anya were, in many ways learning to teach reading together. Anya observed Karen in her learning process and at the same time collaborated with her in designing instructional plans. Karen used materials by Debbie Miller (2002) in planning instruction, and as Anya assumed the role of student teacher, she and Karen continued to collaborate. Using ideas from Miller’s book, their plans included reading picture books with the class, teaching reading strategies, and integrating reading with writing. When asked how her beliefs about reading instruction had changed during the year, Anya said they really hadn’t and added:

My host teacher teaches reading exactly how we’ve learned to teach it. She’s reading so many picture books every day and tying them into all the different subjects. I feel like that’s especially one of the things that align with exactly how we learn to teach reading. We’re doing - the next thing is writing fairytales but it’s all about reading fairy tales (Interview Four).

Anya used the term “we” [Karen and herself] throughout her discussion about reading and referred to how “we” changed the guided reading groups to meet the

students' needs, and "we" talked about reading strategies like schema, using background knowledge, visualizing and making mental images. Using Miller's book as a guide, Anya and Karen created mini-lessons to introduce comprehension strategies.

By the end of the year, Anya said her beliefs about reading had not really changed, and added, "My beliefs about reading have become stronger. We focused mostly on meaning and comprehension strategies, using a ton of picture books all the time instead of just during guided reading." Anya made several references to, as she said it, "making reading more interesting than just doing guided reading." Even though some of the students were frustrated at times during guided reading groups, they still loved the books she and Karen read in class and the first graders liked reading to each other. Anya acknowledged that although guided reading was needed, it is more important that students be excited about reading. Incorporating writing into reading, another idea from Miller, made reading more interesting for her first graders (Final Interview).

Midway through student teaching, Anya stated her belief that reading is the most important thing about school and it is, quoting her, "what I care most about and it can really be fun to teach." She identified read alouds as her favorite part of the day and described this time as "when kids listen the best and it gets kids engaged in reading" (Interview Three). Anya and Karen were essentially learning to teach reading together. While observing her host's learning process, Anya was aware of the value of a professional book in providing guidelines and support for planning instruction. Anya and Karen continued their collaborative process as Anya assumed responsibility for reading instruction during student teaching. Anya was explicit when drawing the

connection to her university course work: “Karen was teaching reading just like we learned to do it” (Interview Four).

Top three teaching moments.

After completing the OSSYP program, I asked Anya to identify the top three moments of her year. First, Anya named her return visit to the school after graduating from the university in order to attend her first graders’ writing celebration. She relayed that as she walked down the hallway, her host teacher saw her and started waving. As Anya approached her former students, they gathered around “Miss K” for a group hug. Describing the writing celebration, Anya shared, “Hearing all their stories that day was really cool because the stories were so good and the kids were so proud. “ Anya was excited about the first graders response to seeing her again, and she recognized the students’ excitement in having the opportunity to share their writing (Final Interview).

Anya’s last day of student teaching was the second “top moment” of the year. Her class surprised Anya with an ice cream party and gifts of “teacher things” for her first year of teaching. The first graders gave her a whistle, bulletin board decorations and other items for her classroom. Many students reported that their parents made special shopping trips to purchase the gifts, and the students expressed pride in having kept the surprise a secret. The class also gave Anya a tote bag signed by each of her students.

The third “top moment” Anya identified was not a single moment but a series of events that helped Anya feel she had become a part of the school. She participated in the school’s 5K race and volunteered at the Gift of Giving Night, an event planned for students of low-income families to go shopping for gifts for their families and other

school-wide events. Anya recognized her sense of belonging to the school community that resulted from her participation in schools events both during and after the school day.

Creating a Network of Support: Theme Two

“The staff all care so much and they have a lot of fun. The Fellows are helpful and answer our questions” (First Interview).

From the beginning of the school year and throughout her OSSYP experience, Anya talked about how much the teachers and other staff members at the school cared about the children. She maintained this positive attitude about the school for her entire year. Anya spoke highly of the mentor teacher who was responsible for working with the OSSYP students. Close to the end of the year, Anya had hopes of staying at the school the following year as a Teaching Fellow, due largely to her relationship with and support from her mentor.

By creating a network of support in the school, Anya facilitated the construction of her teacher identity by reaching out to others in order to improve her instructional practices and learn more about teaching. As her learning continued, Anya’s teacher identity changed. A key person in her support network was Brenda, a member of the school staff who also served as the mentor for the university OSSYP students and the Teaching Fellows. Anya described Brenda as easy to talk with and very encouraging. Brenda, explained Anya, “Made me feel like I was really successful as a student teacher.” Andrea’s encouragement added to Anya’s confidence and was a factor in Anya’s decision to apply for the Teaching Fellows’ program. Anya’s support network was further supported since Brenda, and Karen, her host teacher, had previously worked together as Fellow and Mentor and were close friends. Brenda’s support was facilitated

since her office was just across the hallway from Anya's classroom making it easy for them to be in close contact throughout the day.

Included in her encouragement for Anya to apply to the Fellows program, Brenda commented, "this school loves to have Fellows." Anya noted that many staff members were former Fellows who chose to remain at Green Acres. By Spring, Anya was certain she wanted to stay at Blue Ridge as a Teaching Fellow, both because she was happy at the school and because she assumed she would continue working with the same mentor. By spring, however, Anya learned that Blue Ridge would not have Teaching Fellows the following year and if she were to be a Fellow, she had to move to another school. She lamented, "I was bummed because I wanted Brenda to be my mentor and I really liked Green Acres." Anya did not know at the time that, as a result of a series of events, she and Andrea would be together the following year as mentor and Fellow at the new school just opening in the district. As a Teaching Fellow, Anya's construction of her teacher identity would continue, and like the OSSYP program, the Fellows program provided support from mentors and other Teaching Fellows.

Two other OSSYP students in the building were a part of Anya's support network. During the first semester when the OSSYP students had two-week rotations at the various grade levels, there were time and opportunities for Anya to talk with the other OSSYP students during the school day. The three talked about the observations of teachers and teaching styles, they shared ideas for lessons plans, and they noted teaching strategies that appeared to be affective with students. Checking in with the other two OSSYP students, according to Anya, helped her gain a sense of "how is it going" and she could gauge her thinking and progress the others. Anya's roommate was also an OSSYP

student at another school in the same district, but the socio-economic demographics of the communities each school served were quite different. Anya's school was located in a low-socioeconomic area of town, and Susan's school was in a rural area just outside the city limits. Since the two school communities were quite different, Anya and Susan shared different perspectives and different ideas during their OSSYP year.

During her rotation time at each grade level, Anya met with the grade level teams during planning times. It was during these collaborative meetings that Anya realized she was not alone and not solely responsible for coming up with plans and ideas for all her lessons. The grade-level teammates worked together to ease this burden.

Anya created an extensive network of support at Blue Ridge, a network that included fellow OSSYP students, Teaching Fellows, former Fellows, veteran teachers, her host teacher, and her mentor. She also experienced support through her work with her grade level team. Despite the network of support and close relationships she developed, Anya noted several times that the building principal was distant and did not appear to interact with staff members. Even with her collaboration with colleagues, close relationships with her host and mentor, and affirmation from her first graders, Anya was looking to her principal for something that she felt he did not provide.

Building Relationships with Her Students: Theme Three

"Their respect got so much better when I got to know them better. . . when I showed them I cared, our relationships improved" (Interview Four).

Building relationships with her students was important to Anya as indicated in the stories she told. Her stories about relationships were shared without any prompts from the interview questions. Anya thought about her relationships with her students in a

different way after her host commented, “relationships don’t just happen.” Karen’s comment raised Anya’s awareness of the need to provide opportunities to create these relationships. By the time of the interview in which she shared her host’s comments, Anya had already taken steps toward building relationships, and the interview time seemed to provide an opportunity for Anya to reflect on her efforts. Her stories revealed a series of events that led to stronger ties with her first graders, and by then, Anya had determined that building relationships begins with establishing mutual trust.

Concerns about relationships.

Anya voiced concerns about her relationships with her students early in her student teaching tenure. She described a “terrible week” she had with her first graders. She felt her lessons were “going downhill” and wondered if the newness of her being in the classroom had worn off among the students. She believed her students viewed her as having no authority. Her host teacher suggested that Anya start giving “strikes” for misbehaviors and to keep a record of the strikes on a clipboard. At first, Anya viewed the system of recording strikes as very negative but soon found the system seemed to work. She noted, “The system worked so well that not many kids have strikes now and it actually took away a lot of my frustration.” Since I had my own doubts about systems similar to “giving strikes,” I wondered about this practice as well. Anya’s feeling that the system, as she said, “seemed to work because the behaviors improved,” lessened my concerns. I did, however, hope that Anya continued to question these kinds of practices. Perhaps more than the system of strikes itself, it appeared from Anya’s stories that prior to implementing this practice, Anya did not hold her students accountable for their actions. By providing her students with guidelines and expectations, Anya’s relationships

with the students improved as behaviors improved, improvement due quite possibly to her first graders feeling more secure in their learning environment.

Hearing one of the other OSSYP talk about having lunch with small groups of students, Anya decided to offer lunches with her as a reward for not having any strikes. The students responded well, and in order to ensure that all students had the opportunity to eat with her, Anya included students if they had “one less strike” than the day before. She created ways of making it possible for every child to eat with her. The new system for keeping track of student behaviors resulted in improved behaviors, and according to Anya, lower levels of frustration for both her and her students. She noted, “I hated when I let myself get frustrated with them because they are only six and seven years old.” Anya believed her students had a clearer understanding of her expectations and she was now consistent in providing guidelines for their behaviors and consequences for when they did not meet her expectations. When we met for the final interview, Anya shared:

I think that building relationships was something we always learned in course work; you have to build relationships. . . and it wasn't even that I thought of it as something to do. . . I thought I was getting to know them just fine (Final Interview).

Having lunch with her students marked a critical turning point for Anya and her students. She commented, “ I guess it showed them I cared about them when I'd have them for lunch” (Final Interview).

Also during the final interview, I asked Anya what she believed was the most important lesson she learned from her students. Anya said it was the extent to which their respect for her increased when she realized she had the authority to provide

consequences for their misbehaviors. Anya believed that when she began to hold students accountable, their behaviors improved, and ultimately, their respect for her increased. As her students' respect for her increased, the relationships between Anya and her students improved. Anya concluded, "It's all just getting to know each other." I questioned Anya's use of the term "having authority over them" since her comment, for me, did not represent how she viewed her role as a teacher. Thinking about the beliefs Anya shared about children and teaching, I wondered if she meant, instead of authority, that it was now her responsibility to provide guidelines and expectations.

Insights into Student Learning: Theme Four

It's [the math materials] very fill-in-the-blank thinking. The kids don't know how to fit their thinking into a box on the worksheet (Interview One).

Anya's insights into how children learn were often embedded in stories and went unnoticed until I read and reread her transcripts. One of Anya's quotes caught my attention: "The kids don't know how to fit their thinking into a box." The quote prompted me to revisit her transcripts yet another time in search of other insights Anya shared regarding student learning. As I reread her transcripts, I identified the contexts in which Anya became aware of how students learned and her noticings of what classroom conditions supported students' learning. It was evident that Anya had learned to "step back" in order to observe carefully her students' responses (or lack of) to various lessons. Where many teachers talk about working with individual students, Anya's perspectives were a result of looking out over the entire group of students and assessing the extent to which they engaged, or did not engage, in learning. Whole class instruction is an

important part of the school day, and Anya was keenly aware of what was happening during this time.

Tensions over curriculum.

Anya questioned the lessons and student materials from the district's new math program as a result of her observations in several classrooms at the beginning of her OSSYP experience. She said the instructions were confusing for teachers and added that neither she nor her host teacher could figure out some of the math lessons. The program, noted Anya in September, "Is very fill-in-the-blank structured thinking." The challenges she faced during her student teaching in her efforts to teach math in a meaningful way gave Anya a purpose for thinking about how children learn and prompted her to think about how to make the math lessons work for her students. Anya voiced concerns about the math workbook pages her first graders were asked to complete. Observing her students using the new math workbooks, Anya noticed some were initially excited about the workbook because the pages were bright and colorful. Once into the lesson, she was aware that many students did not understand what they were to do. During the interview, Anya drew an example of the questions on the student pages and added, "It's silly to be doing those pages in first grade. . . they don't know what they are supposed to do" (Interview Four). By the time Anya assumed full responsibility for the class during student teaching, she was selecting which math workbook pages and what parts of the lessons she would and would not use. If a game suggested in the program did not appear to be an activity that would be helpful to her students, she looked for a better and more engaging way to present the material. Anya worked to introduce math activities that did not have the students just sitting at their desks. Recalling one of her previous math

lessons, Anya shared, “The other day I saw kids’ eyes rolling back in their heads like, ‘Aren’t we done yet’ because the workbook page was taking so long.” Thinking to herself that day, Anya reflected, “This is terrible.” On another day the students were asked to skip count by 2s’ and Anya explained, “It was all laid out for them at the top of the workbook page. . . I don’t know. . . it just gives them too many of the answers and they’re not thinking at all.” Based on observations of her students, Anya was revising and adapting math lessons along with questioning the way the new math program was presenting content to her students. According to Anya, the new math program was not engaging students in ways that actually required them to think (Interview Three).

Anya used the term “getting into the rhythm of teaching math” once she felt comfortable teaching math. As a result of support from other teachers, her close observations of her students, and adapting math lessons to meet the needs and interests of her students, Anya became increasingly more confident in teaching math. She was critically evaluating the math materials and allowing her professional decisions and knowledge to determine teaching strategies for math. Anya assumed responsibility for doing whatever she needed to do in order to make math lessons meaningful for her first graders.

Transitioning students and the impact on their learning.

During their various field experiences as education majors, preservice teachers often observe students working in small groups, particularly during guided reading and word work lessons. Many teachers in elementary classrooms place students in groups according to “levels” that are often determined by a standardized assessment. In recent years, students are transitioned from classroom to classroom for “Response to

Intervention” lessons, commonly referred to as RTI. Anya questioned putting first graders into groups, and in particular, she questioned the practice of moving groups of children from teacher to teacher for short periods throughout the day. She noted the success her host teacher had in teaching the word work lessons to the entire class and how the students enjoyed the kinds of activities her host planned. From Anya’s perspective, whole class instruction was working. Anya had recently attended a presentation by a group of teachers who ability group children for word work, grouping that involved moving students to various classrooms and with different teachers. Anya questioned the benefits of so much transitioning and added, “It seemed interesting, but it also sounded hectic. . . too much going on.” Anya was noticing and reflecting on the idea of ability grouping. She was considering the impact that transitioning might have on students and she questioned the effectiveness of this kind of instructional practice. She also had the opportunity to observe a teacher who was not transitioning students and instead provided whole-class instruction. Anya was not ready to accept the practice of putting students into groups just because it seemed to be common-place in many schools.

Having fun learning and the classroom-learning environment.

Anya shared an insight into how children learn when she talked about the fun students had during a recent science unit she taught. She related her story in response to my question asking her to identify “Ah-ha” moments from her OSSYP year. Anya described the science unit as “being the most fun for me and the most fun for the kids.” Sharing the story about the nature walk that was part of the unit, Anya suggested that it might be a good idea to check the weather forecast before starting out! She explained that the days prior to the walk had been nice, but beginning the day of the walk, it rained and

kept raining for days after that. Other than the rainy day walk, the students had enjoyed learning about plants and organisms. They planted seeds and observed and recorded plant growth. Anya surmised, “Sometimes I can trick them into thinking they are having fun. . . if they are not having fun, they are not learning. . .” By then, Anya had even heard a student comment, “Math is more fun than recess!” (Interview Four).

Anya’s insights into the importance of the classroom-learning environment were based on her observations of teachers at various grade levels early in her OSSYP experience. She realized the impact a teacher’s positive attitude and support for students played in their learning. During the first interview, Anya mentioned a particular teacher who left quite a positive impression on Anya (Fall Interview). A year later, in an email, Anya shared more information about this teacher and her classroom:

I remember really enjoying being in that classroom, especially because I had just finished a rotation in a miserable second grade classroom. . . So then I began my rotation in this third grade classroom and the teacher was great. She never had to raise her voice and the students had great routines and expectations. I also really liked her attitude toward teaching because she was more experienced and a little older, but still loved her job. It gave me hope since she wasn't "burned out" on teaching. She also volunteered to take on tasks at school and was so dedicated. I think it rubbed off on her students because she had a great class (Email April 14, 2011).

Wishing She Had Taken More Risks: Theme Five

“I wish I had taken more risks” (Final Interview).

I asked Anya what she might do differently during her OSSYP year. She responded:

I would have tried to do more daring or risky projects. . . I kind of always felt like I was doing just what I thought my host wanted me to do. That's the only thing. I kind of tried to have the year. . .to do my best and build good relationships with the staff and be involved, just because I wanted to make a good impression and get the most out of the year. . . I guess I could have taken more risks with my teaching (Final Interview).

By the time Anya assumed responsibilities as a student teacher, she was more confident and had reached out to other teachers for support, especially the school's mentor teacher. She had not, however, felt comfortable in initiating her own unit of study and doing things "her way." Several factors perhaps caused Anya to feel uncomfortable taking more risks and initiating her own ideas. In the back of her mind were her mother's reminders to "listen to what your host teacher tells you to do." Initially, Anya was looking for feedback and support from her host teacher that she believed she was not initially getting. Perhaps her desire to take more risks in her teaching along with increased confidence in herself will make it possible for Anya to take risks in the future. The first step for Anya was acknowledging how she might have done things differently (Final Interview).

Anya's Circular Ending

"I know I want to teach, I just don't know how. This year was learning to teach the way I want to teach" (Final Interview).

Anya began her OSSYP year knowing she wanted to be a teacher but believing she “didn’t know how to teach.” At the end of the year, Anya realized she had not only learned *how to teach*, she had learned *how she wanted to teach*. She commented, “This year was learning to teach the way I want to teach” (Final Interview). For Anya, how she teaches will be determined by her careful observations of her students and how she applies what she sees to her teaching. She will internalize students’ responses to her teaching, implement revised plans, reflect on these, and then make instructional decisions in the best interests of her students. Supporting her decision making process is Anya’s stronger confidence in herself.

Teaching, for Anya, is about the intrinsic rewards that result from her successes in engaging students in meaningful learning. Also an intrinsic reward for her are the relationships she established with her students. Anya knew she had become a teacher when, in her words, “She knew she cared so much.” Her teaching identity was further affirmed through her realization that she had learned “how *she* wants to teach.”

Anya’s Poem: Becoming a Teacher

Anya Becomes a Teacher
 I didn’t know what it was going to be like-
 When I was learning
 I wondered how I could possibly do it.
 I don’t know if I’m doing it right
 I’m scared they are not going to learn
 I go over it the second time and think
 This is not helping.
 What will I do differently?
 They love the books we read
 Love reading to each other.
 Teaching them to write fairytales
 is all about reading fairy tales with them.
 Learning to teach reading along with my host
 visualizing, story maps, characters, and
 problem and solution.

Just talking about it. . .

It's stuff they do already

It's pointing it out that's important.

One little boy

discouraged easily, refuses to do his work

avoids by doing something else

crying and getting upset.

Doesn't think he can do it.

Doesn't have any confidence.

Then, a "3" on his writing!

He returns to his kindergarten teacher

to share his story.

A defining moment in my teaching?

Knowing I care so much; care about teaching them

I want to do more.

I want to be there because of the kids.

Greatest lesson from the year?

How much my relationships with them changed.

It's all just getting to know each other.

It mattered when I showed them how much I care.

Sharing things about one another

a class puzzle; each student a piece

They put the pieces together.

When the community has its bumps

I model for them; model respect.

In my own classroom I will take risks

try more things

Build good relationships.

I learned how *I* want to teach.

LeAnn's Stories

LeAnn remained after class the day of our final exam in the reading methods course I taught. The exam and the course were her last as a college junior. The day also marked the end of college life as LeAnn had known it. She would spend her senior year as a OSSYP student in a school district located in a community outside of the town where the university was located. Still in the back of my mind as we stood in the doorway was my wish to see LeAnn laugh, relax, and show signs of easing up on the high expectations she placed on herself. During our conversation, I asked LeAnn how her science final, the exam she had taken in the class period prior to my class, had gone. LeAnn crossed her eyes in a way that only LeAnn can, (her beautiful, big brown eyes added to the effect), and created an expression that clearly conveyed the message, “The science test was awful!” Taken completely by surprise at her out-of-character response to my question, I remember laughing. . . and laughing. It was at that moment I knew, “LeAnn will be OK; she *does* know how to laugh, and how to laugh at herself.”

Near the end of the same semester LeAnn had volunteered to participate in my pilot study. During the interview for the study, LeAnn talked about the factors she believed were important in forming her identity as a preservice teacher. This initial interview was the beginning of my getting to know a very different LeAnn than the one I knew from class. LeAnn and I continued to work together during her OSSYP year as she was by then a participant in my dissertation study. I continued to work with LeAnn again the following year when she was a Teaching Fellow and I served as a liaison to her school for the Fellows program.

LeAnn becomes Miss Mishler

LeAnn commented early in the OSSYP year that she did not view herself as a compassionate teacher in the classroom, and at the time, I tended to agree with her. The following year, as a Teaching Fellow, I visited LeAnn's fourth grade class on a regular basis and continued my conversations with her. The LeAnn I saw in the fourth grade classroom was very passionate about her teaching and she demonstrated great compassion for her students.

A few days before the start of her year as a Teaching Fellow, I visited LeAnn's classroom at her request. I recorded my thoughts from the visit:

This over-achieving, perfectionist, always-serious, and in LeAnn's terms, "very competitive" first year teacher was bubbling with excitement as she showed me around her classroom. The ocean theme was colorful and tastefully carried out, and the ocean theme was integrated into meaningful learning activities for the students. LeAnn was not into the cute and fluff seen in some classrooms. This former academic scholar who graduated with honors was quite possibly more excited about the approaching first day of school than all of her fourth graders combined (Research journal, August, 2010).

Three months before this visit to her classroom, LeAnn and I met for the final interview of my study, an interview that continued for two hours. As with all her interviews, it appeared from the transcripts that a large portion of our conversation was not directly related to my study. However, two things were happening as a result of the lengthy conversations; one, I came to know LeAnn far beyond the "Perfect Student with a 4.0 GPA." Second, I discovered as I read her transcripts that many of LeAnn's "side-trips"

and off-task conversations came full circle when she returned to the initial topic. At that point, LeAnn shared amazing insights into herself and into teaching and learning.

Why I Share These Stories

Five themes highlight LeAnn's stories of her evolving teaching identity. First are the stories that reflect the theme of family and community influences on her. The second theme is seen in her perspectives on the "big picture" of the entire school community. Third is the theme found in the stories in which LeAnn makes reference to high needs students and students with learning disabilities. The fourth theme reveals LeAnn's awareness of ethic and moral issues she encountered during the year. The fifth theme is LeAnn's construction of her teacher knowledge.

Family and Community Influences: Theme One

"I love to read because my mom read with me" (Pilot study).

Growing up in rural Midwest; Family and community. LeAnn's memories of reading with her mom from the time she was a young child are vivid and detailed. The books she and her sister shared were kept on a huge, wobbly old bookshelf at the top of the basement steps. LeAnn remembered her mother telling her how she read the same book over and over again when it happened to be one of her favorite titles. LeAnn remembered reading to her mom one particular evening and being so tired she could hardly stay awake. She continued to read until her mother made her stop and go to bed. LeAnn adds, "I loved to read because my mom read with me." Among LeAnn's childhood memories are trips to the public library with her mom and sister. She remembers checking out, in her words, "piles of books" to read in the car on the long trips to visit her grandparents in Illinois. When I asked LeAnn why she believes he

Mother viewed reading as being so important for LeAnn and her sister, she responded, “She reads all the time too” (Pilot study).

LeAnn’s childhood school experiences.

LeAnn’s first story of her school memories was from preschool, and in this story she noted, “I was a pre-school drop-out.” LeAnn explained that the preschool program left her unchallenged. Since she was a picky eater, she didn’t like the food at preschool. Her parents eventually allowed her to stop attending preschool.

Growing up in a small rural community, LeAnn and her family were friends with her teachers outside of school. Many of the people with whom LeAnn interacted at school were friends from church and from the community. In addition, LeAnn’s mom worked as a teachers’ aid at the elementary school she attended. LeAnn has fond memories of helping her mom with her mom’s schoolwork at home.

LeAnn’s memories of her first grade teacher included the teacher selecting books for her to read, and each time LeAnn returned a book, the teacher gave her another to read. LeAnn wrote brief reports about the books, reports that included the title, name of the author, and one or two sentences about the story. Her first grade teacher supported LeAnn’s reading by providing reading materials for her at school as well as books for her to take home, and LeAnn remembered the teacher selecting books that challenged her and supported her progress in reading. She valued the fact that the teacher was carefully selecting the books especially for her.

LeAnn’s second grade teacher, a family friend who attended the same church, influenced LeAnn’s decision to become a teacher. It was this teacher who commented as LeAnn was helping in the classroom, “Someday you’re going to make a great teacher.”

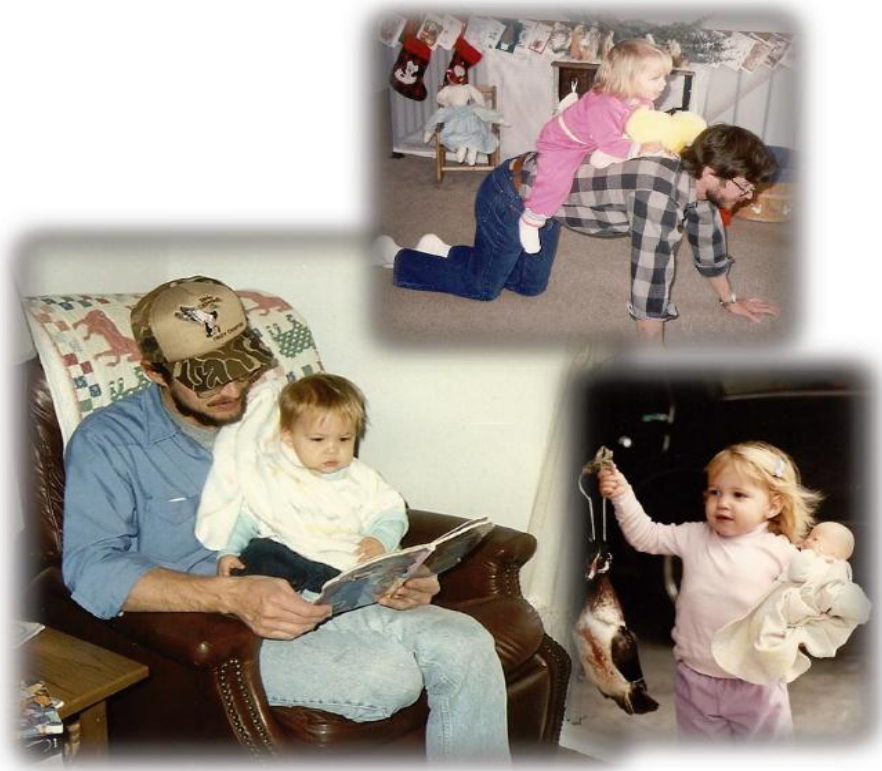
(Pilot Study). A year after the pilot study, LeAnn reiterated her thinking that her second grade teacher was a major factor in her decision to become a teacher. Also influencing her decision to become a teacher was LeAnn's high school experience working in classrooms as part of the CYV (Community Youth Volunteer) program. As a cadet teacher, LeAnn worked directly with students and viewed this experience as "probably having a lot to do with my wanting to be a teacher (Final Interview).

Because LeAnn completed college course work while in high school, she earned enough college credits to become a substitute teacher. Substituting experiences helped LeAnn establish confidence in her abilities to be successful in the classroom, confidence that was also a factor in her desire to become a teacher. By the time LeAnn entered a teacher education program, she had positive experiences as a student, a range of teaching experiences, and being raised in an environment influenced by her family's close ties to school personnel.

Her dad's and uncle's influences on LeAnn.

LeAnn describes herself as stubborn, strong-willed, and outspoken. She attributes these traits to her Dad. Just like her father, LeAnn had problems with authority figures, especially when she believed those figures were being unfair and out of line. These traits got her benched during high school sports events. At the end of her senior year in high school, LeAnn was voted "Miss Outspoken." Her close relationship with her father was apparent throughout all her interviews. She spoke of the father-daughter tradition of going hunting on the first day of deer season as "the high-light of my year." She was devastated when she learned her OSSYP teaching schedule would cause her to miss the first day of hunting season. Her final project for a writing course at the university was a

picture book LeAnn created about her experiences with her father. Excerpts from her picture book follow.

LaAnn's Picture Book about Dad*Figure 3**Page from Picture Book*

As I sat and pondered all the wonderful moments that came to life within my mind, there existed the constant presence of my father. Though the memories may become unclear and the photographs may fade...

I'll always remember Dad and I together.

Figure 4

A difficult time for LeAnn in high school was during her uncle's battle with cancer and his subsequent death. LeAnn was close to her uncle and considered his death one of the most critical moments in her life. She recalled her uncle as "ornery and a jokester." She described him as very supportive and said he often told her how proud he was of her accomplishments. Her memory of receiving the news of his death remained clear. At the time, LeAnn was helping in the classroom of her mother's close friend and was told, "LeAnn, you need to go find your mom. She needs to see you." LeAnn acknowledged that her uncle's death made her stop and rethink her priorities and what it was she wanted out of life (Pilot Study).

LeAnn's decision to go into teaching was met with mixed reactions from members of her family and her extended family. Some family members, including her mom and dad, and family friends told her she was "too smart" to be teacher and that she was wasting her brain. LeAnn added, "Three of the people who told me I was too smart to be a teacher are educators!" (Pilot study). Their comments apparently left LeAnn undeterred as she pursued a career in teaching.

LeAnn's Perspectives on Her Competitive Nature

LeAnn believed her competitive nature developed during her early school years as she grew determined to "do better than her sister" who was four years older than LeAnn. LeAnn described herself as very competitive and said she had not fully realized the extent of this competitiveness until after her sister left for college. Once her sister left home, LeAnn remembers talking with her by phone and crying because she couldn't figure out why they hadn't been closer when her sister lived at home. LeAnn said her competitiveness began with her sister and continued well into her own college years.

Seeing how accomplished her sister was, LeAnn wanted to do even better. She remembered how pleased her parents were when her sister did well. Motivated by the determination to do better than everyone else, LeAnn was always at the top of her classes in high school. When her sister graduated from college in three and a half years, LeAnn was determined to graduate in less time and was able to do so (Pilot Study).

LeAnn's decision to participate in the FFA [Future Farmers of America] program in high school provided opportunities for her to compete, and one incident may have been a turning point for LeAnn in her drive to accomplish more than others. She joined FFA because her sister had been in FFA, because the program at her school was strong, and LeAnn held two of the teachers in high regard. The FFA program provided opportunities for LeAnn to learn leadership skills and many of the local, state and national competitions in which LeAnn participated involved her in team efforts. In one of her stories of her FFA experiences, LeAnn shared a memory that seemed to contradict her competitive drive to "do better than everyone else." During one of the team competitions, LeAnn's low score had the potential of eliminating her entire team from receiving any awards. LeAnn talked with her FFA teacher and shared her concerns and frustrations that she might cause the team's loss. Devastated by her low score, she viewed the situation in terms of how it could impact the entire team. In this situation, winning was no longer about LeAnn; she was concerned for the entire team.

LeAnn's Competitiveness as an OSSYP Student

During our final interview in May, I provided LeAnn a copy of the questions I had written specifically for her relating to our previous conversations. She selected the

question she wanted to begin with and added, “I like this one. It talks about my mentioning that I was very competitive.” She shared:

In OSSYP, it [the competitiveness] really pushed me to work harder and have better lessons and be more creative and just try to outshine the other people. . . I mean in a competitive way. . . I’m going to try to be a Teaching Fellow here [at the school where she was currently teaching] and I’m going to need to get a job somewhere. I have to have something to show what I can do (Final Interview).

LeAnn continued to talk about how being competitive impacted her OSSYP experience. She reflected on her interactions with Joan, one of the other OSSYP students at her school.

It was more of keeping up with Joan. She’s wonderful. She’s very, very creative. She’s always doing new things with her second graders. A lot of the things she was doing didn’t really apply to my fourth graders, so it just kind of pushed me to think on a different level, and decide how I could make it work with my students. . . It’s not only planning lessons based on hoping to keep up with Joan, but looking too at where my kids are struggling and what is missing and what are they not getting out of my teaching (Final Interview).

LeAnn realized that listening to Joan’s ideas and talking with her supported LeAnn in taking her own teaching to another level. She perhaps did not realize the change at the time, but LeAnn’s wanting to be better than everyone else had moved her to understanding that her interactions with others had the potential of making it possible for her to bring out the best in herself. As she continued to talk about her perspectives on her competitiveness, LeAnn explored her thinking and appeared to come to a new

understanding of her competitive nature. She shared that she always feels she can do better. LeAnn believed she will be a great teacher, but she still wondered sometimes if she, in her words, “was doing enough.”

By the time of her final interview in June, LeAnn had been accepted into the Teaching Fellows program for the following year. She wondered aloud if part of wanting to be a Teaching Fellow had to do with a certain kind of personality. She felt that those entering the Fellows program want to do much more for their students because of a belief that is always possible to do more (Final interview).

Not only was LeAnn returning to the same school as a Teaching Fellow, but Joan was returning also. Reflecting on her opportunity to continue working with Joan, LeAnn noted: “Working with Joan will push me to work harder and be more creative. . . there is always going to be someone like that, or hopefully there will be someone that I can strive to work as hard as they do” (Final Interview). Reflecting on our conversations about her competitiveness, LeAnn remarked: “It’s [her being competitive] not over the top. It doesn’t drive what I do. It’s more about making myself better than it is about wanting to be better than someone else” (Final interview).

LeAnn’s Revelations about Herself

Responding to the question, “What revelations about yourself have surprised you?” LeAnn shared that she does not see herself as “super nurturing.” Laughing as she made the comment, LeAnn noted, “I would rather have the older ones I can joke around with instead of the ones that are going to hang on my leg and cry down my sleeve.” In her words, LeAnn said she “fell in love” with the students during her rotation time in fourth grade and added, “I could make jokes with them and have a good time. I was in my

element.” LeAnn did not know at the time that her student teaching experience would be with fourth graders.

LeAnn’s thinking about “the little ones” changed after her rotation time in a first grade classroom. Observing how smoothly the classroom ran and how the children did well in following routines and instructions, LeAnn was less emphatic about not wanting to be in the primary grades. In this first grade classroom, LeAnn valued the teacher’s high expectations for her students, and she noted, “Nothing was accepted on the basis of ‘they’re just first graders’- she expected a lot from them ” (Interview Two).

LeAnn’s interest in math instruction.

I knew of LeAnn’s strong interest in teaching math some day from my interview with her during the pilot study. She shared, “I could be completely happy teaching in a middle school with sixth graders doing sixth grade math.” Teaching middle school math is an option if she passed the PRAXIS [test required of beginning teachers in order to qualify for licensure], something she considered doing in the future. In her final interview, just after completing her student teaching, LeAnn commented, “There are still days I wonder whether I am where I want to be or whether I’d rather be teaching math. I think I will always feel this way” (Final Interview).

LeAnn’s first experience in teaching math came during her junior year in high school. Her college algebra teacher suggested that two senior boys struggling with the course ask LeAnn to tutor them. LeAnn spoke with pride as she told her story about “helping two older guys.” Tutoring two high school students in math added to the list of teaching experiences LeAnn had prior to entering a teacher education program.

An interest in pursuing a graduate degree in math education was supported by one of LeAnn's instructors, Dr. Tanner. As her instructor for the math methods course her junior year, Dr. Tanner suggested that LeAnn consider pursuing a PhD in math education. LeAnn also spoke with a doctoral student about a graduate program in math education. Two additional math education instructors told LeAnn, "You have no idea how valuable it would be for a school to have an elementary school teacher who wants to talk about math and to do math" (Interview Three).

Observing classroom math instruction.

Perhaps because of her keen interest in math instruction, LeAnn noted her concerns about some of the math lessons and instructional practices she observed in various classrooms. In one classroom, the teacher simply played a DVD from the math program the school had just implemented. LeAnn also recognized the discrepancy between what she learned in her math methods course as opposed to what she saw in many classrooms; children were doing worksheets with little or no opportunities to use math manipulatives. She shared an observation of a kindergarten classroom where students were expected to manipulate two full sheets of paper taken from a workbook, an expectation she viewed as unrealistic for this age group. LeAnn was using what she learned in her course work about hands on math and a constructivist approach to math instruction while observing in classrooms. Combining what she had learned with what she was observing with her passion for math, she was molding her beliefs about math instruction.

Knowing herself as a teacher. LeAnn's favorite days at school were the days when she was substitute teaching.

As a substitute, she had the freedom to change her mind about what she was doing and in the midst of a lesson, in her words, “change things up.” Revising her lesson plan often paid off for LeAnn and her students and in a note of confidence, she added, “I know I’m not going to screw up the kids. I know they’ll be fine. . . . If I try something and it doesn’t work, they’ll bounce back.” As a beginning teacher, LeAnn was already learning to reflect *during* a lesson she was teaching and in turn take steps to revise her plans in the moment of teaching. LeAnn recognized the importance of observing her students and their actions during a lesson and to make the necessary changes right then in order to make a lesson work best for the students (Final interview).

LeAnn was self-conscious when someone else was in her classroom while she was teaching. She did have the opportunity to “do her own thing” one day when her host teacher was out of the classroom and was gone much longer than expected. LeAnn was left to improvise, and thinking of something that would work well with her students, she explained, “We got the dictionary out and just started playing with words.” LeAnn realized her students were fully engaged in the “spur of the moment” vocabulary activity that evolved and reported that her students had come up with amazing ideas during the lesson. LeAnn recognized the difference between teaching the content and teaching her students. She was building her confidence to implement teaching strategies in the moment of teaching.

LeAnn suggested the need for allowing student teachers to be independent and left alone in the classroom to carry out teaching responsibilities. Her host teacher, with

few exceptions, remained in the classroom the entire time LeAnn was teaching. LeAnn remarked, “I learn the most about myself when there is no one to back me up,” and she continued:

It made me nervous when she [her host] teacher was always in there and I felt like if something wasn't going well I was more reluctant to change it up because I thought I should stick with the original plan and figure out a way to make it work. But then when I was subbing, I realized, “Oops, this is not working. We're going to do something else.” I probably would have learned more about myself as a teacher and I would've been able to see more of my teaching identity if she hadn't been in there all the time (Final Interview).

Opportunities to be left alone in the classroom helped her grow as a teacher and LeAnn realized the moments when she felt free to “change things up.” She felt the freedom to respond to her students in the moment as opposed to being bound to a prepared lesson plan.

LeAnn's Perspectives on the School Community: Theme Two

“In the beginning I thought the school had a rainbow over it” (Interview Four).

Preservice elementary education majors receive their school placements for their OSSYP experience at the end of their junior year. LeAnn, in her words, “was devastated” when she learned she was not going to be in the school district in the town where the university is located. Instead, she would complete her OSSYP year in a small, rural district about twenty miles away. LeAnn remembers thinking, “This is going to be awful,” and adding to her disappointment was learning it was a 45 minutes drive to the school, or an hour and a half every day. However, during her initial visit to the school at

the end of her junior year, LeAnn met the teacher who would be her mentor the following year. This initial visit to her new school marked the beginning of a change in LeAnn's more positive attitude.

New teacher academy and literacy course.

In their initial conversation during LeAnn's first visit to the school, Marsha, the mentor for the OSSYP students, told LeAnn about the New Teacher Academy, a three-day professional development program provided for all teachers new to the district. During her final interview at the end of her OSSYP year, LeAnn reported that the New Teacher Academy helped her learn procedures and school expectations and provided the opportunity for what LeAnn termed "phenomenal conversations" about teaching. LeAnn added, "We weren't just watching somebody do PowerPoints." During the academy, LeAnn learned, among other things, the practical aspects of how to begin a school year (Interview One).

All OSSYP students enroll in a teaching of literacy course during their OSSYP year. In LeAnn's situation, the course was taught by her mentor and the class met at the school. There were only four student teachers and her mentor in the class, making it possible to conduct the class like a group discussion. LeAnn made references throughout the year to how much she was learning about the teaching of reading and writing, and added, "Patricia told real stories about real kids" in the class. Since her mentor had been a classroom teacher until assuming her position as mentor, Marsha shared stories that put learning how to teach literacy in the context of her own classroom experiences.

Grade-level team support.

During the rotation times at the various grade levels, LeAnn worked with grade-level teams and found this support to be significant in helping with lesson planning. The second grade team in particular worked well together. Despite the diversity in age and experience and teaching styles among the team members, LeAnn noted how well this group functioned. The team had devised ways of dividing up the workload, and in particular, the work they were doing on writing questions for the GLE [Grade Level Expectations]. There were few negative comments among the team members, and LeAnn added, “They’re so supportive and generous and gracious when working together” (Interview Three). The second grade team served as a model for LeAnn in how a team of teachers can and should collaborate to the benefit of both teachers and students.

PLC’s: professional learning communities.

The term “Professional Learning Communities” is applied in many schools to any systematic way the school might organize groups of teachers and staff members to meet and work together in their efforts to reach goals for school improvement. The ways in which PLCs are organized and facilitated are unique to each school with some schools following more structured guidelines than others. In LeAnn’s school, the PLCs functioned at two levels; First, the teachers at each grade level were considered grade level PLC teams. Second, the school’s focus on improving school performance and raising test scores was carried out through PLC meetings that involved the entire staff. In this school, the staff PLC meetings were facilitated by a professional brought in from outside the district.

During the fall semester, the grade level PLCs focused on creating common assessments for the Grade Level Expectations. From LeAnn's perspective, the common assessments were not confining because individual teachers made their own instructional decisions based on what they believed worked best for each group of students. Indeed, LeAnn felt these meetings helped her learn the curriculum, provided her instructional ideas for lessons, and helped her gain knowledge of the Grade Level Expectations.

From LeAnn's perspective, the PLC process did not work nearly as well at the staff level as it did for the grade level teams. LeAnn believed the concept behind PLCs was great but that the process had just turned into paper work at the staff level. She shared:

During the staff meetings, I just sit and shake my head and watch it happen. It's filling out papers and filling in things the way they (outside facilitator) want and we are still going to do things the same way. . . The faculty meetings where those things are occurring I just sit and fiddle with things because I get really frustrated. I feel like if it were run by insiders . . . and we did it ourselves, that would work.

We do know what works for our kids and our school. (Interview Four)

A year after this interview, LeAnn reviewed the stories I was writing about her and revisited her thinking about PLCs. She wondered if staff members keep questioning the process that someone outside the school laid out for them, then why can't the teachers not make it their own? She wondered if the PLC plans should function in ways that work for them since the teachers are the ones who implement the plans? LeAnn believes that perhaps some good ideas may result from the process, but in the meantime, hours and hours of time are spent, staff discussions turn into arguments, and teachers still end up

filling out forms according to someone else's guidelines. Hearing the facilitator tell the staff how everyone would share her opinions openly during the PLC process, LeAnn concludes, "Is fine, but behind closed doors people are going to talk anyhow." From LeAnn's perspective, teachers were not open and honest in staff meetings and once "behind closed doors," there was discontent among staff members.

LeAnn's perspectives on the staff PLC meetings were negatively impacting on what was initially her high opinion of the school. As the year unfolded, LeAnn was seeing the less-than-positive aspects of the school. In February, she commented:

It's funny how, in the beginning of the year, I felt like there was this bright rainbow over the school, and I felt like everything was working so well. Now, getting into it more and having a bigger role, there are holes everywhere. . . There are issues everywhere that I didn't have any idea about.

LeAnn was aware of what was happening around her, and although this awareness was raising negative perspectives about some aspects of the school, she was also considering what was going well and asking questions regarding "how to do it better."

School leadership and culture.

LeAnn viewed the building principal as appearing very professional at staff meetings and adhering to the PLC guidelines. Outside the staff meetings, however, the principal seldom visited classrooms or interacted with teachers. Students sent to the office because of behavior problems soon returned to class with no apparent consequence for their behaviors. LeAnn believed many teachers on the staff did not feel supported by the principal. From her perspective, the principal attempted to be buddies with all the

students and she believed this approach coming from an administrator does not work well for students (Interview Three).

The same school LeAnn described at the beginning of the year as having “a rainbow over it” was by mid-year, in her words, “Not as glory filled as I first thought.” By late Spring, LeAnn’s thinking about the school came full circle. Her decision to apply for the Teaching Fellows program was based, to a great extent, on the strong possibility she could remain at the school the following year. She chose to look past the negatives and find the positives, and she realized by the end of the year how much she learned from her colleagues and from the learning opportunities the school provided. Ultimately, LeAnn did remain at the school the following year as a Teaching Fellow and continued to work closely with the mentor.

Instruction for High-needs Students: Theme Three

“They weren’t just filling out a worksheet. . . the lesson was very purposeful and so gratifying to watch. . . I never experienced a special education lesson anything like this” (Interview Four).

During her OSSYP experience, LeAnn observed and worked with high-needs students, including students with learning disabilities and behavior problems. She initiated the stories about these students and talked about her interactions with some of the high-needs learners. LeAnn shared her stories without any prompts from the interview questions regarding special needs students.

Concerns for lack of instructional support.

LeAnn’s first story involved her interactions with a high-needs student early in the school year while she was completing her two-week rotation in a third grade

classroom. The incident occurred while the students were using class time to catch up on pages they had missed in their math workbooks. LeAnn noticed a boy crying and holding his hand over the workbook page. She sat down beside the child and saw that he was on page 6 of the workbook. The teacher's expectation was that all the pages up to page 50 be completed. The child told LeAnn, "I can't do it. I can't get it done." LeAnn sat with him and helped him complete four pages. She remembers thinking to herself, "He still has 46 pages to do." LeAnn wondered if perhaps the situation had simply been overlooked, and then decided this had been going on for a long time. She acknowledged this child wasn't having a few bad days; there were many bad days for him. Upset by what she had seen, LeAnn shared, "This teacher let him sit there and let it go. . . It's not like she didn't know [he needed help]" (Interview Three).

Near the end of the work time, the teacher approached LeAnn while she was still sitting with the child. The teacher informed LeAnn the student needed to do the work himself since his score provided baseline data. LeAnn remembered not knowing how to respond to the teacher, but she does remember thinking that based on the child's progress in the workbook, the teacher was not seeing what the child was capable of doing. In addition to his struggles with math, this child was in a classroom in which the behaviors of some of the students were, in LeAnn's term, "just wild and the room was often in chaos." LeAnn had seen the child, during times of classroom chaos, get under his desk and sit there. LeAnn concluded: "It breaks my heart" (Interview Two).

A different observation in a Special Education classroom made quite an impression on LeAnn and left her with a positive feeling about the instruction she observed. Recalling her times in special education classes during her prior field

experiences as a college junior, LeAnn remembered classes where students were simply given help in completing worksheets they brought from their classrooms. On this day, LeAnn observed the teacher providing math and science instruction in lessons planned specifically for these students. All of the students' work was reviewed with the students as they worked toward goals they had helped set. She quoted the teacher as saying, "I love what I do." Through her observations of teachers providing a variety of special education services, LeAnn saw the range in the quality of instruction provided by different teachers. On this particular day, LeAnn watched a teacher who was providing purposeful instruction and a teacher who set the tone for a positive learning environment.

Midway through the year, I asked LeAnn what she considered the best teaching lesson she had observed. In response, she described her observation of a speech and language lesson the previous day. The teacher was working with four students including an MR student who was brought over from the high school specifically for this class. The teacher played a language board game with the students and helped them write in their journals. LeAnn, describing the classroom, commented, "It was phenomenal; I really enjoyed it and had never worked with someone like that. . . The lesson was very purposeful. This particular experience left LeAnn with a positive impression of the instruction being provided to special needs students and at the same time allowed her to interact with high needs students (Interview Three).

Challenged by difficult behaviors.

Because her host teacher taught math for another fourth grade class in addition to her own, LeAnn taught two math lessons each day while student teaching. The group of students coming to LeAnn from the other classroom included several students with major

behavior problems, each having the ability to disrupt the entire class. On the evening of one of our interviews, LeAnn remarked: “That class was a zoo today.” While her host teacher was with one of the students, another one was picking up his desk and hitting his head on it and rolling around in the corner. Even though the visiting class has 15 more minutes of math time, LeAnn said their home class got far more accomplished. She wondered how the other classroom teacher gets anything done with so many disruptions. LeAnn continued talking about this particular group of children and said that she and her host teacher dealt with students who were often defiant and argumentative. Sometimes, two of the boys stood in front of the room arguing, screaming and yelling at each other before class and neither she nor her host teacher could put an end to their behavior. The boys would eventually stop, but in the meantime, the start of class had been delayed. LeAnn was experiencing the extreme differences that can exist between two groups of children at the same grade level and in the same school, and she was witness to lost instructional time because of disruptive behaviors (Interview Three).

Conflicting approaches to working with high-needs students.

LeAnn was aware of the complexities of providing instructional support for students with learning disabilities and other students with special needs. She was aware of the differences in instruction being provided, some students simply receiving help in completing work sheets brought from the classroom, while other students were engaged in meaningful lessons. LeAnn expressed concern over the lack of communication between classroom teachers and special education teachers. The classroom teachers, from her perspective, had little understanding of what their students actually did in special education classes. One special education teacher met with the OSSYP literacy class and

shared information about special education programs. LeAnn added, “She had a wealth of information to share with teachers but no one is asking her” (Interview Four).

Like most other districts in the area, LeAnn’s school had implemented a Response to Intervention (RTI) program in an effort to raise scores on the MAP [Mid-West Assessment Program] test. Reflecting on the school’s RTI program, LeAnn shared that in many cases, the students who needed the most help were working with the least qualified teachers. She wondered, “Why have the low kids been the ones pulled out to work with a teacher’s aid. . . they [the teacher’s aids] don’t know how to teach these kids. These kids should have the highest trained people” (Interview Four).

Struggles with Issues of Integrity and Ethics: Theme Four

“If you’re presenting five different methods in math at one time and saying you have to do each of these strategies and you have to be able to show it, it’s impossible for kids - it’s just not right - the kids are just lost” (Interview Two).

Fenstermacher (1990) suggests that “nearly everything a teacher does while in contact with students carries moral weight” (p. 135). The author believes that every time a teacher makes an instructional decision, responds to a student, or facilitates the resolution of a conflict, the teacher is engaging in a moral act. In their role as educators, teachers are in a position of authority and are therefore engaged in carrying out moral acts. During her interviews, LeAnn shared concerns about situations at school and often concluded, “It’s just not right.” Realizing it or not, LeAnn was addressing moral and ethical considerations when she questioned instructional practices (for the student working on math pages, the teacher was withholding instruction). She voiced concerns about how some staff members addressed students with disrespectful comments, and she

wondered about instruction that was not in the best interests of the students. LeAnn's teacher identity was evolving as she critically assessed the moral implications of these situations.

One story that resonated with LeAnn was actually told by another teacher. A student new to this teacher's class had shared the story about a previous teacher. The student shared that she had written something for her former teacher and then found the writing piece in the trashcan. LeAnn said the teacher's story made her think about something she had never considered before, and she wondered, "How devastated would a kid be when something like that happened?" (Interview Three).

The moral obligation to make knowledge accessible.

Goodlad (1990) considers it a moral obligation of the teacher to make new knowledge accessible to all students. Because of her interest in math, LeAnn often noted her observations of math lessons in various classrooms, lessons that were not meeting the needs of the students. She pointed out the impossibility of students understanding several new concepts at one time, especially when these were presented through direct instruction with little student interaction. She described lessons during which teachers used vocabulary terms the students did not understand. Sometimes too much terminology was presented in one lesson and she added that if too much is presented at one time, "It's impossible for the kids" (Interview One).

LeAnn faced a dilemma when asked by a staff member to record notes and report back on a particular student. The notes were to be recorded without the teacher's knowledge and would be used in evaluating a student with an Individual Learning Plan (IEP). Concerned by this request and not feeling comfortable documenting observations

without the teacher's knowledge, LeAnn talked with her mentor and asked her advice on how to handle the situation. Her mentor suggested that LeAnn talk directly with the special education teacher responsible for the IEP and remove herself from the situation, advice that LeAnn followed.

It was not until I read LeAnn's transcripts that I realized how many times she added, almost as an after-thought at the end of a story, "It's just not right." She seemed to use this phrase most often as it related to instructional practices that concerned her. She recognized instruction that was not making knowledge accessible to all students.

LeAnn Constructs Her Teacher Knowledge: Theme Five

"I don't need to ask them more questions. I just need to listen to them talk" (Interview Four).

The concept of teacher practical knowledge was first introduced in the 1980s. Prior to that time, teachers were seen as simply presenters of knowledge. The concept of teachers constructing knowledge specific to teaching had not been introduced to the field of education. Beginning in the 1980s, knowledge specific to teaching was recognized as unique to each teacher and as acquired through practice and reflection. This knowledge includes an understanding of how children learn, a repertoire of instructional strategies, and all other aspects of what a teacher knows about her classroom practices.

One aspect of LeAnn's newly acquired teacher knowledge was learning the importance of collaboration with other teachers, and during her OSSYP year, this collaboration was with grade-level teams. Working with her team, LeAnn learned that collaboration made her workload easier and more importantly, helped her become a better teacher. LeAnn took the ideas shared by the other teachers and adapted the ideas

to her own class. Working with other teachers introduced her to new perspectives and helped her gain an understanding of the over-all operation of the school.

Reflecting on her interactions with another OSSYP student led LeAnn to a new finding in her teacher knowledge. Seeing projects on display in the hallway from the other OSSYP teacher's class, LeAnn considered the benefits of having her students' work on display. When creating their own projects, LeAnn realized her students were processing their learning as individual students as opposed to many lessons that involved the entire class. Visual displays make it possible to for students to share individual thinking. She also reflected on the use of the Smartboards verses creating hand-written charts during class discussions. The charts remain on display after the lesson, but what was recorded on the Smartboard was gone when the lesson ended. LeAnn said, "The charts are up for a few days and they stick in their minds" (Interview Four).

Through observation of other teachers and in her efforts to create her own strategies, LeAnn was learning to work with high needs students. Something as simple as handing the child a ball of putty made it possible for him to continue his work. LeAnn's own experimenting with solutions for behavior problems in her math class had resulted in success when she began asking students to be her "buddy" for the day. The "buddy" helped pass out papers and supplies and helped in any way LeAnn needed. She was adding to her practical knowledge through observations of how another teacher handled a situation and at the same time developing her own strategies for working with behavior issues.

Critical to planning a lesson is the teacher's understanding of what students know at the end of a lesson in order to prepare for the next day. LeAnn was teaching math

before she assumed responsibilities as the student teacher. However, at that time, her host teacher was collecting the papers after the math lessons. LeAnn reflected, “I didn’t know where to go with my lesson the next day because I didn’t know if they understood what we did today.” Once she took over as student teacher, LeAnn had access to the students’ work and could review their work prior to the next day’s lesson. By not having their papers after teaching a lesson helped her realize the importance of seeing what students understand and do not understand before going onto the next day’s lesson (Interview Three).

LeAnn was constructing her teacher knowledge when she learned that breaking away from original lesson plans often benefited her students and made the lesson far more interesting. Seeing her host teacher “skip over” some lessons in the teacher’s manual gave LeAnn permission to “pick and choose” from the teaching materials. As she developed her own teacher knowledge, LeAnn was beginning to trust herself to make instructional decisions regarding the use of time and curriculum materials.

Observing students in both her classroom and in other classrooms helped LeAnn realize the critical importance of students being interested in what they are doing. Her fourth graders became enthused about social studies when LeAnn integrated literature about Missouri and famous Missourians into a unit on the state’s history. A history lesson about the Missouri Compromise taught by her host teacher gave LeAnn the opportunity to see a lesson that engaged the students in understanding a complex historical issue. Instead of the students reading about the Missouri Compromise, the students participated in a simulation activity in which they were citizens of the “North” or the “South.” LeAnn shared:

They really grasped the idea and ran with it and got excited about it. I felt after that some of the worksheets we did or little activities didn't help them learn. . . what they remembered was acting out the Missouri Compromise process (Interview Four).

Prior to student teaching, LeAnn believed it was necessary for students to complete worksheets or in some other way provide written documentation of what they had learned. Seeming to talk herself through her thinking process, LeAnn went on to say that she learns a great deal about her students by reading their journals, listening to their class discussions, and through conferencing with them. Her thinking aloud helped her come to the conclusion: "I feel like there is so much going on good that I see coming out of them and that to me is enough. I don't need a sheet of paper to show me what they learned" (Interview Three).

Near the end of our final interview, LeAnn commented, "I have all this knowledge in my head and all these things I've heard in classes. That's all fine and dandy, but until you try it with your kids - it has no meaning until you work with kids." LeAnn was constructing her own teacher knowledge as she, perhaps not realizing she was doing so, integrated her learning from university course work with what she was learning through her interactions with her students. Supporting the construction of her teacher knowledge were the collaborations with colleagues, including other OSSYP students.

LeAnn's Circular Ending

LeAnn's self-described competitive nature and her desire to "be the best" were initially a result of her wanting to please her parents. She remembers competing with her older sister while in elementary school and throughout high school and into her college

years. Then, during her OSSYP experience, LeAnn's competitiveness moved from her wanting to be "better than everyone else" to a realization that competition with others had the potential of bringing out the best in her. LeAnn realized that collaborative work with others for whom she had great respect challenged her to think about her own teaching in ways that were making her a better teacher. LeAnn was constructing her teaching identity when she acknowledged that working with strong teachers for whom she had great respect was helping her consider her own teaching in different ways and to find strategies that were more engaging to her students. She realized that in order to reach her goal of "being the best she could be" was different from being better than everyone else. LeAnn stated early in the study that she knew she was a good teacher; she wanted to learn how to be an even better teacher.

LeAnn's Poem: Becoming a Teacher

LeAnn Becomes a Teacher

I just want kids to have time to read
 They beg for SSR every week
 but it's almost always guided reading
 Never their own reading with their own books
 I don't care if it takes up guided reading time
 They are going to read.
 I don't know if I ever learned anything
 from those basals and worksheets.
 Did I learn from listening to my mom read to me?
 Absolutely!
 Did I love reading on my own?
 Absolutely!
 The conversations are deeper when I get really brave
 and think of some other weird way to do something
 the conversations come when we are in the middle of

something.

We do a one-eighty
 When they make unexpected connections.
 We think we have to point things out to them
 but they do it on their own
 My planning has changed

pull out--

Trying to think about the really big ideas I want them to
but then they do it on their own.

I've learn way more by having discussions with my kids,
by listening to them.
If I sit and read with them,
I will figure out what they are doing.
I'm not going to find that by having them circle in a bubble.
I become a teacher when I'm in there with my kids
Doing it day to day
I have all this knowledge in my head
And all the things I've heard in class
That's all fine and dandy--
Until you try it with your kids.
I handed him his 6s test
And he passed
He was so excited
and gave me this big ol' hug
That was one of the moments.
That's why I'm becoming a teacher.
Then someone asks
"So what do you do?"
I'm a teacher!

Lisa's Stories

On the last day of her student teaching, Lisa's fourth graders presented her with *The Important Thing about Miss Murray*. Using Margaret Wise Brown's (1990) *The Important Book* as a mentor text, each student created a page identifying something important about Miss Murray with her host teacher contributing the final page of the book. During her last interview in May, Lisa remembered this event as one of the "top three moments" of her student teaching experience.

As Lisa listened to the students read their pages from *The Important Thing about Miss Murray*, she realized how much the students knew about her and she shared, "not only how much they knew about me that I didn't know they knew, but what each student took away from having a relationship with me." Sharing her book with me several months later, Lisa noted several pages in particular. One boy had written, "The Important Thing about Miss Murray is that she loves Harry Potter." This student and Lisa connected through their love of the Harry Potter books. Another student connected with Lisa through their shared interest in music and the conversations they had about playing the piano (Final Interview). When Lisa gave me a copy of her book later, she reflected, "It was just everything that each child said reminded me so much of them, just showed me who they are, and how important it is to connect with every child" (Personal communication, September, 2010).

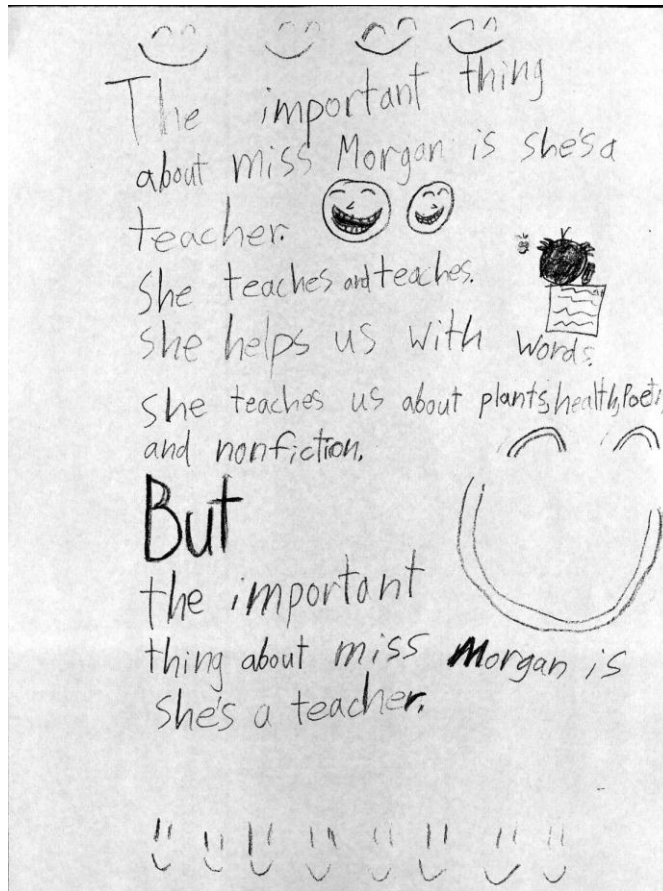


Figure 5 Page from "The Important Things about Miss Morgan"

I was reading the transcripts from Lisa's interviews at the time she gave me a copy of her *Important Book about Miss Murray*. As I read her transcripts, I realized I too was learning "The Important Things about Miss Murray." Just as Lisa made it possible for her students to get to know her, she made it possible for me to know her through the stories that she shared in her process of "becoming a teacher."

My Relationship with Lisa

My relationship with Lisa began when she was a junior enrolled in two classes I was teaching. The classes, social studies for teachers and a reading methods course, were offered in two consecutive semesters. As her instructor, I remember Lisa as a perfectionist, to the point that, along with other instructors, I was concerned about the

pressures she imposed on herself. She placed extraordinary expectations on herself, including the expectation to earn perfect scores on all her assignments. These assignments included written responses to assigned readings, major course projects, and creating a unit of study. At the time, Lisa was also dealing with serious health issues. I was not aware, however, of the extent of these health issues during the time she was enrolled in my classes.

The major project for the social studies class was to create a picture book based on the life stories of a person the student interviewed. Each student was asked to record an interview with “someone older.” The transcripts of these interviews provided the text for the picture book. Lisa’s book was based on an interview with her minister. I was initially concerned about the kind of stories she could record since her minister was not in the age group I suggested. I also believed that this open-ended assignment, without a clearly defined rubric, would be difficult for Lisa since she seemed to need very definitive guidelines. My concerns were unfounded. Lisa’s book, *The Secrets of the Bees*, was remarkable. Her minister sharing his story of caring for honeybees, and in the telling of his story, provided beautiful life metaphors. Lisa’s rendition of the story was masterful and her colored pencil illustrations were creative and beautifully integrated with the story. In creating her book, Lisa seemed to break through any restrictions she might have placed on herself and had surpassed my expectations for the projects.

Page from The Secrets of the Bees



Figure 6

Page from *“The Secrets of the Bees”*

Several weeks after completing her picture book for the social studies course, Lisa brought her final art project to class since it was due the following period. The assignment was to showcase an artist and create a display board to help elementary school students learn about a great artist. Instead of focusing on a single artist, Lisa created a project about the performing arts group Stomp. Just as with the project she did for my class, Lisa’s art project was unique and creative and clearly demonstrated great depth in her thinking.

From my perspective as her instructor, Lisa got along with her peers, but I sensed her closest ties were with friends she met through church and Christian organizations. Lisa spoke openly about her religious beliefs during our interviews and in particular about her close relationship with a friend from church, the friend to whom Lisa turned when she needed someone to talk with when she was dealing with stress or health issues.

As a result of our interviews, I viewed Lisa as more mature and more professional than many of her peers, and I believed the Lisa I learned to know from our interviews was different from the Lisa I knew in class. I saw past the high-achieving perfectionist and discovered a thoughtful preservice teacher with insights into how children learn that set her thinking apart from that of many of her peers. Unlike many of her classmates, Lisa never made negative comments about other instructors nor did she complain about assigned course work. It appeared that both in and out of class Lisa did not engage in “gripe sessions” nor did she dwell on the “Oh, I’m stressed” conversations I often overheard from some of her peers.

While it is common for many preservice teachers to want to know “how to do it,” Lisa showed an early understanding that learning to teach, to a great extent, comes with actual teaching and interactions with children. She spoke of trusting her intuitions and stated her belief that she “would figure it out for myself.” Lisa valued the connections she made with her students through the books she read aloud and through the poetry unit she implemented while student teaching. In reference to her future as a teacher, Lisa commented, “I just want to talk with them about books.”

From my perspective as her instructor and then as the researcher, the important thing about Lisa was her openness and honesty in allowing me to be part of her process of becoming a teacher. Because she clearly articulated her thinking in making her “becoming” process transparent, I was witness to a preservice teacher’s learning to teach that extended above and beyond acquiring knowledge of methods and an understanding of theory. It was as if Lisa was “walking the walk” of teaching even before she “talked the talk” of her teaching practices.

Why These Stories

The stories I share were selected based on the themes I identified from reading Lisa's transcripts. The first theme is found in Lisa's stories of her OSSYP experience. The second theme is Lisa's understanding of her own identity. A third theme, embodiment, is supported through the stories Lisa shared about how her physical wellbeing impacted her teacher identity. The fourth theme is found in the stories of her relationships with her students. The fifth theme is seen in the metaphors for her teaching. The sixth theme is Lisa's construction of her teaching knowledge during her OSSYP year.

The Positive Influences of Lisa's OSSYP Experience: Theme One

"I felt like a teacher when Shelly [host teacher] trusted me with the kids. Shelly really let me try out things and make my own mistakes--to realize what worked best for me" (Interview Four)

Lisa believed that Westview Elementary, the school where she completed her student teaching experience, had a more professional atmosphere than the other schools where she had served various field experiences as part of the teacher education program. Teachers in another school often wore sweat pants and t-shirts. The teachers at Westview, according to Lisa, dressed very professionally and had more pride in their school as compared to other schools. She added, "Both the teachers and students are proud to be at Westview." Lisa recognized from the beginning of the year that a part of the school culture at Westview was the number of staff members who had participated in the Teaching Fellows' program and had chosen to continue at the school (Interview Two).

The staff at Westview.

The staff at Westview had high expectations for all the students, expectations that were also high for the students who did not speak English. “Every teacher,” said Lisa, “is doing everything she can to make sure every student learns.” In response to my question asking if she observed teachers collaborating with each other, Lisa replied, “The collaboration among teachers is incredible” (Interview One). The collaborations in which Lisa participated were most often the grade-level team planning times.

Once she began her rotations at the various grade levels, Lisa observed a variety of teaching styles and noted, “Those teachers that had been Teaching Fellows stand out so much compared to those teachers that hadn’t been Fellows. Just their knowledge and their passion and their resources” (Interview Two). Two teachers who made the greatest impact on Lisa, a second grade teacher and also her host during second semester student teaching, had participated in the Teaching Fellows’ program. Lisa saw the former Fellows, and these two teachers in particular, as models for the kind of teacher she wanted to become.

Learning with Shelly, her host during student teaching.

Lisa’s relationship with her host teacher was key to her successful student teaching experience. She attributes much of what she learned to Shelly’s support and shared:

Shelly allowed me to be myself. She really asked my opinion on a lot of things instead of just telling me this is what we’re going to do and this is what I need you to do. She’d be like, “what do you think of this, what do you think would work best for the kids?”

Lisa did not initially understand Shelly's confidence in her and recalled saying to Shelly, "I can't believe that you are trusting me with the kids." (Final Interview)

Lisa noted Shelly's trust in her during our interview in February. She related that when Shelly asked her to teach the math lesson the following day, Lisa offered to email the lesson plan that evening for Shelly's approval. Shelly responded, "No, you will be fine." In this way, Shelly provided opportunities for Lisa to take risks, allowing her to make her own mistakes. Shelly told Lisa, "You're free to do different things . . . It's your classroom now, do what you want." Shelly's encouragement to "be herself," along with clearly stating her trust in Lisa, provided support that put Lisa on the path to finding her teaching self. (Interview Four)

Lisa Understands Her Own Identity: Theme Two

"I know who I am - I love where I am, and I am excited about where I'm going"

(Final Interview).

Lisa talked about the importance of letting herself "be a college kid for now" when I asked how she handles stress. During the pilot study, she shared:

I think for the past couple of years I have really learned to just let myself be 19 and 20. I am just really embracing everything. . . I don't have to worry about all things. Releasing stress is like letting myself be a kid again. I've watched almost every Disney movie there is, and when my friends and I watch a Disney movie, we call it 'Disney Therapy.' It's a great way to go back and be a kid. . . it's about being a kid again (Pilot Study).

During her final interview, Lisa compared “being herself” with allowing her students to do the same when she commented, “I’m just letting myself be a college kid right now and that’s what I what to try to do with my kids too.”

In October, still early in her OSSYP year, I asked Lisa what changes she was seeing in herself. She responded, “I see myself more as a professional. I value my own opinions and my own judgment calls more than I used to. I feel more comfortable with the students.” Lisa shared that at first it was “nerve racking” having someone watch her teach. A turning point in her concern about being observed by other teachers was an incident during her two-week rotation in a second grade classroom. Lisa related this story from her rotation time in Sarah Hall’s second grade classroom:

When I was with Sarah, I realized when I teach lessons in her class she was more concerned about what the kids were picking up on than what I was doing. I had the image that she was so focused on me when really she just wanted to know what her kids were doing (Interview Two).

This realization seemed to be the opportunity for Lisa to relieve herself of the stress of someone observing her. Sarah helped Lisa understand that what was happening in the classroom was about what students were learning and not about how Lisa was performing.

At the end of her OSSYP year and during our final interview, Lisa connected “being herself” with allowing her students to do the same when she commented, “I’m just letting myself be a college kid right now and that’s what I try to do with my kids too.”

Lisa's constructs her teaching identity during her OSSYP experience.

When I asked Lisa what surprised her most during her OSSYP experience, she said it was how much she fell in love with every grade level. Prior to her senior year experiences, Lisa was certain she wanted to be a kindergarten teacher, but as a result of her OSSYP experience, she realized how much more she could teach curriculum if she was in a classroom with older students. Commenting that she no longer had a particular grade level preference, she noted, "I would teach anything now" (Interview One).

Reflecting on what she learned about herself, Lisa said she had learned to depend on herself. Events outside of school were impacting this developing reliance on herself. She shared, "Every single one of my close relationships has dropped off the face of the planet for one reason or another." One of those relationships that was "dropping off" was a close friend's moving from the community, the friend from church with whom Lisa confided when dealing with anxiety issues even before her OSSYP year. When several of her relationships changed for a variety of reasons, Lisa remarked, "I just realized how to rely on God and rely on myself" (Interview Four).

Lisa mentioned "the rough stuff with my family, it's still kind of going on" and explained that her only means of escape from family issues was to throw herself into teaching. She shared, "I really found that finding my identity as a teacher helped me separate from some negative things in my life." There were no questions during the interview that specifically mentioned "teacher identity" (Final Interview). Lisa drew her own conclusion that she was finding her identity as a teacher. It occurred to me that Lisa might be using her teaching to avoid the family problems at home, and perhaps to some extent she was. However, instead of using teaching to avoid problems, everything she

shared indicated she was focusing her emotional energy on her students, her teaching, and on a career that was providing personal satisfaction.

Constructing her teacher identity through interactions with students.

Lisa's developing understanding of herself as a teacher was demonstrated in the story she told about one of her students. In the story, Lisa came to terms with her relationship with, in her words, "a little girl who annoyed me so much and I just could not stand to be around her." This change in Lisa's thinking occurred one evening while she was writing plans for the next day. She began thinking about how she could reach the child instead of trying to always figure out "how can I keep her quiet so she doesn't bug me." Thinking about each student as an individual instead of whether she liked the child or not, Lisa focused on the little girl who "bugged her" and concluded, "I came to appreciate her for who she was, and even though to this day she still annoys me, I can pick out good things about her . . . I love her, I love her now." Lisa described this experience as one that marked a change in her teaching (Interview Four).

Surprising to me, remembering the Lisa I knew as a college junior, was Lisa's frequent mention of humor in the classroom and how important she believed humor is in her teaching. She related stories of "having fun with the students" on a number of occasions. Laughing at herself was the best way to respond when symptoms of her Tourette's Syndrome played out while she was teaching. Lisa attributed her belief about the importance of humor in the classroom to her relationship with her host teacher and the moments of humor she observed being shared between Shelly and the students.

Challenges to Her Teaching Identity.

Lisa's certainty about being a teacher was challenged when, she explained, "They just won't sit down-- just when they won't listen." Apparently thinking about what she had just said, Lisa continued by sharing a quote her principal emailed to the staff the previous day. The quote read: "When I'm at my very lowest point and I can go no further, I look back at the reason why I'm doing this, and it all comes down to one thing, passion." Lisa reflected on the quote:

No matter what, there will be bad days, and kids are kids and they have bad days too. Sometimes I would give anything for a little adult moment. But I can't have that; I have twenty-two eight year olds. And you know, you just have to get through those moments. (Interview Four)

Lisa acknowledged that there are difficult times, but a few moments later she concluded, "But when I leave my job at the end of a bad day and still have a smile on my face, I know it's the right thing." Lisa identified a time when she had doubts about being a teacher, and yet, in the same story, she seemed to talk herself out of those doubts. In telling this story, Lisa came full circle and brought herself back to the self-assured teacher I saw in previous interviews.

Lisa's Embodiment of Teaching: Theme Three

"I feel like a professional. . . I can say I feel like a teacher now" (Final Interview).

Embodiment refers to the complex ways in which the mind and body act in reciprocal ways. The "body," or the physical aspects of a teacher, include gender, race, style of dress, and general appearance. The physical body makes it possible for us to

interact with the world around us and to engage in relationships with others, thereby making learning and other cognitive processes possible. Those cognitive processes are carried out through the physical acts of the body. In addition, teacher identities evolve as teachers engage in the physical act of teaching.

Adrienne Rich (1979) provides an easily understood explanation of embodiment when she writes, “Every mind resides in a body” (p. 245). Lisa’s stories provide examples of embodiment as she faces challenges due to health issues. And as her teaching identity evolves, there are indications of her embodiment of being a teacher.

I stopped by Westview on the first day of school, also Lisa’s first day as an OSSYP student. Approaching her in the hallway, I was struck by her remarkable transformation from student to teacher. I had seen her smile often, but today her smile was different. Lisa was beaming! She walked toward me wearing a brightly colored dress and heels. Her manner was poised and erect and she carried herself with confidence. Lisa’s appearance was the embodiment of a teacher. Her sense of who she was as a teacher, the mind connection, was to following soon as evidenced in her interview transcripts. I was witness to this embodiment of teaching both from my observation of her in the school setting and from the stories of her teaching experiences that she shared with me throughout the remainder of the school year.

The embodiment of who Lisa is included a series of illnesses during her junior year at the university as well as a prior diagnosis for obsessive-compulsive disorder. Most recently, she had been diagnosed with Tourette’s Syndrome. Although the disorders were diagnosed while Lisa was in high school and in college, she had been dealing with the symptoms since she was a young child. Neither Lisa, nor her parents and teachers

understood what had caused some of her behaviors, behaviors that set Lisa apart from others at times and behaviors that caused tensions within her family. In addition, Lisa's embodiment included having been identified as "gifted."

Living with obsessive-compulsive disorder and Tourette's Syndrome.

Lisa traced her memories of the obsessive-compulsive behaviors and possibly the Tourette's back to first grade and perhaps earlier. Several teachers showed some understanding of what was happening and helped Lisa through periods of anxiety. These teachers provided support when Lisa had panic attacks, attacks that she described as severe. During these attacks, Lisa would shake and hyperventilate to the point of losing consciousness. The attacks sometimes lasted for three or four hours.

One panic attack Lisa remembers occurred while she and her mother were in a shoe store. Her mom went to the next aisle, and when she did not see her, Lisa suffered a panic attack. She related examples of other incidents that had caused her to have panic attacks:

Students popping their pencils could send me into an attack, and a 98% on an advanced chemistry test once sent me into an attack. Stepping on cracks in the hallway was frustrating, and when a classmate would accidentally bump into my desk, I couldn't handle it. (Final Interview)

It seemed important for Lisa to clarify that what she felt at the times of the attaches was not rage and she explained, "I have never been an angry person, they [the panic attacks] just upset me so much" (Final Interview).

While in elementary school, Lisa's fear that her parents would not come to pick her up after events at school kept Lisa from participating in after school activities. She

also remembers classmates making fun of her, and some teachers responding to her behaviors by saying, “Quiet down.” After incidents such as these, in Lisa’s words, “I was in tears the rest of the day” (Final Interview).

Since the OCD and Tourette’s were not diagnosed until Lisa was in college, her parents did not understand her behaviors as a child. Being overly anxious was probably a cause of many of the problems between Lisa and her parents. Lisa remembers her parents saying, “Stop doing that” and “Why are you acting that way?” She added that despite her fears of being left sometime, Lisa’s parents never abandoned her anywhere and they never intentionally hurt her. Lisa recalled “hiding it [her emotions] all,” while at the same time thinking, “I know something is not right.” It would be years later, once diagnosis were determined, that Lisa received therapy to support her in living with her disorders.

Once in college Lisa started medication and continued therapy for OCD. In her final interview, after completing her OSSYP year, Lisa commented that her anxiety over grades was way down even though she was still frustrated with anything less than perfect. She wasn’t sure what happened to lessen her anxiety but perhaps it helped when she acknowledged the anxiety and when she understood what triggers her anxiety. She had also started talking with her parents about the issue and believed that more open communication with them was helpful also (Final Interview).

During the final interview, Lisa shared that she had a panic attack a week earlier. She describes her phone call to her mom:

Mom and I talked for two hours. . . It’s still really hard for me. . . like being okay to tell my parents things and letting them in because before I’d always try real

hard to protect them. I didn't want anything to upset them, so I just tried to deal with it by myself. It's realizing that it is okay to need help (Final Interview).

Lisa's embodiment and Tourette's Syndrome.

Living with Tourette's Syndrome helped Lisa realize how important it is to be able to laugh at herself, especially when her Tourette's becomes evident during her teaching. Lisa shared:

I tend to fall down a lot, trip over things. . . My Tourette's makes me stumble over words sometimes and it makes me - I get weird facial expressions and the kids notice that stuff, but when you can laugh at that. . . I just start cracking up and they just think it's funny too. . . and it's not a big deal (Interview Three).

Lisa described her experiences with Tourette's and shared that she does not have the vocal tics often associated with Tourette's, and she does not shout out profanities, another behavior often associated with Tourette's. Lisa's motor tics, for the most part, are barely noticeable. Sometimes her eyes tic and her neck jerks, but even after becoming aware of her Tourette's, I seldom saw any indication of the symptoms. Lisa said that medications help keep the tics under control. In response to my comment that she certainly "has had her share of problems," Lisa responded, "Yeah, but that's OK" (Interview Four). Lisa's Tourette's influenced how she was constructing her teaching identities. She acknowledged the influence of the Tourette's and assumed responsibility for taking control of its impact on her life, and in this study, the impact of her teaching practice. Instead of a negative view of her Tourette's and instead of using the Tourette's as an excuse in any way, Lisa took control, determined how to deal with the issue, and actually appeared to turn it into a positive as she constructed her teaching identity.

Looking like a middle school student.

Another aspect of Lisa's embodiment was her youthful appearance. Although looking very young did not seem to impact her teaching at the elementary level, it was an issue when Lisa was substitute teaching. She noted, after spending time in a middle school, "I look like one of the students." Stories of her substitute teaching experiences provide insights into how older students perceived her. In her most challenging substituting experiencing, teaching ninth grade at a junior high school, Lisa explained, "I looked younger than the students." Several students commented to her, "Oh, I thought you were the new student." Lisa took the experience in stride and informed the students she was their teacher for the day and went on to define her expectations for student behaviors, an act that seemed to establish her as the teacher (Interview Four).

Lisa's embodiment of being a teacher.

Reading the literature on embodiment at the same time I was writing "Lisa's Stories" supported my understanding of the concept. The physical aspects of Lisa's embodiment were obvious. In addition to these physical aspects, Lisa's stories revealed her embodiment of becoming a teacher as she constructed her teacher identity. Indications of her embodiment of being a teacher were in comments such as, "I feel like a teacher" and when she noted, "I got down there and looked the child in the eyes." Lisa was using her physical being when she expressed her feeling that she was a teacher and in the physical act of "getting down there and looking the child in the eyes."

In her story about singing with her students, Lisa provides an example of her embodiment of teaching through the physical act of singing. Her stories about team teaching with Shelly locate her spatially at one side of the room and Shelly at the other as

they interacted with the students. In this way, Lisa engaged in the physical act of being with Shelly and with the students as she was teaching. When symptoms of her Tourette's became obvious while teaching, the symptoms were embodied, and Lisa carried out her emotional response through the physical act of laughing at herself. Describing the read aloud time in the classroom, Lisa placed herself in the midst of her students. Numerous times throughout the interviews, Lisa's stories placed her in proximity with an individual student or in the midst of the students. As Lisa constructed her knowledge of teaching, she applied this new knowledge in her teaching, often involving physical acts as she carried out new teaching strategies.

Effects of Lisa's embodiment on her search for a teaching position.

Lisa had completed the interview process for a teaching position by the time of our last meeting. She had interviewed for and been selected for the Teaching Fellows program. When I asked if the topic of Tourette's came up during the interviews, Lisa shared her thought process in deciding *not* to bring up the issue of Tourette's. She explained, "It was something I mulled over in my head a lot and talked to a lot of different people about - should I come out and tell them, should I just ignore it?" Lisa decided if the Tourette's symptoms were getting in the way of an interview, she would address the issue, and otherwise, she would not. As it turned out, the only time Tourette's was discussed was in the interview for the Teaching Fellows program. Lisa shared what occurred during the interview that prompted her to talk about her Tourette's:

I honestly thought they would never hire me because they came right out and said, "How do we know if you're stressed?" and I said, "My Tourette's gets really bad, and they just said, "OK." I was like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I just told them

that - they aren't going to hire me," and they did. Lisa concluded: "It's who I am and I can't change it (Final Interview).

Lisa decided she would deal with the systems of the Tourette's in the classroom by laughing at herself and moving on. She was talking openly during our interviews about the Tourette's as well as receiving professional counseling. The job interviewed was positive reinforcement for her open and honest conversation about her Tourette's and a positive outcome from her long journey in living with Tourette's.

Relationships with Students Influence Lisa's Teacher Identity: Theme Four

*It was just everything that each child said [in *The Important Thing about Miss Murray*] reminded me so much of them, just showed me who they were. . .*

(Personal Conversation, September 2010).

Lisa's story about *The Important Book* her students created for her represents how important having a relationship with each child was to her. Sharing her *Important Book* with me, she commented: "The pages in *The Important Book* are about how we connected with one another" (Personal conversation, September, 2010). Building relationships with her students was a theme throughout all of Lisa's interviews. The references to her relationships with her students were made without any prompting from the interview questions.

The relationships a teacher establishes with students impact teacher identities and affirmation from students promotes fulfillment from teaching. Lisa's stories reflect how important relationships with her students are and how these relationships influence her teaching identity.

Building relationships with her students through humor.

Lisa recognized the times she and her students laughed together as an important factor in establishing relationships with them. She shared, “There are funny moments in the classroom that just make me laugh.” Lisa related the story of an incident with one of her students when “we [Lisa and the student] just laughed and laughed.” The little girl’s family did not attend the open house during which time the students shared musical instruments each had created. Seeing that the student was alone, and on the spur of the moment, Lisa picked up the student’s guitar and began singing a Mylie Cyrus song. Lisa continued, “The little girl just laughed and laughed and thought it was the funniest thing she’d ever seen in her life. She added: “The students and I laugh all the time. I think it calms them, and they know I care about them when we laugh together” (Interview Four).

Lisa’s story about establishing a relationship with Cori was from her rotation time in third grade. Lisa shared:

She’s [Cori] really behind a lot of her classmates and she gets so upset about not understanding and she would just be like crying. One day I said, “Cori, look at me.” I was down at her level and she wouldn’t look at me and I just kind of took her chin and made her look at me in the eye. She was so worried, and I was like, “What is your job as a student?” She said, “To do my best.” And I said, “What’s my job as a teacher?” and she was like, “To help me.” And I said, “That’s right. I’m going to do my best to do that. . . I believe you can do it. Lisa observed a remarkable and positive change in Cori after their conversation and concluded, “It was really cool to watch [her change]” (First Interview).

Connecting with students through literature.

Lisa's understanding of how relationships are built through shared literature may be a result of her memories of reading with her mom. Lisa talked about giving her mother a copy of *Winnie the Pooh Storybook Treasury* the previous Christmas. Lisa chose this gift because of her memories of reading the book with her mom when she was a child.

Lisa shared:

Mom and I would go to Barnes and Noble and sit and read the book [*Winnie the Pooh*] at the store every time. We'd sit in the big comfy chairs and read. And it's a fifty-dollar book, so we could never afford to buy it, and my mom would just read from it. That's something we would do on a Saturday. . . just go to a bookstore and read from this book. Then, last year for Christmas, I searched everywhere and I finally found a used copy and I gave it to my mom for Christmas. That's probably one of my most treasured memories from childhood, is sitting and reading with my Mom (Final Interview).

I asked Lisa how her mother responded to receiving the book, and she shared, "My mother told me 'I never knew it meant as much to you as it did to me until you got me that book'." Lisa's memories of reading with her mom make it possible for her to bring to her teaching an understanding of how relationships can develop through reading together.

Because of her extensive knowledge of children's literature, Lisa was able to help students find books they enjoyed. During her rotation time in fourth grade, Lisa met a little girl who abandoned every book she ever started. The little girl, Liddy, told Lisa she had never found a book she liked. After talking with Liddy and learning her interests,

Lisa selected a book for her to read. Handing the book to Liddy, Lisa said, “Try this one.” In the meantime Lisa moved on to her rotation time in another classroom. While sitting in the classroom one day, she saw Liddy at the doorway motioning for Lisa to come to the hall. Liddy exclaimed, “I finished the book. I never finished a book before!” Lisa remained in the hallway with Liddy as they talked about the book. Lisa’s brief connection with this student had a powerful impact on Liddy, and in telling this story, it appeared the incident also had a powerful impact on Lisa (Interview Two).

Lisa established relationships with her students through the read alouds she shared in class. Her first read aloud as a student teacher was *The Witches* by Roald Dahl (2007). When Lisa told the class that Roald Dahl was her favorite childhood author and that the book was her favorite, the students responded with excitement, “You mean we get to read your favorite book?” Lisa added, “I was so excited because they were so excited.” Lisa realized the value of reading aloud in forming relationships with her students and she shared her love of reading and her vast knowledge of children’s literature with her students.

Metaphors for Her Teaching: Theme Five

“They [students] are like air popcorn; everyone has the potential of popping given the right temperature and care” (Pilot Study).

Identifying metaphors for teaching is a difficult concept. In her interview for the Pilot Study, I asked Lisa what she considered a metaphor for her teaching. After thinking for a moment, she responded. “Popcorn! Like air popcorn - take all of the little kernels. . . everyone has the potential of popping given the right temperature and care.” She explained that all the kernels do not pop at the same time and that all the kernels, in the

beginning, have the potential of popping. Some kernels, she noted, will not pop. After a moment, she added, “Maybe if conditions had been different, they would have all popped.” Lisa’s metaphor indicates a belief that all children can learn and her metaphor implies it is the teacher’s responsibility to see that the necessary conditions for “popping” are provided.

Midway through the OSSYP experience, I gave Lisa a camera and asked her to take six to ten photos of items or artifacts that represent who she is as a teacher; metaphors for her teaching. Lisa chose to take photos of books as metaphors for her teaching. One photo of her personal journal lying on the kitchen table was a way of showing her journaling was a part of her every day life. She explained the photo of her Bible: “Even though I won’t be able to teach my students the Bible - you know, this is who I am. My personality is because of this book. . . I can model what a godly person looks like.” The photo of *Ender’s Game* (Cord (1994), continued Lisa, “represents my philosophy that differentiation shouldn’t be just for those kids below level.” The book is about gifted students and Lisa reiterated her belief that teachers need to give more attention to gifted students in their classrooms. A photo of *Sea of Monsters*, (Riordan, 2007), one of the Percy Jackson series very popular with her students, represented how important it is that she read the books her students are reading. A photo of Lisa’s Music and Appreciation book was included since it represents her interest in music and all the instruments she plays. A photo of *Witches* (Dahl, 2007) was included since it is Lisa’s favorite piece of children’s literature and because of her third-graders excitement over the book when she read it with the class (Interview Four).

Lisa Constructs Her Teacher Knowledge: Theme Six

“There is nothing like working with kids and just doing it!” (First Interview).

Learning to be a teacher began with Lisa’s field placement during her freshman year of college. She recalls that initially she could focus on only one student or a small group at a time. She added, “Managing an entire class of students was not something I could accomplish.” Then, three years later, reflecting on her student teaching experience, Lisa realized how much she had learned since her freshman year field placement. She learned she could indeed manage an entire class of 22, meet their needs, and build relationships with each of the students, all while constructing her teacher knowledge. (Final interview)

OSSYP Supports Lisa in Constructing Her Teacher Knowledge.

During our first interview in the fall, I asked Lisa whether she was learning more from observing teachers or from working with students. She believed she was learning from both and added, “Watching teachers helps me when I’m in a situation and don’t not know how to handle it, or I’ll know how to handle a situation differently the next time.” As Lisa often did, she paused and added a thoughtful insight; “There is nothing like just working with the kids and just doing it” (Interview one).

The opportunity to spend time in various classrooms at the different grade levels during the year made it possible for Lisa to observe how different teachers handled discipline and behavior management. She observed teachers implementing curriculum in various ways. The host teacher during her rotation time in first grade provided feedback to Lisa that was particularly supportive when the teacher noted how well Lisa interacted with students. This positive feedback, in Lisa’s words, “helped me realize my own natural skill with these kids and it made me feel better” (Interview One).

Lisa's rotation time in a second grade classroom prompted her to reflect on her observations of the teacher and to think about her own teaching beliefs. The classroom teacher was retired from the military and, in Lisa's words, "He managed his classroom like he was still in the military." She quickly realized she could not teach in the same manner. Lisa remarked, "I went more with his style [during her time in this classroom], but I recognized I couldn't run my own classroom the same way. . . It's not my personality - I couldn't do that." Lisa reflected, "I see myself as being strict but the other teacher was more commanding. I would rather use pre-corrects and set expectations as opposed to disciplining later. I didn't like who I was when I had to be like that. Lisa's experience in this second grade class added to her "teacher knowledge" as she realized an approach to teaching that would not work for her (Interview One).

Lisa identified "Ah-ha" moments from her student teaching time. One "Ah-ha" moment was learning to manage transitions throughout the day. Turning to her love of music, she invited her third graders to sing with her as a way of mediating classroom transitions. Lisa and her students sang the state song and the school song during transitions, and she reported, "They loved it!" She added, "Even if you don't have the best voice, you just have to sing with them! They don't care." Lisa expanded her teacher knowledge when she found a way to support her third grades in making smooth and timely transitions and she realized the importance of her participation in what she asked her students to do (Interview Four).

Another "Ah-ha" moment for Lisa was learning *how* to reflect. Without any prompts from the interview questions, Lisa emphasized that she had learned *how* to reflect and noted, "I learned *how* to reflect with Shelly [host teacher]." Lisa explained her

understanding of *how to reflect* in a story she told about an assignment she gave her students. When the students' work did not meet her expectations, she reflected on her teaching and decided she had not provided clear guidelines for the assignment. As a result, the students' work was not up to Lisa's expectations. Learning *how* to reflect was a part of the teacher knowledge she was acquiring during her OSSYP experience. Prior to her OSSYP year, Lisa wrote numerous reflections on field experiences in various classrooms. The opportunity to reflect with an experienced and reflective teacher made it possible to look at her own teaching as opposed to observing others teachers. Shelly also modeled her own reflection process for Lisa as well as providing feedback (Interview Four).

Going where Her Students Take Her.

Supported by Shelly's encouragement, Lisa tried out her own ideas as she continued to construct her teacher knowledge. Her willingness to come forward and ask for more teaching responsibilities led to the poetry unit Lisa planned and implemented. The unit concluded with a Poetry Café that provided students the opportunity to share their poetry with an audience. Lisa had initiated the idea for a poetry unit, and Shelly left the planning for the celebration up to her saying, "You plan the writers' celebration, this is yours." Asking her where she got the idea for the Café, Lisa responded, "I just came up with the idea." In addition to planning and implementing the poetry unit, Lisa demonstrated the ability to extend and enhance her original plans. In our conversation about the unit, Lisa commented, "You don't know where your kids are going to take you." Building on what she knew about her students and her awareness of their interests, Lisa demonstrated an ability to extend and enhance her original plans. She valued her

students' initiative and was excited about the prospect that her students would take her in unexpected directions if she allowed them to do so (Interview Three).

Lisa looks to her future as a teacher.

During our last interview, Lisa explained how she was now a different person. She shared, "I am a teacher now. I believe I have a lot of experience. I feel like a professional." Lisa added:

I don't have to do it [teach] like others. . . I can make up my own plans and they work much better than the plans from the books because I know what I'm doing with them [her students]. I've thought about the kids as mine. . . I've learned to respect myself as a professional and not to second-guess every little thing (Final Interview).

Lisa's Circular Ending: The Important Things about Miss Murray

She's a Teacher! She teaches and teaches. She's smart and she makes things easier. She got me to read (quotes from The Important Book created by Miss Murray's students).

Lisa's use of air popcorn as a metaphor for her teaching represents her belief that each child has the potential for learning and that not all children will learn at the same rate. Significant in her popcorn metaphor is her final statement, "but given the right conditions, maybe they can all 'pop'." Lisa's stories reveal her belief that all students can be successful given the opportunity and she accepts responsibility for creating the "right conditions" in order for all her students to learn. Lisa believes all her students will "pop" as she welcomes the challenges and accepts responsibility for ensuring that this happens.

Lisa's Poem

Lisa Becomes a Teacher

Teaching reading is wanting children to fall in love with books
to love the characters, to cry along when Leslie dies
and rejoice when Wilbur is saved.

Teaching reading is reading the *BFG* aloud and hearing *Witches*
they learn the author is my favorite.

My biggest friend in teaching reading is reading aloud
introducing kids to books, getting them excited
coming to find the joy in reading.

I just want to talk with them about books
build relationships with them.

I learned a ton from my host teacher
I don't know that I could do this by myself
Just thrown into a classroom
She asked me what would *I* do
 she trusted me with the kids and asked my opinion on a lot of
 things
 treated me like a professional
 let me try out things and make my own mistakes

She helped me to find my identity as a teacher.
I think more and more how I center on the students instead of myself
the kids change, everything changes.
I don't know where they are going to take me.
I work better when I come up with something on my own.
I wonder how to reach a child -
 appreciate them for who they are.

The kids are excited that I'm there
They know me, they want me here. . . it's really cool.
They show me how important it is to have a relationship with each child.
I sing with the kids; you have to sing with them.
I reflect on the way home
 I turn on the music and sing
 and conduct my own orchestra.

I can't teach the Bible, but I will model for them.
I get down and look them in the eye.
I can be like a kid in the classroom with them.

I am ready for my own classroom
 setting up the room, planning my own units
 I've learned so much from them.
 I've learned how to make my own decisions.
 I don't have to do what others have done.
 The kids are like kernels of popcorn

I will make sure the kernels pop.
I can say I am a teacher now.

Chapter Five: Recurring Themes in Their Stories

The themes I identified in the stories the preservice teachers shared were common across all the transcripts. Within these themes, however, the teacher candidates shared very different stories. I determined eight themes from a master grid of all the stories as the themes most telling of the candidates' evolving identities. I then returned to the transcripts and selected stories as representative of these themes. These themes serve to organize the stories in this chapter: (a) engagement in discourse; (b) reflection; (c) critical moments; (d) relationships with students; (e) emotional involvement; (f) self-concept; (g) construction of teacher knowledge; and (h) embodiment of teaching.

The term “preservice teacher” was used in previous chapters since this is the term used in the literature on teacher education and teaching identities. In Chapters 5 and 6, I use the terms “teacher candidate” or “candidate,” along with “OSSYP student” since these are the terms used by the university the preservice teachers were attending. The subheadings provided in the following sections identify the themes found in the stories.

Engaging in Discourses: The Social Construction of A Teacher

A brief explanation of the term “discourse” and several examples of the discourses the teacher candidates experienced are provided. Although similar to “talk,” “conversations,” and “discussions,” there are aspects of discourse that distinguish it from other kinds of verbal interactions as addressed in the following section. In addition, most of the literature I reviewed regarding preservice teachers and teacher identities used the term “discourse.”

Discourse as It Applies to This Study

“Discourse,” according to the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts (Downloaded March 3, 2012. www.merriam-webster.com). In *Michel Foucault, Mills* (2003) offers a discussion of discourse in terms of the work of Foucault. Discourse, according to Mills, is a grouping of statements within a domain or within a practice. For example, the medical profession has a discourse particular to its domain, just as educators have a discourse specific to the practice of teaching. Within these domains or practices, there are structures and guidelines that may include specific vocabulary, knowledge of the domain or practice that participants bring to the discourse, and the context in which the discourse occurs. Particular discourses are carried out in predictable ways since participants have previously engaged in the discourse and come with common background knowledge and experiences. A discourse then, is conducted around certain ideas that participants share. Someone new to a discourse may not understand aspects of the discourse and may or may not be successful in becoming a member of that discourse. For example, a lawyer may find it difficult to participate in and understand the discourse of educators engaged in talking about teaching, just as a teacher is likely to find it difficult to engage in a discourse with lawyers talking about their legal practices. Both the dictionary definition and Mills suggest that a discourse is bound by beliefs and practices, and a discourse is developed by people with common interests in a particular domain or practice. A part of becoming a teacher is learning and becoming a member of the discourse of the school and of education.

Teacher Candidates Engage in Discourses

The teacher candidates engaged in a variety of discourses throughout their senior year. One type of discourse often mentioned during the interviews was the discourse of reflecting about their teaching with their host teachers. The discourse of a school staff meeting most likely reflects the discourse of the school community. The teacher candidates engaged in a discourse with other teacher candidates during the first semester, a discourse they moved away from as they entered their student teaching experiences and became engaged in discourses with host teachers and grade-level teammates. Kara's participation in the literacy lab allowed her to be part of a discourse that was a collaborative discussion about literacy instruction. As with any discourse, the literacy lab discourse was influenced by the beliefs of the teachers, the social context, and the interests of those involved.

Danielewicz (2001) suggests that discourse is central to learning curriculum content and central to learning about teaching. She adds that it is through discourse that the teacher candidate develops his or her teacher identities. Wenger (1999) reminds us that our teaching identities develop as we engage with others through our participation in the teaching communities in which we are situated: "We define our teaching identities as we negotiate membership in the teaching community" (p. 149). Sharing personal narratives, the discourse of stories, is also critical to establishing our teacher identities (Bruner, 1991).

Opportunities for engaging in discourses that are foundational to the learning of teacher candidates are at the core of the OSSYP program. Built into the yearlong experience are opportunities to meet and work with teachers at all the grade levels as well as opportunities for involvement in school-wide professional development. A culture of

collaboration, a form of discourse, was already in place in the schools to which the teacher candidates were assigned. A collaborative culture was supported by staff members who were Teaching Fellows, former Fellows, and former teacher candidates, all having had extensive experiences in establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships. Within this collaborative environment, each candidate created a network of support making possible additional avenues for engaging in dialogue with others. These support networks, facilitated by the school environments, made it conducive for teacher candidates to seek advice from colleagues.

Engaged in discourse with host teachers.

The five candidates shared stories of close relationships with their host teachers, and each recognized the critical role her host played in the candidate becoming a teacher. The teacher candidates engaged in dialogue with their hosts during planning times, throughout the day and before and after school, adding to their opportunities to engage in discourse. Three of the host teachers had participated in the Teaching Fellows' program and had themselves benefitted from positive mentoring experiences. Lisa was specific in stating that her host knew how to mentor because she had been a Fellow. Kara indicated she believed her host knew how to mentor since she had participated in both the OSSYP program and the Teaching Fellows program. Having been mentored themselves, both Lisa's and Kara's hosts understood the importance of giving their student teachers "space" to plan their own lessons, to try out their own ideas, and to carry out their own plans. For Lisa and Kara, part of successful mentoring meant their hosts were confident in their abilities to successfully accept responsibilities while at the same time supporting

the candidate through a gradual release of responsibilities. The hosts mentored the teacher candidates by continually engaging with them in planning and reflecting.

Engaged in discourse with grade-level teams.

Another discourse essential to the candidates' learning was the collaboration with grade-level teams. During the first semester, the teacher candidates attended grade level team meetings but since they were at each grade level for only two weeks, time constraints limited the extent to which they became involved. The candidates were able to recognize the value for teachers in team planning and sharing instructional ideas as a result of their time working with teachers at the various grade levels. Elin and LeAnn each noted how teachers in one particular grade level in her school worked exceptionally well together. They observed meaningful collaboration and learned that not all grade level teams function in the same way.

Grade-level team meetings were mentioned often in the stories about student teaching experiences. By then, the candidates were equal participants in these grade level team meetings. Leanne appreciated the support from her team in planning lessons and student assessments. She noted the assessments were open-ended and that her teammates encouraged her to adapt the assessments to work best for her students. Leanne's grade level team worked within the structure provided by the school-wide Professional Learning Community, particularly in planning assessments to meet curriculum objectives. Participation in these meetings helped Leanne become familiar with the curriculum and the timeline for implementing the curriculum. Elin received encouragement from her team to revise the plans to make them work for her and for her students.

Additional discourses in which they engaged.

Conversations with another OSSYP student in her building led LeAnn to become engaged in one-on-one collaboration with a peer for whom she had great respect.

Talking with Joan helped LeAnn realize how helpful it was to hear ideas from another teacher, especially one, in Leanne's words, "who was doing phenomenal things with her students." LeAnn began taking some of Jayne's ideas back to her own classroom and adapting them to her students' needs. LeAnn realized how her conversations with a peer for whom she had great respect challenged her to think about her own teaching in different ways.

Opportunities for professional development were available to Kara through her school's Literacy Lab program and to Leanne through her school district's New Teacher Academy conducted prior to the start of each school year. Both professional development opportunities made it possible for the candidates to engage in discourse with colleagues. The Literacy Learning Lab at Kara's school was facilitated by the literacy coach and provided opportunities to observe other teachers. Debriefing sessions were supported through the professional literature the team shared. Kara's knowledge of literacy instruction was extended through the opportunities to engage in conversations with teammates, conversations she related directly to her own instructional practices. The New Teachers' Academy provided Leanne the opportunity to talk with experienced teachers about a range of topics including what to do the first day of school, classroom management and general information about the school's operation. LeAnn found the Academy experience meaningful and the information valuable and looked forward to attending again the following year when she returned to the school as a Teaching Fellow.

Supportive discourses outside the school environment.

Two of the teacher candidates received support through their conversations with people outside the school environment. Anya's roommate was a candidate at another school in the same district, a school in a rural part of the community. The two shared their experiences and "compared notes." Anya therefore had the opportunity to talk with another classroom teacher who brought different perspectives to the conversations. Engaging in conversations with her mother played a vital role in Elin's OSSYP experience and serves as an example of another type of discourse that provided support. Elin and her mother discussed Elin's relationships with her peers and her conversations with her mother helped her make decisions that made it possible for her to conduct herself in a professional manner. In her conversations with her mother, Elin was stepping back from the school discourse. Their conversations provided Elin with different perspectives on how she viewed herself and the situations at school.

Reflecting on Teaching Experiences

Schon (1982) suggests that teachers need opportunities to share and test their reflections with colleagues, opportunities to express and share feelings, confusions and intuitive feelings. It is through reflection that teachers work their way through issues and confusions and search for ways to think differently about their teaching. Dewey (1997) views reflective thinking as delaying final decisions until the situation under consideration is further studied, and he suggests this is done through continued questioning and inquiry.

Reflective thinking explores various perspectives and options that point to changes in thinking as opposed to a search for the correct answer. Reflective thinking

involves consideration of one's own beliefs and a willingness to accept confusion and perplexing situations. The teacher candidates shared reflective thinking throughout the yearlong interview process. Reflective thinking appeared to come naturally as indicated by the fact that the candidates shared their reflections without specific prompts from the interview questions. Reflective thinking was shared in response to prompts that began, for example, "Tell me a story about. . ."

A Culture of Reflective Thinking

Just as with collaboration, a culture of reflection was already in place at the schools to which the candidates were assigned. Like collaboration, reflective practices were supported by former and current Teaching Fellows and former OSSYP students on staff. Both university programs were designed to provide opportunities for candidates to engage reflective thinking. The candidates spoke frequently about how their hosts modeled the reflection process. In addition, the host teachers reflected *with* the teacher candidates and made this reflection time a priority in the school day. Four of the candidates noted they learned *how* to reflect with their host teachers and the fifth said she learned how to reflect from her instructor for the OSSYP literacy course. The host teachers and the instructor, in their roles as mentors, "acted as a catalyst to enhance reflection" (Frick, Carl and Beets. 2010, p. 421).

Other Opportunities for Reflective Thinking

The candidates believed that their interviews during the research process also helped them reflect. I noted moments during the interviews when each appeared to reflect and then articulate a new insight. Sometimes a candidate shared a significant reflection near the end of an interview. It seemed the candidate was sharing aloud an

internal dialogue, or processing her own thinking aloud, almost as if I were not in the room. Had there been time limits on the interviews, or had I ended the conversation moments earlier, some of these reflections would not have been shared.

The “when and where” of reflecting were shared by Elin and Lisa. Elin reflected during her 45-minute drive to and from school. Her classroom at the end of the day when the building was quiet was also conducive to reflecting. Lisa’s reflections were processed at the end of the day, in the classroom and with her host teacher. Lisa made specific note of emphasizing she learned *how* to reflect with her host teaching.

For three of the teacher candidates, some of their best ideas for instruction came while they were actually teaching. Elin and Kara recognized that many times their ideas for instruction the following day came in the midst of teaching a lesson. Observations of how their students were responding to a lesson helped them determine the direction of the next lesson. Reflecting during a lesson, Kara asked herself what the students were getting from her teaching. LeAnn’s reflective thinking while teaching prompted her to make changes “in the moment” and to alter the course of her original plan based on her students’ responses. LeAnn was excited about the positive results and high student engagement she observed as a result of her “in the moment” change of plans.

Reflective Thinking Prompts Changes in Teaching

Anya’s reflections on her math lessons prompted her to change her teaching strategies and how she used the materials provided by the school’s math program. Her reflections led her to adapt some lessons or eliminate aspects of other lessons when the instruction was not working well for her students. Anya created activities that benefitted her students by engaging them more in the lessons. Lisa’s, Elin’s and Anya’s reflections,

based on observations of their students, guided them in making decisions that resulted in changes in their teaching. Each teacher was supported in her reflective thinking through conversations about the lessons with her host teacher. Leanne noted how important it was for her to reflect *with* someone as opposed to reflecting on her own.

Lessons that did not go well were also a topic for reflective thinking. Lisa's reflections led her to realize she needed to provide students with specific guidelines for behaviors and clear expectations for assignments. Elin reflected on two lessons that did not go well. Her students' discussion following a read aloud was a disappointment and in the conversation afterwards with her host, Karyn told Elin she needed to "make the lesson her own" instead of trying to teach exactly as she believed Karyn would.

Reflecting on a math lesson that did not go well, Elin realized that a quick reading of the lesson plan the night before had not prepared her to actually teach the lesson. She had not given careful thought to the step-by-step planning required to conduct the lesson in a successful manner and she learned that simply reading over a plan in the manual was not sufficient. Reflective thinking also lead to the candidates to realize their increased self-confidence. In addition to her increased self-confidence, Lisa realized that her lessons were more successful when she created the plans herself based on what she knew about her students, and in particular, her students' interests. Kara noted she was more capable in carrying out the responsibilities for being a teacher than she first thought.

Other Perspectives on Reflective Thinking

Elin and Leanne each offered a different perspective on reflecting. Elin reported that her host teacher told her that at times she reflected too much and added that at one point her host told her, "Stop, Elin, enough is enough!" LeAnn said she chose not to

reflect when reflecting was upsetting her and she would, for the time being, focus her attention on something more positive and return to the issue later. LeAnn offered another thought on her reflecting process. Because her host teacher seldom left the classroom, her host observed everything LeAnn was also seeing. LeAnn believed her reflection process was hindered since there seemed to be no need for her to process and articulate her thinking for some one else. The conversations often ended when her host noted, “Yes, I noticed that too.”

Critical Moments and Turning Points

Before sharing critical moments from the stories, I consider how two of the candidates made their decisions to become teachers. Unlike the other three who believed they had always wanted to be teachers, LeAnn’s and Elin’s decisions to enter the profession came later. LeAnn’s decision to become a teacher came while she was in high school, and for Elin the decision came during the summer after her freshman year in college. Both LeAnn’s and Elin’s decisions were results of experiences they had working with children. LeAnn was a cadet teacher while in high school and helped teachers in elementary grade classrooms. LeAnn’s decision was also due, in part, to her uncle’s death and her need to find a focus in her life. For Elin, the decision to be a teacher came as a result of her teaching a summer school class of preschoolers. After her first year in college preparing for a career in fashion design, she realized that was not what she wanted nor was it “in her heart.” Teaching a class of preschoolers the previous summer was a turning point for Elin.

I selected critical moments from the OSSYP experiences to share based on my perception that these were the moments most significant to the candidate telling the story.

The significance was indicated by the teacher's retelling the story several times or by the emotions shown in the telling of the story. As Tripp (1994) suggests, critical moments are not necessarily dramatic nor are they noticed at the moment they occur. They may at first appear to be very commonplace events. The event becomes critical when a teacher reflects on what occurred, and at the moment of reflecting, she determines the incident to be critical.

Critical Moments as Epiphanies

Savin-Baden and Niekerk (2007) use the term "epiphanies" instead of "critical moments" and suggest that there are four types of epiphanies found in teacher narratives. The authors list first, a "cumulative epiphany," one that occurs at a turning point in one's thinking. The second is the "illuminative epiphany," one that allows the teacher to identify a new insight. Third are the "major epiphanies," or those that are significant enough for new meanings to be immediately identified. The fourth are "relived epiphanies" or those that have to be relived in order to be understood.

Using Savin-Baden's and Niekerk's (2007) guidelines for four types of epiphanies, I selected "critical moments" for each of the categories the authors suggest. First, the cumulative epiphany, or one that is seen as a turning point, might be Kara's story of the incident in her classroom that occurred during a math lesson she was teaching. A little girl who had struggled with math was finally able to grasp the concept and called out to Kara, "I got it!" At that moment, Kara said she felt like a teacher. Similarly, a turning point for Lisa was realizing the trust her host teacher placed in her and as Lisa noted, "I couldn't believe Karyn actually trusted me with her students."

Anya specifically identified having lunch with her students as a turning point, or cumulative epiphany, in her student teaching.

The second type of epiphany, or illuminary, allows the teacher to identify a new insight. Anya identified the moment she felt she had become a teacher as when she realized how much she cared about her students and about teaching. The pause before she spoke indicated she was reflecting, and her reflecting then led to this new insight. Kara paused a few moments to reflect before commenting, “We learn to teach by teaching,” indicating her reflection revealed a new insight. Ending an interview that lasted for over an hour, LeAnn paused after talking about a completely different topic and commented, “I don’t have to give them worksheets to find out what they know. I just need to listen to them talk.”

The third type, or major epiphany, is one that a person recognizes immediately. Elin’s story of taking responsibility in making decisions involving the problematic behaviors of one of her students result in an epiphany she immediately recognized. Elin exclaimed, “I did everything right and I made the right decision!” The process leading up to making the decision and the manner in which she shared her story were further indicators that this was a major epiphany for her.

The fourth type of epiphany, one that must be relived to be understood, is found in Lisa’s stories about the students coming to her for help instead of going to her host teacher, and sometimes even calling Lisa by her host’s name. Over time, Lisa realized the students viewed her as their teacher. Anya relived the experiences of the math lessons she was teaching and realized the lessons she planned were successful in meeting the needs of her students and actively engaged them in math learning. LeAnn, over time

and with feedback from her mentor, contradictory to her earlier thinking, realized she was indeed very compassionate about her students.

The Nature of Critical Moments

The nature of the moments that made the greatest impressions on the teacher candidates varied. In some stories, the moment was just that – a brief period of time. Sometimes the significant moments occurred over a period of time, days or weeks. The realization of how much work is involved in teaching was significant. As time drew closer for them to student teach, several voiced concerns about “being able to do it all” and “Now I’m going to be responsible for my own actions.” For LeAnn and Lisa, substitute teaching provided epiphany moments when they recognized they had the skills and knowledge to make their substituting experiences successful. Anya experienced a significant moment as a result of taking the initiative to ask questions about her performance when she was not getting the feedback she wanted and needed. Once she began asking questions, her student teaching took a new and positive direction. It was through reflective thinking that each candidate created her own critical moments, critical moments often identified during an interview with the researcher (Tripp, 1994).

Relationships with Students

Teaching identities, according to Clarke (2009), are relational, and as such, teachers’ relationships with students are critical. Clarke suggests also that recognition by their students that they are indeed teachers is critical to their teacher identities. Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2006) identify three features of professional identities: first, the content the teacher teaches, second, the teacher’s concept of his or her place in the profession, and third, the teacher’s relationships with students. Teachers construct

their knowledge of teaching as they work with students, and since teacher knowledge directly impacts identity, relationships with students play a vital role in forming teacher identities. The candidates shared stories spontaneously about their relationships with their students-- stories that were told without prompting from the interview questions.

Anya's host teacher was explicit in telling her "relationships don't just happen." Her host told Anya she must be intentional in providing opportunities for teachers and students to connect. For Anya, one way of connecting was through the writing pieces her students shared. For Kara, the one-on-one reading time provided opportunities for her to offer support and encouragement, and comments such as, "You can do it." Kara noted the physical contact with her first graders as they drew close to her during their one-on-one reading time. Kara and Lisa shared stories of conversations with individual students and were clear in sharing the explicit language they used when speaking with children. Their stories indicated thoughtful word choices and careful consideration of the child's self-esteem. Lisa provided assurance to students that she would not allow them to fail and that her expectations were that they do their best and that she would be there to provide support. Anya realized a change in her relationships with her students when she began inviting several students to have lunch with her each day.

Humor in Establishing Relationships

The importance of humor in the classroom was noted in stories from each of the candidates. Elin wanted her students to see her laugh. Lisa spoke of the importance of laughing at herself about incidents that occur while she was teaching. LeAnn believes it is important to "joke and tell stories" in the classroom. During a visit to LeAnn classroom, I observed a strong learning community, due in part to Leanne's ability to

joke with her students. Anya reflected on her belief that having fun is essential to student learning and Kara wants her students to look back years later and remember having fun in her classroom.

Affirmation from Students

Affirmation from their students was important to the candidates as indicated in the stories they told. Elin shared stories of her first graders hugging her. In addition, comments from two of her students were especially meaningful to her. One comment came from the little boy who told Elin that *he* was *her* teacher. The second comment was from a student who told Elin she was “the best teacher ever.” The excitement with which Lisa shared the story about the student motioning her to come to the hallway to tell Lisa she had finished reading a book for the first time ever was clearly affirmation for Lisa. Leanne was explicit in sharing affirmation from her students when she commented, “The fourth graders love me!” For Anya, the “group hug” from her students at the end of the year was affirmation of the relationships she had built with them. Kara summarized the theme of the importance of relationships when she noted, “It [teaching] is all about relationships.”

Additional Thoughts on Relationships

Kara offered a different perspective on the idea that teachers should always provide a student with choices. She believed there are times when it is her responsibility as the teacher to make the decision that is in the best interest of the child. She believed that offering choices to a student should not always be an option. Kara emphasized the importance of talking with the student and making sure the child understands why she made a particular decision.

Emotional Involvement in Teaching

Attention to the emotional lives of teachers is relatively recent to the field of educational research. Kelchterman (1996) suggests that when teachers talk about their work it is immediately evident that emotions are at the heart of their teaching. An understanding of how emotions impact teaching practices and decision-making is essential to understanding teacher identities. Zembylas (2003b) views emotions as sites of resistance and self-transformation and as such they lead to changes in teachers' identities.

Emotional Involvement with Their Students

The stories often revealed emotional involvement with students. Elin showed empathy for students whose lives outside of school were difficult. She described an incident that "broke her heart" and another time she shared that sometimes she "cried on the way home" after a day at school because of some of her students. LeAnn used the words "it breaks my hearts" in reference to students' lives outside of school. Lisa said she just wanted to go home with her students so she could help them in the evenings.

At times the candidates were explicit in naming their emotions. Kara shared that she "gets excited about the little 'ah-ha' moments." Lisa used the word "passionate" in reference to her love of reading and her feelings about sharing literature with her students. She also used the word "passionate" when talking about her interests in teaching students identified as gifted, an interest she has due to her own experiences as a gifted student. Lisa said she "fell in love" with each grade level during the rotation times after initially being convinced she wanted only to teach kindergarten. She used the word "excited" in talking about her teaching and said she "becomes excited when the kids get

excited.” In talking about her relationship with one student whose behaviors were problematic, she noted she did not become angry with students. Despite the difficulties she has experienced because of her health issues, Lisa made a point of saying she is *not* an angry person and therefore does not vent anger on children. During one of her interviews, Elin commented that she had no idea she would be so excited about teaching and working with children.

Emotional Experiences as OSSYP Students

In December, the teacher candidates waited with great anticipation to learn their student teaching assignments for the second semester. Elin described this time as “my heart was racing.” In another situation, Kara used the term “panicked” when she told the story about the birthday part and the difficulty she had in handling the situation when her host was not in the room to support her.

The candidates reflected on the emotions they displayed in the classroom while student teaching. Elin wanted her students to see her laugh. A different view was offered by Kara and Anya regarding their responses to students’ behaviors. Both recognized the times when they allowed their students’ behaviors to upset them. Anya said she “hated it” when she displayed her frustrations with her students’ behaviors, and Kara said she was unhappy with herself when she allowed her students to see her “riled up” because of their behaviors. Both were conscious of the negative impact these reactions had on students’ behaviors. Both understood that if they remained calm, the students did also.

Emotional Responses to Classroom Observations

Some candidates’ stories revealed emotional involvement with students when they observed teachers who, in their view, were mistreating a child. After working with a

student who was not able to complete his math work and was instructed by the teacher not to help him, LeAnn looked back on the incident and described her feelings as “I was so upset.” She added that by not helping this student, the teacher was withholding academic and emotional support from the child. In response to her observations of a lesson in a special education classroom, a lesson she believed to be well designed for the specific needs of the students, LeAnn used the term “gratifying” to describe how she felt after observing this particular teacher working with students. Kara believed that a teacher she observed during an earlier field experience was withholding emotional and instructional support for a girl in a fifth grade class. From Kara’s perspective, the student was struggling with academic work, and the only feedback provided by the classroom teacher was negative. Kara revisited this story in several interviews, indicating the impact the experience had on her.

During their rotation times at the different grade levels, several candidates observed a few teachers interacting with students in ways they did not want to emulate in their own teaching. Kara observed in a fourth grade classroom where the teacher was, in her words, “very traditional, the kids sat in rows, and they were never allowed to talk.” This was the same classroom where one of the students told Kara he was permitted to read only the books in his book box and books at his level. Kara’s commented, “I couldn’t teach like that.” As a result of her rotation time in a second grade classroom, Anya was determined “not to be a teacher like that.” Four of the candidates identified teaching practices during their rotation times they believed would not work for them; practices that were not in line with their beliefs about how children learn.

Sharing Their Emotions

Of the five teacher candidates in the study, Elin was the one most comfortable in talking about her emotions. A week before she began student teaching, she started her interview with the comment, “Mrs. D., I’m having a big ‘old’ breakdown.” From my perspective, Elin dealt with stress by “getting it out there,” putting a label on it, and moving on. She had the ability to frame the stress and contain its impact on her. Her mother’s conversation with her about OSMs helped her keep things in perspective. By acknowledging her stress, Elin was able to be in control of her stress.

The topic of stress was suggested by only one of the interview questions during the yearlong study. The question regarding stress was framed in terms of how each of the candidates handled stress. By comparison to other themes, stress was seldom mentioned. If students came to an interview under a great deal of stress, it was not obvious to me. Elin and LeAnn noted at the end of the year that for them the interviews provided relief from stress.

Self-concept

A teacher’s concept of herself includes the perception she has of her own worth and her perception of how others value her. Another dimension of self-concept is how the individuals view their competencies and capabilities in particular situations (Wilson & Deaney, 2010). One’s self-concept is critical to her teaching identities since it directly influences how she carries out the acts of teaching. Self-concept determines one’s willingness to take on new tasks and when these tasks are successfully completed, self-confidence is enhanced [examples of increasing self confidence are found under other subheadings in this chapter].

While revisiting the interview transcripts in preparation for writing their stories, I realized I had always considered each of the five as having a strong sense of self. As college juniors in my classes, each had an inner strength or maturity that I did not see in most other undergraduates. Although a strong self-concept was never identified as a criteria for participation in my study, this character trait was most likely a factor in my selection process. At least once during the year, each candidate offered a comment indicating her concept of herself. Kara shared, “I am who I am and I don’t want to be anyplace where they try to change me.” Lisa said, “I am who I am and I can’t change that.” Leanne viewed herself as very self-confident but always “wanting to do better.” Elin commented, “I know who I am.” After overcoming her self-doubt, putting aside her mother’s advice to “do it right,” and taking the initiative to be proactive in asking questions, Anya emerged with a more positive self concept as indicated by her comment, “I know how I want to teach and I don’t have to do it like everyone else.”

Constructing Teacher Knowledge

Teachers construct knowledge that is specific to their teaching practices, an observation first proposed by Elbaz in 1981. In addition to knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of curriculum, Elbaz identifies three additional categories of knowledge; *practical knowledge* is the knowledge derived from their teaching practices, classroom management and students’ needs. The second category, *knowledge of themselves*, comes from how they work toward their goals for teaching. The third category, *interactions*, refers to teachers’ knowledge that is based on social interactions with others in their teaching environment. It was Elbaz who introduced the term “practical knowledge” into educational research and literature. Clandinin (1989) describes the “certain kind of

knowledge” that teachers have as “knowledge that is practical, experiential, and shaped by a teacher’s purposes and values” (p. 121). Teacher knowledge, the author continues, is very specific to each individual teacher since it includes the individual’s beliefs, prior experiences, and the contexts in which the knowledge is constructed.

In the following section, I share comments regarding teacher knowledge that were common among the five candidates. Following that section, I share examples of teacher knowledge specific to each of the candidates.

Teacher Knowledge Among the Five Teacher Candidates

Although mentioned only a few times in the early interviews, the candidates spoke of learning organizational and classroom management skills. Each of the five candidates was specific in noting how much she learned by observing teachers engaged in teaching. All of the candidates acknowledged they were learning to teach by teaching and learning through direct interaction with their students. They were in situations where collaboration with their grade level teams was an important part of constructing their teacher knowledge. These grade level team experiences made it possible for the teacher candidates to understand how collaboration works and the value of collaboration. By engaging in collaboration first hand, they added to their teacher knowledge as they developed a deeper understanding of the concept of collaboration over time.

Learning how to make instructional decisions based on what they learned about their students added to their teacher knowledge. All of the candidates identified problematic areas of instruction and then made changes in their teaching or in the instructional materials they were using. They accepted responsibility for making changes in their instruction as opposed to seeing deficiencies in their students. Because the

candidates were in situations where they had the freedom and support to adapt and revise plans as needed, they had opportunities to further construct their teacher knowledge.

LeAnn’s teacher knowledge.

LeAnn learned that formal pencil and paper assessments were not always necessary for her to know what her students had learned. After listening in on a small group literature discussion, she realized that listening carefully to their discussions provided her with valuable assessment information. After observing how students in her school were placed in Response to Intervention [RTI] groups, Leanne expressed her belief that groups should be determined by what teachers know about the students and not according to formal assessments. LeAnn learned also that student materials can make the difference between student engagement or non-engagement. When she introduced authentic literature [stories] into her social studies lessons, her students became excited about their study of Missouri.

Kara’s teacher knowledge.

Kara, like LeAnn, realized she understood her students’ learning better by “listening to what they are talking about.” Kara acknowledged the value of the rotation times at the different grade levels and said this aspect of the OSSYP program gave her insights into all the grades and an understanding of what happens before and after each grade level. From her host teacher, Kara learned that the teacher sets the tone for the classroom; the teacher’s actions are a powerful determining factor in how students respond. Kara added to her teacher knowledge when she realized that her excitement for teaching was tied directly to her students’ excitement for learning, and their excitement was in turn a factor in her enthusiasm for teaching.

Anya's teacher knowledge.

Anya learned that setting clear expectations and providing consequences for not meeting those expectations affected the learning community in her classroom. She learned that relationships with students “don't just happen” and that she needed to facilitate activities that make it possible to establish relationships with students. Anya learned to observe students' responses to her lessons, and based on these observations, she determined a course of action in making changes in her teaching. Through meaningful observations she learned to plan and implement lessons to meet the needs of her students. Most importantly, Anya learned she needed to assume responsibility for asking the questions that led to the information she needed to improve her teaching.

Elin's teacher knowledge. Elin learned that careful planning [going beyond just reading over the lesson in the manual] was essential in preparing for a successful lesson. She found that writing instructions for a lesson on the board and reading through the instructions with her first graders made a significant difference in their ability to follow through with the assignment. Working with a grade level team that valued her input and at the same time encouraged her to take lesson plans back to her classroom and “make them her own” made it possible for Elin to understand the value of collaborating with colleagues.

Lisa's teacher knowledge. Lisa learned that singing facilitated her students' movement during transition times in the classroom. She learned that her students were successful in completing assignments when her instructions were clear and specific. Lisa realized that by carefully observing her students and learning their interests, they in turn

took the lead in their learning. Using her knowledge about the students, she learned to plan instruction that followed their lead.

Each of the teacher candidates acknowledged they “learned so much that year” and that the ability to construct their teacher knowledge was to a great extent made possible by the OSSYP program.

Embodiment of Teaching

John Dewey (1929) was the first to consider the concept of a mind and body connection. Using the term “body-mind,” Dewey argued that we assume a living body when we talk about social interactions and participation. LeGrange (2004) continues by suggesting that embodiment occurs when “thinking and doing become one activity” (p. 391). This author argues that the connection between the mind and the body is closely related to the relationships between theory and practice. Theory is regarded as a product of cognition and the mind while practice involves the bodily activities that carry out the theory. The body puts into practice the mind’s ideas. Therefore, when teaching is embodied, theory becomes practice and practice becomes theory.

Embodiment of Teaching: Looking Like a Teacher

An easily identified aspect of embodiment was the change in the teacher candidates’ physical appearances and attire once they entered the program. I met Lisa in the hallway on my visit the first day of school and remember thinking to myself, “She is a teacher!” Her dress and body language signaled the transformation from college student to teacher. On visits to the other schools, I saw the other teacher candidates with professional looking hairstyles and attire, and as with Lisa, both were indicative of their transitioning to being a teacher. The importance of looking professional was a topic in

stories from Anya, Lisa and Elin. Anya noted the importance of appearing professional when out in the community where parents might see her. Elin spoke of the importance of looking professional from the perspective of seeing herself in competition in the job market. Lisa described the staff members at her school as “dressing very professionally.”

Embodiment Modeled by Host Teachers

Each of the candidates noted how her host modeled the kind of teacher she wanted to become; each of the five saw her host as the embodiment of good teaching. Anya noted how her host embodied a calm manner and the calming impact this had on the students. Kara’s host shared aloud her thinking process while she was teaching and in this think aloud process, Kara’s host explained her own embodiment of being a teacher.

Similarly, Elin’s mom modeled the embodiment of professionalism and continued to talk with Elin throughout the year about professional conduct. Elin described being a teacher as “having the essence of a teacher” and explained essence as the manner in which a teacher conducts herself in the classroom, at staff meetings and in public. Having the essence of a teacher, Elin explained, was seeing one’s self as a teacher. Elin’s explanation of her use of the phrase “having the essence of a teacher” is in keeping with the concept of “the embodiment of a teacher.”

Embodiment as the Physical Act of Teaching

Describing one way in which she carried out the physical act of teaching, Kara spoke of how she placed herself in relation to where her students were sitting when she commented, “I get down there with them.” She also told of how students “snuggled up” and read with her. Lisa, when talking one-on-one with a student would “get down at her [the child’s] eye level.” All the candidates shared stories of giving and receiving hugs

from their students. On my visits to LeAnn's classroom, I found her standing among the students' desks, usually surrounded by several students engaged in conversations with her.

Lisa's story about team teaching with Karyn provided a model for understanding the time-spatial concept of embodiment. Lisa described how she stood to one side of the room, still among the students sitting at their desks, while Karyn stood across the room, also among student desks. While they were team teaching, Lisa and Karyn talked back and forth, making it possible for their students to observe how they were building on one another's ideas. The students were also contributing to the discussion. Lisa's and Karyn's proximity when teaching placed them in the time of the lesson and in a particular location in the classroom that facilitated interactions among everyone in the classroom.

Because of her health issues, youthful appearance, and physical engagement with students in her classroom, Lisa provided numerous examples of embodiment. Due to her petite stature and youthful appearance, older students did not take her seriously at first and some viewed her as another student. Lisa said she looked like all the other ninth graders. Looking forward to the following year as a Teaching Fellow in fifth grade, she noted that some of her students would be as tall as she. Lisa's OCD and Tourette's have impacted her and are a part of her embodiment. She chooses to respond in positive ways to these issues and as a result has become strong-willed and determined to succeed. Lisa embodied teaching when she sang with her students and as she moved among the students while teaching and during transitions times.

Embodiment of Emotions

Emotions are directly connected to one's bodily actions. It is through physical expression that emotions are revealed, making emotion an important aspect of embodiment. The work of William James is frequently cited with regard to the relationship between the physical body and one's emotions. James believed that emotions are a result of the body's reactions to emotional stimuli (Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber & Ric, 2005).

Kara noted how upset she was with herself when she acted in a way that allowed her students to see her frustration with their behaviors. Elin wanted her students to see her laugh and to see her express her emotions. Kara noted times when she did *not* want her students to see her display her emotions. Elin, on the other hand, wanted her students to see her display of emotions by observing her laugh. Elin provided an example of embodied emotions in the story about her decision on a course of action in dealing with a child's behavior issues. She commented, "I went with my gut feeling."

Summary

This chapter highlights eight influences found to be significant in determining a teacher's identity. The influences are highlighted through examples from the stories the candidates shared. Even though the eight influences [themes] that provide the framework for this chapter were common to the stories told by all the candidates, the content of the stories varied. For example, the five candidates engaged in a variety of discourses throughout all aspects of their OSSYP experiences, but the stories each told were particular to her circumstances and to the people with whom each interacted.

Considering the narratives across each of the eight themes, one gains insights into how the candidates were creating their teaching identities, and in addition, their stories help to show how the influences on their identities are closely connected and interact with each other. For example, reflection leads to recognition of critical moments, and relationships with students are directly related to a teacher's concept of herself and ultimately her teaching identity. The culminating effect of all these influences on their identities is the embodiment of "being a teacher." Their stories provided data for the study, and more important, telling their stories enhanced the candidates' embodiment and understanding of being a teacher.

Chapter Six reports the findings from the study and suggests implications for future research.

Chapter Six: Summary of The Insights and Implications for Future Research

This study was guided by my interest in learning how preservice teachers develop their teaching identities. I chose a narrative inquiry approach (see Chapter Three) to the research since I understand the value of narrative in capturing the complexity of teachers' lives and experiences. My decision is supported by Schaafsma and Vincz (2007) who suggest that the study of narratives allow researchers to search for meanings rather than to look for answers and in their search for meanings, researchers come to terms with the new questions they discover in the research process.

I identified the themes in each candidate's stories and later found the same themes to be common among stories told by all the candidates. These themes suggest the factors that influence how the candidates were constructing their teacher identities.

Insights Gained from The Stories

Early Indications of A Teacher Identity: Insight One

Upon entry into the teacher education program, the candidates identities included, for example, that of college student, daughter, sibling, friend, or employee working to earn money for tuition. In addition, the OSSYP students told stories that indicated a teacher identity among their other identities, a teaching identity in its early stages of development. The candidates related stories of fond memories of former teachers and how some of these teachers inspired them to become educators. The teacher candidates' identities, in their early stages, provided the foundations upon which to continue construction of their teaching identities. For each of the candidates, the growth and development of a teaching identity during the OSSYP experience was significant.

Teaching Identities Are Socially Constructed: Insight Two

Teaching identities are continually being constructed and revised through the relationships teachers have with others, including their students. Some relationships are inherent in the social structure of a school and others are chosen by the individual. Coldron and Smith (1999) also suggest that being a teacher means being seen by others as a teacher while at the same time continually redefining a teaching identity within the social context of the school. Mead (1934) reminds us that the “self,” or one’s identity, is a result of social communication. According to Mead, the “self” can exist only in a social context.

From the time they first entered the schools to which they were assigned, the OSSYP students engaged in discourses with administrators, teachers, and other staff members. Leading up to and including the student teaching experiences, these teacher candidates constantly interacted with host teachers, grade level teammates, and the students with whom they worked in the classrooms. Each established a network of support in her school and interacted with members of that support network. Their becoming teachers was socially negotiated and their teaching identities were being constructed through discussion and reflection. Each candidate was becoming a member of “a community of practice” (Wenger, 1999) through her interactions with members of the existing school community.

Stories, a form of discourse and social interaction, provided the data for this study. In addition, stories were essential to the candidates’ evolving identities. (Bruner, 1991) The candidates shared with enthusiasm and honesty their stories of day-to-day lives in the classroom. In the process of relating their stories during the interviews, they identified new insights into themselves and their teaching. An analysis of recurring

themes in the stories the teachers told revealed the factors that influenced their teaching identities. Each of these factors, discussed in the following sections, impacted their teacher identities. The influences on their identities were grounded in their narratives and carried out through social interactions within the context of the individual schools (Danielwicz, 2001).

The OSSYP Program: Opportunities for Construction of Teacher Identities: Insight

Three

In his landmark book *Communities of Practice*, Wenger (1999) writes, “A community of practice is a living context that can give newcomers access to competence and also invite a personal experience of engagement by which to incorporate that competence into an identity of participation” (p. 214). The university OSSYP program provided a “community of practice and a living context” in which the candidates further constructed their teaching identities.

In the spring of their junior year, the teacher candidates anxiously awaited news of their school placements for the following year and were eager to make their first visits to the schools. As elementary education majors at the university, they heard about the OSSYP program for several years prior to entering the program. The candidates viewed the program as “invaluable” and one commented, “You can’t put a price tag on it.” The teacher candidates reported that they learned more during this year than the previous three years of their undergraduate program combined.

The OSSYP program supported the teacher candidates’ apprenticeship into teaching and the profession by providing a structure that facilitated discourses at various levels and by making available learning experiences through engagement with students

and colleagues. The OSSYP program immersed the candidates in the culture and daily operations of the school beginning a week before the start of the school year. The schools to which the candidates were assigned had existing cultures that further supported the teacher candidates. For examples, colleagues at these schools made the OSSYP students feel welcomed at the beginning of the year and were open to answering their questions and helping with lesson planning. Members of the teaching staffs at the schools included teachers who were former OSSYP students, and therefore, understood the program. Each of the schools included other staff members who had participated in or were currently enrolled in the Teaching Fellows program at the University. These colleagues brought to their teaching experiences an understanding of the critical importance of collaborative relationships and reflective practices, all part of the culture at each school.

Reporting to their schools a week prior to the start of the school year, the candidates helped teachers prepare classrooms and materials for the first day of school. From the moment they reported to their schools, the OSSYP students were immersed in the activities of the school and interacted with school personnel. Once school began, the candidates spent about two weeks in classrooms at each grade level. In these classrooms, they interacted with students, worked one-on-one with students and helped with small group work. Each of the five candidates began the year feeling certain she knew what grade level she eventually wanted to teach. However, as a result of the time spent in classrooms at the different grade levels, each changed her mind or decided that her preference for a particular grade no longer mattered.

Placement in the individual schools provided a context in which the OSSYP students had opportunities to work with experienced teachers and along side students. The school placements were the sites of knowledge construction, especially given that the OSSYP students were immersed in an environment that facilitated their exploration of new ideas and their discovery of new insights. Reassuring to the teacher candidates was the realization that they “didn’t have to do it all by themselves.” Each of the five sought out colleagues who were former Teaching Fellows to ask about the Fellows program and seek advice on a range of issues. Wenger (1999) distinguishes between *acquiring* knowledge of teaching and *creating* knowledge of teaching. I suggest that the OSSYP program placed the candidates in communities in which each created her knowledge of teaching.

During the first semester, the OSSYP students had more freedom during the day to talk with other OSSYP students in the building. Since they were not solely responsible for classrooms at that point, they could leave on an “as needed basis,” for example, to meet with the researcher or to meet with the university liaison. The OSSYP students talked with each other about what they were seeing in classrooms, shared instructional ideas that they liked, and discussed their university course work. These times to talk facilitated friendships and close ties with one another. During the first semester they were also enrolled in courses taught on campus and had opportunities to be together and form a community of learners within the OSSYP program itself. Once the candidates assumed their responsibilities as student teachers, it was no longer possible to leave the classroom and to communicate as often with other OSSYP students, and they were no longer taking courses on campus. In addition, at this point, their support networks

shifted from other OSSYP students to closer collaborations with their host teachers and grade level teams. Their closest ties were no longer as students with students; there ties were now teacher to teacher.

The OSSYP students' attendance at team meetings during the first semester allowed them to observe teachers planning lessons and assessments and provided the opportunity to become familiar with the grade level collaborations. While student teaching, each candidate took a more active role in the grade level meetings and was then viewed by the other teachers as an equally participating teammate. Each candidate received support from her teammates in planning lessons, and significant to each was the message from her team that she did not "have to do it like we do it." The candidates were encouraged to adapt lesson plans as they deemed best for their students.

Interacting with her host teacher during student teaching was a critical factor in identity development and a positive experience for each of the five candidates. The host teachers and students formed close working relationships that evolved into good friendships. The host teachers modeled instructional strategies. Significant for the candidates was how their host teachers modeled positive interactions with students through the use of carefully selected language. In addition, their host teachers provided guidance for the candidates while allowing them the freedom to plan and implement lessons along with the freedom to "stumble" and have the experience of teaching lessons that were less than successful. Reflective conversations and suggestions supported the student teachers in rethinking their approaches and making changes in their teaching.

Four teacher candidates credited their learning *how* to reflect to their host teachers' modeling and guiding them through the reflection process. The fifth candidate

credited her OSSYP literacy instructor for teaching her *how* to reflect. Four of the candidates' hosts were former OSSYP students and three of those four were former Teaching Fellows. These four candidates believed that because their hosts had been mentored, they in turn knew how to be a mentor to others.

The OSSYP students shared stories of times when there was a disconnect between what they were observing and what they had learned in their university coursework. On these few occasions, the candidates described students sitting quietly in rows with little or no interaction among members of the class. They observed a few incidents when they believed a teacher was verbally mistreating a child or simply ignoring a child's needs. These were not the classrooms, however, where any of the five was assigned for student teaching. Instead, the candidates were assigned to classrooms where, for example, the literacy programs were based on reading and writing workshop formats similar to what they learned about in their university courses. When several candidates encountered a math program they believed was not meeting the needs of their students, a program that was not a match with what they learned in their math methods course, they had the support of their host teachers in implementing their own teaching strategies. The OSSYP experience provided opportunities for the candidates to learn with and from colleagues as well as learn with and from their students. Their learning to be a teacher was taking place in classrooms and in school environments that supported the program and the individual candidates. The reputation and the history of the OSSYP program speak to the program's credibility in preparing teacher candidates to be successful in their own classrooms.

The OSSYP program offers, in Dewey's (1963) words, "educative experiences" for the teacher candidates. According to Dewey, students must have opportunities to be

active participants in experiences in order to learn. These experiences become educative when they build on prior experiences and when the new experience is carefully planned to allow the student to gain new knowledge and understandings. Dewey suggests also that the new experience must be conducted in a way that instills in the student a desire to continue learning. I suggest that the OSSYP program offered “an educative experience” for the teacher candidates.

Reflective Practices in Learning to Teach: Insight Four

None of the interview questions asked specifically about reflective practices. Several of the interviews prompts did, however, lead to the candidates sharing their reflective thinking. For example, the prompts “Tell me a story about a time when. . . .,” or, “Tell me a story about a child who puzzles you” led to reflective responses.

An understanding of one’s self is essential to the construction of a teacher identity. It is through reflective practices that this self understanding is actualized. The reflection process must be at a conscious level and must be supported through dialogue with trusted colleagues. Knowing how to reflect and having the means for engaging in reflective practices are critical not only to teacher identities, but to the education profession in general. (Warin, Maddock, Pell and Hargraves, 2006)

The teacher candidates reported they had written numerous reflection papers during their prior education courses, but it was in the classroom and with their host teachers modeling for them that the candidates learned how to reflect in more meaningful ways. Reflecting on their experiences while student teaching took on new meanings since the candidates were now reflecting on responses from the students *they* were teaching and on lessons *they* themselves had planned and implemented. Engaging in

reflective conversations with their hosts pushed their thinking, helped them see different perspectives, and guided them in making decisions in how to improve teaching practices, including relationships with students. Most important, the candidates now recognized the power of reflective thinking on their teaching practices.

Reflective thinking impacts teaching practices.

Reflecting on their teaching practices led to changes in their teaching and changes in classroom management. Sometimes, the OSSYP students were reflecting as they were teaching, or as Schon (1983) names it, “reflecting in action.” Reflecting in action led some OSSYP students to decide on a different direction for the remainder of the lesson. In these times, they recognized their students’ needs, responded to these needs and to students’ interests, and adapted the lessons accordingly.

Reflecting on their observations of their students helped the candidates move their thinking from what *they* were doing to a focus on what their *students* doing were doing. Reflecting on lessons they themselves had planned and implemented, as opposed to using lessons from commercial curriculum materials, made it possible for the teacher candidates to experience more positive feedback from students. In addition, they realized their own lessons were meaningful and engaging for the students. Reflections on the OSSYP program indicated the positive impact the program had the candidates becoming teachers, and more importantly, the candidates recognized the extent to which they were adding to their knowledge of teaching as a result of the OSSYP experience. Sharing their reflections about the program was a natural part of their conversations and was done so with minimal prompting from the interview questions.

The interviews generally lasted about an hour, sometimes longer. There were no time limits set. Sometimes, near the end of an interview, the conversation returned to reflective thinking. These were the moments when the teacher candidates, now student teaching, uncovered new insights into themselves or into their teaching.

Reflective thinking becomes reflexive thinking.

When reflective thinking uncovered new insights and the teacher candidate acted on these new insights, her thinking, at this point, became reflexive. (Discussed in Chapter Two) In other words, reflective thinking that led to action became reflexive thinking at the time action was taken. Reflecting on the math lessons from the school's curriculum materials, lessons that were not meeting the needs of the students, the candidates adapted the curriculum plans or devised their own math lessons. For one candidate, classroom transitions were chaotic and noisy. Reflecting on the problem and then determining a new course of action resulted in reflexive thinking. When action was taken based on reflective thinking, the resulting reflexive thinking influenced the teacher's teaching identity.

Reflective thinking reveals critical moments.

Critical moments, the events that bring about change in teaching practices and often mark turning points, are closely tied to reflective practices. As Tripp (1994) suggests, critical moments are created by the teacher when she reflects on an incident and then interprets the incident as having a strong impact on her teaching. Considering Tripp's (1994) explanation of critical moments, an incident became critical when the OSSYP students reflected and placed the situation within the context of a story. Because their OSSYP experience provided opportunities for risk taking in their teaching, and because each had a network of support, there were opportunities for critical moments to

occur. Identification of critical moments was also facilitated through the interview process and the prompts that led to reflective thinking

During the interviews, each OSSYP student was asked to identify the moment when she first felt she had become a teacher. Even though each said she “felt *like* a teacher” at the beginning of the OSSYP experience, several months later each easily identified the moment or experience during which she felt she had *become* a teacher. Now, along with others viewing them as teachers, they had internalized “becoming” a teacher.

After rereading the transcripts and recalling moments from the interviews that stood out for me as the researcher, I identified what I believed were critical moments for the candidates during their OSSYP experience. For Lisa, there were two critical moments: one, her recognition of the importance of her ability to laugh at herself and, two, her realization of the extent to which she had created close relationships with her students through the read-alouds. Anya’s reflections created a critical moment when she realized she knew how *she* wanted to teach and she knew she didn’t have to teach like everyone else. For Kara, two critical moments were realizing she was learning to teach by teaching and realizing she “had to get down their with them and listen.” LeAnn’s competitive drive to be better than everyone else caused her to realize that she became the best teacher she could be through her collaborations with teachers for whom she had great respect. Elin, most reticent about beginning her student teaching tenure, recognized how successful she had been in assuming full responsibility for the classroom in the absence of her host teacher.

Relationships with students considered through reflection.

Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) suggest that relationships formed in the classroom are vital to teachers' identities. These relationships are created by the teachers through their investment in the lives of students. Relationships are supported through a sense of community in the classroom and by a teacher's integrating personal connections. This sense of a connection with students and their sense of belonging in the classroom are directly related to teachers' identities. From the initial coding of the data, it was obvious that the candidates valued their relationships with their students, and in addition, they drew a connection between positive relationships and student learning. As with several other themes identified in the stories, none of the interview questions asked specifically about relationships with students. Telling stories about interactions with their students was a natural part of the conversations.

The OSSYP students shared stories about their interactions with individual students as well as stories about interactions with their entire classes. The conversations with individual students were often "in the moment" of needing to address a behavior issue or discuss problem solving strategies. The candidates offered support and encouragement and "ah-ha" moments were celebrated with individual students. Classroom learning communities were supported through read-alouds and sharing quality children's literature. Some whole-class interactions took the form of the candidate stating guidelines for behaviors and expectations for assignments, thus leading to more productive learning environments.

The importance of humor in the classroom was noted by each of the OSSYP students. Sometimes the candidate laughed at herself over a silly mistake and sometimes

the read aloud-story lead to laughter. All five candidates stated their belief that learning should be fun. In addition, the candidates learned about the interests of their students by interacting with them, and interactions with students provided information for assessing progress in learning new concepts.

Interactions with students provided affirmation for each OSSYP student, affirmation that her teaching was affective and that the students viewed her as a teacher. Statements from a class such as “We love you!” provided affirmation. Students in their classrooms demonstrated affirmation for the candidate when they showed excitement for lessons and other learning activities. One teacher identified the “cause and effect” of enthusiasm for learning: “When I am excited, the students get excited, and when the students are excited, I get excited.”

Reflective thinking reveals emotional involvement in teaching.

Recognizing one’s own emotions and taking responsibility for those emotions is a part of constructing one’s teacher identity (Cattley, 2007). In order to understand how teaching identities are formed, one must consider the part emotions play in constituting those identities (Zembylas, 2003b).

A range of emotions was identified in the stories the OSSYP shared, including empathy for their students with difficult home situations, frustration when something at school was not going well, and excitement for breakthroughs in student learning. The candidates were sometimes explicit in naming their emotions; for example, their use of the words “passionate,” “excited,” and “a nervous wreck.” From the perspective of the researcher, it was evident to me that each of the candidates was emotionally invested in her students, caring about them and working hard to provide students with meaningful

learning experiences. Evidence of the emotional investment was seen both in the compassion with which they spoke of students and in their desire to make lessons meaningful and engaging.

Each teacher candidate had her own ways of dealing with the emotion of stress, was that included walking her dog or enjoying a Disney movie evening with friends. Two candidates noted that the interview process helped relieve stress. Each candidate had at least one contact with whom they confided outside of school. Those outside-of-school contacts included parents, friends, boyfriends, and roommates. A supportive context provided by the OSSYP program and the candidates' sense of self-concept made the experience less stressful, and when stressed, the candidates were prepared to acknowledge the stress and deal with it.

Geijssel and Meijers (2005) suggest that emotions are critical to identity-forming process. The authors explain that since identities are impacted when teachers respond to a situation or their beliefs are challenged, emotions are a natural part of these changes in their lives.

The Construction of Teacher Knowledge and Its Impact on Identity: Insight Five

Teacher knowledge, or what teachers know about teaching, is constructed through social interactions with others, both in and outside the classroom. "How teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 2-3). Since knowledge impacts practice, and practice influences identity, then the construction of the knowledge of teaching is directly related to the teacher's evolving teacher identity. Petrosky (1994) suggests that teachers create

their knowledge of teaching through educational discourses and in the process they also re-create themselves as teachers and thinkers. Since knowledge impacts practice, and practice influences identity, then the construction of the knowledge of teaching is directly related to the teacher's evolving teacher identity.

Constructing teacher knowledge through discourse.

The construction of their teaching identities was facilitated by the OSSYP students themselves when they accepted invitations to become members of the learning communities in which they were placed. The candidates entered into the educational discourses of the schools, including participation in collaborative discussions with teaching colleagues. These discourses, along with their interactions with students, provided the means by which they constructed their teaching identities.

Constructing teacher knowledge by teaching.

Through close observations of how their students responded to the lessons they taught, the OSSYP students identified concerns about their instructional methods and began searching for ways to revise lessons in the curriculum materials. Sometimes the candidates planned and implemented their own lessons, either because the curriculum materials were not bringing the results they hoped for, or they simply had ideas of their own they wanted to try. When teaching lessons they designed as opposed to lessons from curriculum materials, the candidates experienced positive reactions and more student engagement. The freedom to try out their own ideas along with the support of their host teachers allowed them to explore ways to "make the lessons their own." They were learning how to make their teaching strategies work for both them and for their students.

All the candidates encountered experiences that led them to understand their students' need for explicit directions for assignments and clear expectations for behaviors.

Constructing teacher knowledge through observation of teachers.

The candidates acknowledged the value of observing other teachers in the daily act of teaching, managing the classroom, and interacting with children. Seeing classroom teachers in the act of “doing,” in some cases, was the first time the OSSYP students understood what guided reading “looked like,” and how classroom teachers integrated literature into their lessons. Observations of other teachers helped them create an understanding that teaching is unique to each teacher, and each teacher constructs her own teacher knowledge. The candidates identified teaching styles they hoped to emulate while rejecting some teaching practices they observed.

Constructing teacher knowledge with students.

Each teacher candidate acknowledged that she was learning to teach as she worked with students; she was learning to teach by teaching. It was through the moment-by-moment decision making process of the daily management of the classroom that they were constructing their teacher knowledge. They were learning what practices were effective and what practices did not work well. Through their interactions with the students, the candidates developed an understanding of how individual students learn as well as what their students knew and did not know. Each teacher candidate was learning *from* her students and *with* her students, placing students at the center of the construction of their teacher knowledge. The candidates learned to use their observations of students and their students' responses as factors in making instructional decisions, thereby adding to their teacher knowledge.

Constructing teacher knowledge through reflexive thinking.

Essential to the construction of their teacher knowledge was the candidates' ability to reflect and the support their host teachers' provided by engaging them in reflective thinking. When reflective thinking moved to reflexive thinking, new knowledge was constructed, thereby leading to changes in the teacher's identity.

Construction of teacher knowledge facilitated through risk taking and agency.

A willingness to take risks in their teaching led to the construction their teacher knowledge as the candidates discovered strategies that worked, and strategies that were not successful. The willingness to take risks, or agency, is defined by Bandura (2006) as the ability to take action with intent. Wilson and Deaney (2010) define agency as "a combination of intention and action that results in making things happen" (p. 173). The OSSYP students demonstrated agency when they questioned the status quo, took risks in their teaching, and when they were proactive in seeking advice and help. A willingness to take full responsibility for their actions and their students' learning are indicative of agency when we consider the candidates' attitudes and beliefs in themselves. This agency made it possible for them to form intentions, set goals to carry out those intentions, plan the appropriate course of action, construct and carry out the action, and most importantly, reflect on the soundness of their thoughts and actions (Bandura, 2006).

Agency was evident when the candidates questioned the status quo by voicing their concerns about how students were grouped by skill levels. Agency was seen when the candidates learned to make instruction "their own" and to "put their own spin" on lessons. As they assumed more and more responsibly, they were learning to make the "moment to moment" decisions that are part of daily life in the classroom. The

candidates looked to themselves for resolutions to problems as opposed to looking for deficiencies in the students as the source problems. When they assumed responsibilities, their teaching knowledge expanded as they learned to resolve issues that arose. They learned to name a problem and how to go about finding solutions. Having agency facilitated the construction of their teacher knowledge.

Narratives and Identities: They Are Their Stories: Insight Six

Stories provide meaning to our lives and make possible our connections with others. We live our lives through stories, both the stories we tell and those we hear. “Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, p. 13). Narrative identity, then, is the idea that the stories we tell over time, both to ourselves and to others, play a vital role in the construction of our sense of who we are (Elbaz, 1981).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest the “how and the why” of the stories the teacher candidates shared when they assert that “Stories allow teachers to capture and describe experiences as they occur ‘in the midst’ [of teaching]” (p. 63). Throughout the interview process, the candidates were “in the midst” of working with students in classroom environments. They told stories about events that happened that day, or in the recent past. As they shared their stories, the candidates organized their thinking and made sense of the events as their teaching experiences played out day-by-day. Since the interview prompts were open-ended, and because the researcher attempted to facilitate conversations that followed a candidate’s lead, the stories were their own constructions. Their stories were their interpretations of recent events and were the stories *they* chose to share.

During the pilot study and for the first interviews of the dissertation study, the candidates shared stories about “not knowing how to do guided reading” and “not knowing how to deal with a particular behavior issue.” Common to what we often see in teacher candidates, they focused on themselves and their behavior as the teacher. Gradually, their stories turned to sharing what they were learning about their students, their observations of their students, and their own responsibilities for teaching these children. As they told their stories, the candidates organized their beliefs and theories about teaching and learning. Their stories, therefore, were a factor in the construction of their teaching identities.

The candidates’ early stories revealed their concerns about having the teaching skills and techniques necessary to be successful in the classroom. Once engaged with students in the classroom, and with support from host teachers and mentors, the teacher candidates became involved in “doing.” The stories transitioned from concerns regarding the technical aspects of teaching to stories about their students and their own interactions with colleagues. Because they were engaged in working with students, and given encouragement to “try their wings,” the OSSYP students lived the experiences about which they told their stories. Not only did they have stories to tell, they narrated their experiences with ease. They knew I valued their stories and that their stories would eventually reach a wider audience. If, as Watson (2006) writes, “People construct narratives and narratives construct people,” (p. 510) then teaching identities were being constructed as the teacher candidates shared their narratives throughout the research process.

Bakhtin, Foucault, and Bruner on Identity Construction

As I developed an understanding of the work of Bakhtin, Foucault and Bruner, I identified similarities among their ideas regarding how identities are formed. In this section, I consider the similarities among their ideas on identity.

For Bakhtin, Foucault and Bruner, identities are grounded in discourse and therefore, identity construction is facilitated through language. Individuals determine what aspects of these discourses they may or may not assign their own understandings of their experiences. Bakhtin, Foucault, and Bruner agree that the languages individuals use in these discourses are influenced by the culture, historical backgrounds, and the beliefs and bias of the individuals entering into the discourse.

Bruner suggests that we assign meaning to our experiences through the narratives we construct, narratives that are influenced by the stories we hear others tell. Bakhtin, writing about identity as “ideological becoming,” suggests that we listen to the voices of others, internalize these voices, and then decide what aspects of these other voices we will claim for our own thinking. For Foucault, identities are created when the individual acts in resisting the ideas of others when the ideas are imposed on the individual and are not ideas the individual chooses to accept. When the individual actively resists what is being imposed on him or her, then he or she is actively creating an identity. Bakhtin, Foucault and Bruner each believe that identity is not something that happens to a person. Identities are determined by the individual through a conscious act in response to a social interaction and/or discourse. Bakhtin suggests that identities are formed as the individual determines what ideas he will take from others and claim for his own. For Foucault, identities are created when the individual acts in resistance to ideas being imposed

thereby deciding not to accept the idea. Bruner believes identities are constructed when individuals create meaning for the events in their lives through the stories they tell, meanings that are not in existence until the stories are constructed.

Common to Bakhtin, Foucault, and Bruner are their beliefs that identities are socially constructed through discourses we encounter. The participants in these discourses bring with them their personal histories, cultures, beliefs and bias. Identities are determined through the decisions one makes about accepting or rejecting these discourse, decisions made at the point of something happening that causes us to act on accepting, rejecting, or in some way adapting the discourse to make it our own. Common to the three theorists is the suggestion that our identities are constructed through language and are constantly under construction.

The ideas of Bakhtin, Foucault and Bruner as they relate to identity are reflected throughout this study. The candidates were constructing their teacher identities through discourses in which they engaged, discourses that took place within the social contexts of the schools. Identities were under construction at the point of something happening that caused the candidate to create meaning for the event through a narrative, or the candidate internalized the ongoing discourses and determined her own thinking in response, or when the candidate resisted ideas imposed on her, ideas she was not willing to accept.

A Question Remains for Consideration

One question I realized late in the study relates to the role of competition in the construction of teacher identities. During the interviews, two of the OSSYP students made specific mention of competition, and others talked about the need to “be the best” and “having to do it right.” I identified my question relating to competition while

reading *Schoolteacher* by Lortie (1975). In his seminal work on teaching and teacher education, the author discusses “collegial responsibility” that requires teachers to work together and trust one another (p. 236). With the support provided by the OSSYP program, the candidates began student teaching and assumed responsibility for a classroom full of students for the first time. Mention by the OSSYP students of competition and “getting it right” came early in their student teaching experience. The candidates’ concerns about “getting it right” and “being the best” appeared to dissipate over time, due possibly to becoming immersed in working with their students. As they transitioned from student to classroom teacher, their experience in real collaboration was just beginning. They began to establish close collaborative relationships with colleagues, and in particular with grade-level teammates. The feelings of competitiveness and “getting it right” lessened as they came to trust and rely on others. As Lortie notes, these preservice teachers’ prior experiences working in groups did not carry with them the high stakes that now came with teaching. Lortie notes also that as teachers develop collegial relationships, their sensitivity to their perceived judgments of others decline.

Themes Suggested in the Literature Not Found in The Data

The literature suggests several influences on teacher identities that were not found in the research data. The *impact of former beliefs* and *past school experiences* on a teacher’s identity were noted frequently in the literature. The OSSYP students’ stories did not include references to prior beliefs during the interview process, due most likely to the topic not being addressed in any of the interview questions. Although their prior beliefs almost certainly influenced their teaching practices, without specific questions

relating to the issue, the candidates may not have been aware of the role these beliefs played in the process of becoming a teacher.

Indications of *beliefs in cultural myths* that teachers may bring to their teaching practices were not found in the stories nor was their *evidence of stereotypes*. This was due, perhaps, to the candidates not being confronted with situations that might cause cultural myths and stereotypes to surface. I would suggest also that field experiences during their junior year exposed them to schools in different social economic areas of the community allowing them to dispel myths and stereotypes as they interacted with students from a wide range of background and from different ethnic groups.

The five OSSYP students were not faced with the challenge of *being ask to teach in ways that were contradictory to what they had learned in their university coursework*. With the exception of the math program used in three of the schools, teaching practices in the schools were in line with what the candidates learned in their education courses at the university. Three of the candidates were supported in making changes in the math curriculum. The schools and classrooms to which the teacher candidates were assigned were closely aligned with the philosophy of the teacher education program at the university.

Themes Not Found in The Literature

I identified several topics pertinent to the construction of teacher identities that were not addressed in the literature I reviewed. Missing from the literature is research into the discourse among preservice teachers during their field experiences. These discourses take place in the schools to which preservice teachers are assigned for field experiences. The candidates also engage in discourse with each other when they meet by

geographic regions for university classes. The discourses among the OSSYP students in this study were important to establishing relationships, sharing and evaluating teaching practices they observed, and debriefing throughout their OSSYP experience. The discourse among the OSSYP students themselves, without facilitation from instructors, was a different form of discourse, owned solely by the candidates, and a powerful influence, positive and sometimes negative, on the teacher candidates. This particular discourse occurs “under the radar” and “on the edges,” and is not recognized for its powerful impact on the candidates during this time in their identity development.

Foucault, Bakhtin and Bruner laid the groundwork for me in considering how teacher identities are constructed. Reference is frequently made in the literature to the work of these major theorists, but little or no explanation is provided as to how their theories relate to the construction of teacher identities. From me, it was essential to my understanding of the concept of teaching identities that I had an understanding of the work of these three theorists, and eventually, an understanding of the connections among their theories. Once I established a theoretical framework, I gained deeper understandings of the candidates’ narratives in terms of the implications for identity construction. An understanding of the work of Foucault, Bakhtin and Bruner influenced how I interpreted the data as I continued to revisit the transcripts.

In addition, I found resources in which the author did not provide the in-depth discussion I believe would benefit readers. For example, there is a wealth of information about the importance of *reflective* thinking in teaching, however, little attention is given to *reflexive* thinking. Nor is reflexive thinking well defined or explained in meaningful ways. Reflective thinking is significant only when it leads to action, that action resulting

from reflexive thinking. Changes in teaching practices and the construction of teacher identities are a result of reflexive thinking. The emphasis on reflective thinking stops short of the point at which action is taken and change occurs. In other words, thinking about an issue is not enough. Taking action that results in a change in teaching or identity is what matters.

Educators focus on the positive affects of reflective thinking and little attention is given in the literature to the possible negative aspects of reflective thinking. There are few discussions addressing the need to challenge reflective thinking by suggesting differing perspectives than those offered on an issue. Reflective thinking needs to be questioned and alternative findings need to be considered. Dewey (1938) adds that reflective thinking must be interactive to be truly reflective. Reflection must occur in an interaction in which ideas must be clearly articulated for others, and in interactions that offer prompts from others as a way of encouraging the teacher to think more deeply about the issue at hand. How a teacher's reflection process is influenced by those with whom she shares the process is seldom addressed in the literature, and even then, only briefly. Critical to the outcome of reflective thinking is the validity of the information and the extent of the knowledge about the situation that a teacher brings to her reflective thinking, another aspect of reflection I found mentioned briefly in only one source. In addition, bias, beliefs and stereotypes often enter into the reflection process and go unrecognized for their influences, another issue seldom addressed.

Identity Work in Teacher Education

This study points to several implications for teacher educators. First is the critical importance of involving teacher candidates in thinking and talking about their own

identities, and their teaching identities in particular. The focus on teaching identities is two-fold; it is important that future teachers recognize the importance of understanding their identities both to them as individuals and to the field of education at large, and it is important that teacher educators realize the importance of identity work as well as having an understanding as to how to include identity talk in the courses they teach.

A second implication for teacher education is the importance of reflective thinking in self-understanding and knowing who they are as future teachers. Teacher educators must prioritize reflective thinking and extend conversations about reflective thinking to include discussions about criteria for meaningful reflection. This includes supporting teacher candidates in realizing the impact on reflection from those with whom they reflect. Factors that can restrict reflective thinking need to be recognized; factors that include time restraints, insufficient knowledge brought to the process, and the influence of bias and myths that often go unrecognized. Reflective thinking is not a given; teachers learn how to reflect through interactions with others educators and when time to reflect is a priority. Teacher candidates need to understand that reflective thinking has to become natural and on going. Discussions about and engagement in reflective practices need to be extended to move past the traditional reflection assignments currently in place today.

A third implication for teacher educators is the need to challenge candidates to identify and critically assess the status quo in classrooms. I suggest that teacher educators encourage education majors to ask the questions “Why am I doing what I’m doing?” and “How is what I’m doing in the classroom affecting who I am as a person?” I suggest teacher candidates learn to think in terms of “How is what I’m doing impacting the child?” and “How could I do this differently?” I suggest that teacher educators

explore with teacher candidates the concept of agency in teaching and help them understand there are always options and how to evaluate these options.

A fourth implication I suggest is that many teacher educators are currently engaging teacher candidates in activities that could be extended to include discussions about teacher identities. In my own experience, the assigned reflection papers were turned in, I commented on the papers, and I returned the assignment. The potential for powerful discussions lies in reflection papers when they are shared among peers and challenges to their thinking are presented.

A fifth implication for teacher educators is the opportunity to extend life stories and personal literacy histories activities and use these as the basis for discussions about identities and identity construction. Discussions about teaching identities would be particularly meaningful if those discussions were facilitated during field experiences and especially during student teaching. Therefore, it is important for student teaching supervisors to understand the importance of identity talk.

The perception among teacher candidates that there is little to connect their methods courses with their OSSYP experiences suggests a fifth implication for teacher educators. I suggest that teacher educators explore ways for supporting the candidates in understanding how the three years of course work prior to the senior year does indeed connect to their OSSYP experiences. The candidates tend to underestimate the value of their course work at the time and they either think or hear from instructors, “You will understand when you are in the real world.” Much of what they have read about and talked about in earlier course work makes sense when they “see what it looks like” in the classroom. Therefore, it is vital that preservice teachers be in classrooms and working

with students as part of their teacher education program. For whatever reason, there appears to be a breach in Dewey's concept of "educative experiences" somewhere between the junior and senior years of the teacher education program.

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

There are implications and subsequent suggestions for further research in at least five areas: First I suggest research regarding similar teacher education programs; second I suggest research into the influence of mentors who themselves have received strong mentoring support; third, I posit a study of the effects of an OSSYP program on the culture of the schools to which the candidates are assigned. Fourth, I suggest a replication of this study of preservice teachers by educators interested in teacher identities. Fifth, a follow-up study that involves the same five participants from this study would provide rich data from the continuing constructions of their teacher identities.

I first suggest research regarding similar teacher education programs, and in particular those that are viewed by universities and teacher candidates as successful programs that produce new teachers eager in their efforts to determine what works well in teacher education and why. This research is relevant to many teacher education programs across the country and to other countries with comparable teacher education programs.

Mentoring in preservice teacher education is very important; therefore, further research might address the question of "How does an effective mentor learn to mentor?" In a conversation following the study, one of the host teachers noted the effect that being a mentor herself had on her teaching while serving as a mentor. In this particular study, three of the host teachers, strong mentors as indicated by the teacher candidates, had

participated in the university Teaching Fellows Program. A fourth mentor, identified as a strong mentor by the OSSYP student, was a graduate of a strong early childhood education program at the same university. How did these experiences influence their approach to mentoring?

A third suggestion for further research is to consider the impact of hosting OSSYP students in schools and the effects of the culture of those particular schools on the candidates. In this study, each school had an established history of hosting the OSSYP students. The schools to which the OSSYP students were assigned had ongoing communication with university personnel, staff members served as mentors and host teachers, and the OSSYP presence was seen throughout the building for an entire school year. However, due to the homogeneity of the participants and students in this investigation, research with a more diverse group of preservice teachers, mentors and students would no doubt yield different data concerning the development of teacher identities.

A fourth suggestion for further research is to replicate this study, in a context in which there is already an established relationship with OSSYP students or a similar cohort. This longitudinal study was conducted over the span of one year, OSSYP students had successful experiences in supportive environments, and the candidates took the lead in the interview conversations. Research questions might include: Would the same or similar themes be identified in the narratives? What additional findings would point to how and why this program is so successful in preparing elementary education majors?

A fifth study might involve the participants from this study in further conversations about their perspectives on the findings. The participants' perspectives on the OSSYP experience a year or two later might yield insightful information about influences on their ever-evolving teacher identities. The five teacher candidates in this study had successful experiences and demonstrated strong personal identities. They also indicated strong teaching identities under construction; therefore, a follow-up study that included their thinking "after the fact" would quite possibly result in additional findings that point to what works well in teacher education and how teaching identities change as new teachers enter their own classrooms.

Closing Discussion

As I conclude my study, I continue to consider several ideas that the study presented.

First, although the intent in selecting the five participants was not to focus on preservice teachers I believed to be strong educators and certain to be successful in the classroom, all indications from the study point to the future success of these teacher candidates. Their talents and dedication to learning along with the opportunities provided by the OSSYP program resulted in five success stories. From this study, we gain an understanding of how dedicated and talented preservice teachers become teachers within the context of a strong academic program.

Second, many of the stories shared by the teacher candidates were done so of their own initiative. They shared stories of their identity construction without prompts from the interview protocol indicating that teaching is innate and intuitive to each of them.

Third, the preservice teachers' stories revealed their progression through the normal stages of teacher education and student teaching. These stages included feelings of self-doubt, feelings of being over-whelmed with the responsibilities and workload of the classroom, and the sense they had to "get it right." We see in each candidate a transition from being teacher centered to becoming student centered. Although their progression falls within the range of normal, the candidates stories allow us to live their progression along with them.

Fourth, the candidates stories' about their teaching practices showed evidence of their understanding and integration of learning theory into their lessons. However, specific learning theories were not mentioned. The candidates were "walking the walk" before "talking the talk" of theory. As their knowledge of teaching developed, and as their focus became student centered, they looked to themselves to resolve problems regarding student learning. At no time in the study did any of the candidates allude to a learning problem due to a deficiency in the child's ability to learn. These teacher candidates assumed responsibility for their own learning and responsibility for their students' learning.

The fifth idea I considered throughout the duration of the study was the concept of embodiment and how the teacher candidates were embodying teaching as they constructed their identities. Possibly more than any other profession, teaching is embodied. Teachers embody their interactions with others and in particular with children. Teacher identities are constructed as every aspect of a teacher's life is a cognitive act carried out through physical activity. The candidates were embodying teaching when they gathered students around their rocking chairs for reading time, when they knelt down to

be at the child's level while talking, when they hugged a child or held a hand, when they laughed with their students, and when their presence was felt as they moved among the students. As they constructed their teaching identities, they carried out their teaching practices in their classrooms.

Polkinghorne (1998) writes, "A finding is significant if it is important" (p. 176). The findings of this study offer an understanding of how preservice teachers construct their teaching identities and the influences on the construction process. I suggest that the significance of the study is found in the important meanings and understandings offered by the candidates' stories of becoming teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This research is being conducted in an effort to determine what experiences may have influenced preservice teachers in the decision to enter a career in education. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participate. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to participate. You may refuse to be in the study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue once in the study, *you may stop at any time without penalty.*

The researcher's position as the instructor of the course in which are currently enrolled might be viewed as a potential conflict of interest. Questions regarding this aspect of the study will be addressed by the "third party" in the IRB application process.

For this study you will be asked by the researcher to respond to question during an audio-recorded interview session. How and if you respond to the questions during this interview are at your discretion.

Your identity and participation in the study will remain confidential. Names will be changed in reports of the findings of the study. Reports will not include any information that would allow the participant to be identified.

You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records. You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at any time with questions or concerns regarding this study. umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu or (573) 882-9585.

Researcher's Contact Information:

S. Jean Dickinson
(573) 256-2932
dickinsons@missouri.edu

211 Townsend Hall
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, MO 65211

Consent

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I do want to be in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

Your Signature

Date

Appendix B

IRB Approval



Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia

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Columbia, MO 65211-1150
PHONE: (573) 882-9585
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February 13, 2012

Principal Investigator: Dickinson, Sara Jean
Department: Dean of Ed - MPER

Your Annual Exempt Research Certification to project entitled *Life Stories of Pre-service Teachers: How do personal narratives influence decisions to enter a career in education?* was reviewed and approved by the MU Campus Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	1133137
Initial Application Approval Date	March 11, 2009
Approval Date of this Review	February 13, 2012
IRB Expiration Date	March 15, 2013
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Closed - Data Analysis Only
Regulation	45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, serious adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All modifications must be IRB approved by submitting the Exempt Amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Annual Exempt Certification Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped document informing subjects of the research and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eIRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585 or umcresearchcibr@missouri.edu.

Thank you,

Charles Borduin, PhD
Campus IRB Chair

Appendix C

IRB Addendum

October 2009

In addition to agreeing to respond to the researcher's questions during the interview sessions, I agree to the researcher's use of other data that I may decide to share with the researcher through the course of the study. This data might include:

- Responses I share on an Internet site set up for the participants in the study.
- Reflections shared in journal responses.
- Visual artifacts including photos and or other art mediums.
- Email exchanges between me and the researcher.

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I do want to be in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

Your Signature

Date

Appendix D

LeAnn's Final Interview Questions

LeAnn

Final Interview Questions:

How much do you understand about what it is that I am attempting to learn from you through my research?

In one of your first interviews you talked about seeing yourself as very competitive and liking opportunities for competition. How has your competitive “nature” played a role in your OSSYP year? How do you see being competitive as an aspect of your teaching now and in years to come?

How do you explain “becoming a teacher?”

Tell me three stories of your “top three” moments that you believe you will remember the most.

Tell me three stories about your greatest challenges this year.

Looking back now, name at least three ways in which your beliefs about reading changed.

What aspects of your life outside of teaching had the greatest impact on you this year?

What was an event or moment that marked a change in your teaching?

What are the three greatest learnings that you will take with you from this year?

How do you view your personal identity and how do you view your “teacher identity?”

Appendix E
Data Analysis Grid

		#	P
Context			
Former Beliefs			
Reflection			
Subjectivity/Agency			
Social Interactions			
Emotions			
Restrictions			
Tensions/Borders			
Myths/Stereotypes			
Critical Incidents			
Embodiment			
Self-concept			

Interact/Students			
Knowledge			
Morals/ethics			
Stories told			
Metaphor/visuals			
Discourse/borders			
Others:			

Vita

Sara Jean Dickinson grew up in a small, rural community in central Pennsylvania. Her mother and three aunts were elementary school teachers. Jean graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1964 and completed graduate course studies at Shippensburg State University and Penn State University. After three years of teaching in Pennsylvania, she left the profession to raise her son and daughter. During this time, the family lived on and operated a farm in southeast Pennsylvania. She returned to the classroom 17 years later and enrolled in graduate studies at the University of Colorado in Denver. Jean completed her masters and education specialist degrees at the University of Missouri while teaching fifth grade. Currently, she works with preservice teachers.

Jean and her husband are grandparents to four grandsons. She enjoys time with the grandsons, reading, and time with friends. Jean and her husband enjoy daytrips throughout the state.