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# Discursive Intersections: Tracing The Becoming Of Pre-Service Teachers - An Action Research Study

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DISCURSIVE INTERSECTIONS: TRACING THE BECOMING OF PRE-SERVICE  
TEACHERS—AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## DEDICATION

To

My students, for you have given me life as a teacher.

. . . My former third and fourth graders and my pre- and in-service teachers, for,  
unbeknownst to you, guiding me to my dissertation topic.

. . . My pre-service teachers who were a part of this study, thank you for contributing to  
*my becoming* as a teacher educator. You will always have a place in my heart.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to construct knowledge about the intersections between a teacher educator's discourses and pre-service teacher identity performances in a university classroom. The researcher used Mills' (2011) action research design to examine the ways she intersected with the identity performances of 24 pre-service teachers in a literacy methods course. Data collection included audio recordings and transcriptions of class sessions, a teacher journal, written communication between teacher and students, and course assignments. Thematic analysis and methods of discourse analysis were used to identify patterns across pre-service teachers' performances in the classroom. Findings revealed multiple, fluid, dynamically evolving, and sometimes conflicting performances of student and teacher identities, and reoccurring tension points at intersections between the researcher and pre-service teachers. Analysis of the data supported the construction of a theoretical model that elucidates the ways in which multiple intersections contributed to various and fluid identity performances, and the ways generative dissonance influenced identity performances and classroom pedagogies across the semester. A discussion of metaphors to understand dissonance in teacher education and implications for K-12 and teacher educators is provided.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction to the Study and Theoretical Framework

In 2006, prior to the start of my third year as a third grade teacher, the school counselor called to notify me that one of the little boys in my class, Noah, had recently lost his mother to cancer. Shortly thereafter I met Noah and his father at Open House. I remember when Noah stood before me that day, a petite, brown-eyed, brown-haired boy who resembled his father. Noah was quiet; not a shy kind of quiet, but a broken-hearted kind of quiet. It was during the first week of school that my consciousness of words and my language as a teacher came to light. I was having a community meeting with my students, discussing ways to share our learning with families. *"So, what kinds of things can you share with your mom and . . . ?"* As soon as the word *"mom"* left my mouth, I shut my eyelids, wishing the darkness would expunge my words. Slowly, I re-opened them, and looked over at Noah. Like a child who had been scorned, his head hung low, as if to ensure no one could make eye contact with him. At that moment, I realized my discourse of "family" excluded Noah, and possibly opened emotions he was not ready to publicly face with twenty-three 8 year-olds and his teacher.

Having Noah that year led to my self-reflection on the ways I previously marginalized other children in my class through my language of "family." I thought about Leonta, who was in foster care and eagerly awaited adoption. She and I had discussions about her excitement of receiving a new last name, and yet I never clued in that my language of "family" excluded her time and time again. Or what about

Quinterius, who had never met his father? Again and again I had said "mom and dad" out loud to the children, as if they each had a mom and a dad awaiting their presence after school every day; I wonder what went through Quinterius' mind. There was also Roderick, who moved between two foster families and a distant relative in a matter of months at the start of the year. How many children did I dishearten through my language of "family"? I am appreciative that Noah's presence in my classroom that year ignited my consciousness into the power of my language as a teacher. One little boy with a broken heart entered my room and made a world of difference in the way I began to respond to children. Although Noah does not know how prominent his presence was to my future ways with language, his impression is everlasting.

While my consciousness of language began with the discourse of "family," my reflections progressed. From finding the right words during a writing conference, to helping a kid realize they were not quite ready to read Harry Potter, to helping a little boy's mother explain her child's autism to classmates—the list was endless. After Noah, I knew the language I used in the classroom positioned children in varying ways, and had an affect on our future interactions together. It was my job to build children up and inspire their passion for learning. Noah helped me realize that sometimes my words tore them down instead.

While I did not possess the theories or discourse for it then, I realize now that subconsciously I truly cared about my kids' emerging identities during our time together. I wanted to encourage them as children, learners, friends, family members, sports players, cheerleaders, video gamers, and all of their other ways of being. Noah helped me embrace a stance of empowerment, where I consciously worked to support all my

students as valued beings through language that showed I cared for, and supported them, to the end. Gee (1999) once said that:

Language has a magical property: when we speak or write we craft what we have to say to fit the situation or context in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak or write creates that very situation or context. It seems then, that we fit our language to a situation or context that our language, in turn, helped to create in the first place. (p. 11)

Noah helped me create a new way of using language to communicate with the children in my class. Accordingly, it is no surprise that my interest in language has sustained over the years. Now, as a doctoral candidate and a pre-service teacher educator, I continue to seek ways to reflect on my language as a teacher. I aspire to use language in constructive, influential ways that will support the identities that emerge among the students I teach. My own reflections on the ways I use discourses to support students' identities led me to this research project. Specifically, I wondered, what are the intersections among my discourses and the identities that emerge among pre-service teachers in my classroom?

### **Rationale**

Many scholars agree that teachers' language and classroom experiences are influential in creating, sustaining, or inhibiting identities among K-12 students (Hall, 2009, 2010; Handsfield, Crumpler, & Dean, 2010; Harman, 2007; Roche, 2011; Schmidt & Whitmore, 2007; Triplett, 2002, 2007; Wortham, 2003). Moreover, scholars have documented the ways in which teachers intentionally support the enactment of diverse K-12 student identities (Skerrett, 2012; Rex, 2001). In addition, researchers have studied

how curriculum programs and institutional Discourses (Gee, 2008) influence the development of K-12 student identities (Brown & Spang, 2008; Dutro, 2009; McCarthey, 2001). However, to date, no scholars have researched the relationship among teachers' language and students' identities in college classrooms, especially pre-service teachers in education programs. Instead, scholars have examined the relationship among class engagements and pre-service teacher identities (Alsup, 2006; Cattley, 2007; Moore & Ritter, 2008; Seidl & Conley, 2009). They have also studied the alignment of pre-service teacher discourses and instructional choices (Assaf, 2005), as well as the development of pre-service teacher identities in the midst of ideological conflicts and institutional discourses (Larson, 2008; Larson & Phillips, 2005; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). The purpose of this research was to begin to fill this gap that currently exists in the literature on the intersections among teacher discourse and pre-service teacher identities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

I believe knowledge, understanding, and sense-making processes are never truly idiosyncratic, but are inextricably linked to social, cultural and linguistic contexts (Olsson, 2008). My beliefs are influenced by Dewey (1938), Bruner (1986, 1990, 2002), Bakhtin (1981), Gee (2000, 2005, 2008), and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998). Their conceptions guided me to the following beliefs, which provided me with a lens through which I examined the intersections among discourses and identities within the classroom setting:

1. Learning is a constructed process. People continually construct new knowledge based on existing experiences, concepts and schema (Dewey, 1938; Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978).
2. Culture and society shape *what* and *how* people understand (Vygotsky, 1978; Heath, 1983).
3. Identities are complex, fluid, and dynamically evolving; they are constructed, reconstructed, and socially co-constructed as a result of our environments and the discursive practices of our daily lives (Gee, 2000, 2005, 2008; Bruner, 1990, 2002; Sarup, 1996).
4. Humans use an array of discourses to construct multiple ways of being in the world (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 2000, 2005, 2008).
5. Identities are constructed in figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998).
6. Agency is a fundamental human desire that allows for new ways of being (Holland et al., 1998; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Johnston, 2004).

### **Learning is a Constructed Process**

Various theorists contributed to my insight on the ways in which knowledge is constructed. Dewey (1938) helped me understand that knowledge is based in human experience, while Bruner (1986) contributed to my awareness that knowledge builds on previous experiences and concepts. Vygotsky (1978) added to this theory, that knowledge construction is deepened through interactions with others.

Dewey (1938), a leader in the progressive movement in education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, influenced many theorists. Dewey's philosophy centered on human experience and the principle of inquiry. As explained by Dewey and Bentley (1960):

Any statement that is or can be made about a knower, self, mind, or subject—or about a known thing, an object, or a cosmos—must, so far as we are concerned, be made on the basis, and in terms, of aspects of events which inquiry, as itself a cosmic event, finds taking place. (p. 125)

Dewey believed that people use prior knowledge to guide present inquiry, that we understand the world through interaction and the environment, and consequently construct knowledge. He proposed that experience “does not go on simply inside a person” (1938, p. 39); every experience has an active side which is influenced and changed to some degree based on the physical and social surroundings in which experiences occur. He believed that individual actions are affected by the whole situation in which they are involved.

Dewey (1938) posited that a primary function of schooling was to prepare people to live in a democratic society where one’s personal experiences would contribute to their development. He contended that teachers “are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated” (p. 18), but argued that it was ultimately the student who must actively construct knowledge. The role of educators is to examine knowledge of both individuals and subject matter and use this information to facilitate experiences where all students have an opportunity to “contribute something, and in which the activities in which all participate are the chief carrier of control” (p. 56). Dewey believed that the growth of individuals, the environment, and the role of teachers were all important in students’ learning.

Bruner (1986) influenced my understanding of how people construct knowledge. Based on his studies with children, he coined the term *scaffolding* to describe the ways in



which children build new knowledge based on existing experiences, concepts and schema. Bruner (1990) proposed that language and cognition develop through social interactions and that “the central concept of a human psychology is meaning and the processes and transactions involved in the construction of meanings” (p. 33). Bruner believed that instruction should be aligned with experiences to position students as willing and ready to learn.

In his seminal work on intellectual development, Vygotsky (1978) maintained that our thinking originates through interaction with others. His work laid the foundation for research in theories of cognitive development and social interaction. A fundamental principle of Vygotsky’s (1978) work is that social interactions support cognitive development and the construction of knowledge. Vygotsky (1978), through his work with children, discovered that children could solve problems that were more difficult than they could solve independently if they received assistance from a more knowledgeable other. Vygotsky coined this as the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*. Each person has an individual range of potential for learning, which can be deepened and extended through interactions with others. People are able to transcend their existing knowledge through support and scaffolding by more experienced others. Consequently, meaning is constructed through joint interactions, rather than transmission from one to another.

### **Culture and Society Shape *What* and *How* People Understand**

I believe that human understandings are shaped by social, cultural, and historical interactions. Vygotsky (1978) shaped my awareness of sociocultural perspectives by positing that knowledge is created through social and individual processes. Heath’s

(1983) ethnographic work on language socialization guides my recognition on the ways in which language practices are embedded in cultural contexts.

While Vygotsky (1978) is known for constructivist learning theories, he also gave rise to current understandings about the social nature of learning. His work focused on the dialectic between the individual and society, and the way the social world facilitates the child's development. The social context encompasses the entire social milieu, which includes everything in the child's environment that has been explicitly or tacitly influenced by culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The social context includes three levels: 1) the immediate interactive level, which comprises present relations and interactions with other people, 2) the structural level, which consists of social structures that influence people, such as families or schools, and 3) the cultural level, which contains larger societal features such as language and sign systems (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). These contexts each come together to influence the way people think and learn. Vygotsky (1978) described learning as a social process embedded in society and culture, and believed all learning occurs on two levels: "...first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). Each person has an individual range of potential for learning, which can be deepened and extended through social interactions with others. This social interaction plays a critical role in cognitive development and impacts what is learned, as well as how and when learning occurs.

Heath (1983) underscored the importance of sociocultural theory through her ethnographic work where she analyzed and described children's language use in three towns to understand language socialization in communities. She studied the ways in

which literacy was embedded in the cultural context of these three communities and analyzed how these groups “take” knowledge from the environment. At the end of her ethnography, Heath posited that everyday practices interact with schooling expectations to promote linguistic and cultural capital. The everyday practices of children from the “townspeople” interacted with their schooled experiences to promote their ways of being, while demoting the experiences of children from different cultures:

Long before school, their [townspeople] language and culture at home has structured for them the meanings which will give shape to their experiences in classrooms and beyond. Their families have embedded them in contexts that reflected from the systemic relationships between education and production. From their baby books to their guide books for participation in league soccer, the townspeople’s children have been motivated towards seeing their current activities as relating to their future achievements. Their socially determined habits and values have created for them an ideology in which all that they do makes sense to their current identity and their preparation for the achievements which will frame their future. (p. 368)

This accentuates an essential principle drawn from Heath’s work: everyday values and practices position some children to identify with the language and practices used in school settings. Heath’s work holds important implications for how practices and circumstances of one’s community contributes to a learner’s development, because children bring their language functions to school as they have operated in their homes and cultures, and mesh their understandings of language with both home and school (Heath, 1983).

## **Identities are Complex, Fluid, and Dynamically Evolving**

I encompass a holistic notion of identity that discerns interactions among ways of being as integral to the human experience (Alsup, 2006). Identities are dynamically evolving, inherently social, and thus, connected to others (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Lin, 2013; Sarup, 1996). Gee (2000, 2005, 2008), Bruner (1990, 2002), and Sarup (1996) contributed to my recognition that identities are continually constructed, reconstructed and socially co-constructed through culture; they are lived in and through activity, and therefore must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice.

My conceptualization of identity encompasses the notion of self, with a distinction between the two that emerges from theorists who contend that there is more to a self than simply a shifting of identities (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Gee (2000, 2005, 2008) provided me with an understanding of this difference. He maintained that while we enact multiple identities in different practices and contexts, we each have a “core identity” that accounts for whatever “continuous and relatively (but only relatively) ‘fixed’ sense of self underlies our contextually shifting multiple identities” (Gee, 2005, p. 34). While we are each recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context, our core identity holds more uniformity for ourselves and others across contexts (Gee, 2000). Gee connected this notion to the Discourses of which we are a part across our lives. As human beings, we each acquire an initial Discourse, a “culturally distinctive way of being an ‘everyday person’—that is, a non-specialized, non-professional person” (2008, p. 156). Gee called this our “primary Discourse,” and asserted that primary Discourses provide us with an enduring sense of self. Nevertheless, our primary Discourses can also

change and hybridize with other Discourses, but they serve us throughout life (Gee, 2008).

Bruner (1990) purported that self was a transactional relationship between a speaker and an other, as a way of “framing one’s consciousness, one’s position, one’s identity, one’s commitment with respect to another” (p. 101). He professed that self must be treated as a construction that proceeds from “culture to mind as well as from mind to culture” (p. 107). We construct and reconstruct our selves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter. Societies, economies, and languages, all of which hold historical implications and scaffold our practices as human agents, shape our notion of selfhood. Humans explore not only meaning, but its use in practice through discourse that surrounds action. Bruner’s work underscores three essential conceptions relevant to self and identity. First, identities are not essential; they are constructed. Second, selves are not isolated foci in one’s head, but are “distributed” interpersonally. Finally, selves do not arise solely in response to the present; they are shaped by historical circumstances that make meaning to the culture from which they are a part (Bruner, 1990).

Bruner (2002) underscored the role of narrative in the construction and reconstruction of the self—narratives that use language to tell stories. He believed that language and the use of language influences the multiple identities we enact. Bruner asserted that we construct and reconstruct our selves to meet the needs of situations we encounter. Our self-making stories accumulate over time and eventually become outdated, both because we grow older and wiser, but also because our stories need to fit new circumstances and new people. Bruner viewed identity both from the inside and the

outside, to include both memories, feelings, beliefs and subjectivities, as well the myriad of experiences in our lives from the cultures in which we are immersed.

Sarup (1996) imparted insight on my conceptualization of identities as constructions because of the nature of human interactions among people, institutions, and practices. Our existence rests within a wide range of behaviors, where groups maintain boundaries, such as geographical regions, political viewpoints, religious beliefs, occupations, or linguistic and cultural traditions. A multiplicity of factors influence humans in their identity constructions because they are constructed between people, materials, and cultural boundaries. Identity is a mediating concept between the external and the internal, the individual and society, and theory and practice, a tool “through which to try and understand many aspects—personal, philosophical, political—of our lives” (p. 28). Sarup contended that a fundamental aspect to the construction of identity is the past to present relation. The past shapes people’s self-representations because of the ways people identify themselves and share their identities from their own recollections of the past. The present represents the possibility for new identity construction because being in a state of present represents a process of emergence. Accordingly, identities are never finished products; they are an ongoing process woven together from fluctuating forms and practices.

### **Humans use an Array of Discourses to Construct Multiple Ways of Being in the World**

Language is a result of human interactions, an interplay between culture and society (Tracy & Morrow, 2012). Bakhtin (1981) and Gee (2000, 2005, 2008) gave me insight on how identities are constructed from and through language. The ways I define myself and understand my life cannot be separated from the language used to construct

what it means for me to be a daughter, wife, sister, graduate student, or a middle-class white woman. Individuals, groups, and institutions use an array of discourses to construct understandings of the multiple ways of being in the world (Gee 2000, 2005, 2008).

Bakhtin (1981) contended for an understanding of self that is dialogical, which resists being characterized as finalized or static. Dialogical views of identity provide a theoretical position that embrace a multiple, fluid and social nature of identity, while concomitantly explaining identity as being unique and individual. For Bakhtin, dialogue is tantamount to the essence of human existence. According to Bakhtin (1981), learning is a social and cultural phenomenon where language serves to organize our experiences and thoughts, while also helping us understand the choices we make and who we become as individuals. Bakhtin purported that who we become as individuals depends on the “process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). The spirit of human interactions insinuates the social nature of discourse, where people negotiate and struggle between discourses. This involves not only taking up and receiving words from others, but also responding to them. The act of responding informs our world through others. Meaning is constructed through response and interactions with other beings. This exchange is what Bakhtin called dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981). Language results from meanings and interactions constructed in social relations. Dialogism is central to identity construction because it reminds us that we are always in dialogue with others and our environment through the process of becoming (Assaf, 2005; Britzman, 2003).

While reading about the ways identities are constructed from and through language, I found the work of Gee (2000, 2005, 2008) to be particularly influential. His

conception of identities encompassed a holistic nature of human expression and the effects of discourse on both bodily world and individual beings. He claimed that when people interact in a given context, others recognize them as certain kinds of people, which can change at a given time and place, from moment to moment, or context to context (Gee, 2000). Being recognized as a certain “kind of person” in a given context is what Gee called *identity*. He (2005) asserted that sociolinguists are interested in how language is used “on site” (p. 7) to enact activities and identities. Gee named these “on site” forms of language as discourse with a little d, “connected stretches of language that make sense, like conversations, stories, reports, arguments, essays, and so forth” (2008, p. 154). He noted that activities and identities are rarely enacted through language alone, and “little d” discourse melds with non-language “stuff” to enact identities through “big D Discourses” (p. 7), which could include one’s body, clothes, gestures, beliefs, actions, values, attitudes, and emotions. Gee (2008) maintained that a Discourse is

a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting, as well as using various tools, technologies, or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network,’ to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role,’ or to signal that one is filling a social niche in a distinctively recognizable fashion. (p. 161)

Everyone is a member of many Discourses, with each Discourse representing one of our multiple identities, “ways of being,” or “forms of life” (p. 3). Because Discourses are socially situated identities, they are both *social* and *socially historicized*. Therefore,



individuals exhibit multiple, sometimes conflicting identities that are enacted through engagement with others throughout life.

Gee argued that individual language practices and social interactions within particular groups of people are central to identity. He suggested that the human language has two primary functions: 1) it supports the performance of social activities and social identities, and 2) it supports human affiliations within cultures, social groups, and institutions (2005). We recurrently and actively build and rebuild our worlds through both language and actions, interactions, objects, tools, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing and believing (Gee, 2005). For Gee, language signals membership in particular groups through dialogue, negotiation and recognition by others. The recognition of that identity is essential, because as Gee (2000) argued, “One cannot have an identity without some interpretive system underwriting the recognition of that identity” (p. 107). An interpretative system can be a person’s cultural and historical views of nature, or the norms, traditions and rules of institutions. Interpretative systems can also be the discourse and dialogue of others. What is central to identity is that identities can be understood in terms of interpretative systems. People can interpret the same identity trait in different ways, and they can also negotiate and contest how identities are to be seen (Gee, 2000). This negotiation allows room for individuality and human agency, because if you enact an identity that is recognized as “meaningful and appropriate in the Discourse, then it ‘counts’” (Gee, 2008, p. 195).

### **Identities are Constructed in Figured Worlds**

Holland et al. (1998) helped me understand the ways identities are constructed in worlds that are formed and re-formed in relation to everyday events and activities. These

worlds become embodied over time through recurrent interactions and participation in their spaces.

Holland et al. (1998) conceptualize identities, “the imaginings of self in world of action,” (p. 5), as social products. They purported, “identities are lived in and through activity, and therefore must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice” (p. 5). Identity combines the personal world with cultural and social relations. In addition to social practice, Holland et al. were interested in identities as psychohistorical formations that develop throughout one’s lifetime. They drew on a dialogic and developmental frame to build upon two approaches to identity—the culturalist and the constructivist. Holland et al. viewed objects of cultural study as historically and socially situated “texts” or “forms” (p. 26), which can be resisted, institutionalized, negotiated or internalized. Communications convey messages and also make claims about who we are relative to others through the nature of relationships. The matter of self is continually open to the power of discourses and practices that describe it (Holland et al., 1998). People develop through the cultural forms from which they are identified in the context of their affiliation or disaffiliation in those cultural forms. Therefore, identities trace our participation and agency in socially produced, culturally constructed activities, what Holland et al. call “figured worlds” (p. 41). A figured world is a “socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. 52). Figured worlds are sociohistorically shaped cultural spaces where identities are formed through day-to-day activities commenced in their name. Figured worlds include cultural realms created from collective groups, such as academia or classrooms; they take shape and are

shaped by the coproduction of people, activities, discourses, performances and artifacts. Figured worlds provide the contexts and meaning of action in which social positions and relationships are created and conducted. They provide the loci where people's identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically. Figured worlds are formed and re-formed through daily relations and activities, and provide context of meaning and action for the production of social positions and relationships.

### **Agency is a Fundamental Human Desire that Allows for New Ways of Being**

In their work on identity, Holland et al. (1998) underscored the integral nature of identity and agency; their ideas informed my beliefs about the role of agency in creating new ways of being. Moje and Lewis (2007) and Johnston (2004) situated issues of identity and agency in classroom settings.

Holland et al. (1998) conceptualized identities as an essential means through which people care about and care for what happens around them. Identities are significant bases from which people can exercise agency and create new worlds through generativity and capacities, “embedded always in collective meanings and social relations—to imagine and create new ways of being” (p. 5). They approached the study of identity with a goal of respecting humans as social and cultural beings, while simultaneously underscoring the nature of agency, to “recognize the processes whereby human collectives and individuals often move themselves—led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan—from one set of socially and culturally formed subjectivities to another” (p. 7). Holland et al. drew on the work of Inden (1990) to define human agency. Inden (1990) explained agency as:

the realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view. (p. 23)

Inden further argued that people not only act as individual agents, but that they are also able to facilitate and support agency in others. Consequently, agency is a way of positioning oneself or others to allow for new ways of being.

Moje and Lewis (2007) argued that classrooms are essential spaces for the “strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, [and] relationships” (p. 18). As people move between different Discourses (Gee, 2008), they enact identities that will be recognized, which in turn shape how people view themselves. Moje and Lewis purported that the power of agency depends on recognitions that evolve from the varying discourse communities a person enters. They contended that classrooms should recognize and accept students’ identities and provide space for agentic action, where learners make and remake their identities on the basis of new ideas, practices or discourses learned through their participation in the classroom community.

Johnston (2004) posited that people narrate their lives, identifying themselves and circumstances, “acting and explaining events in ways they see as consistent with the person they take themselves to be” (p. 23). In classroom settings, students develop personal and social identities defined by the people they view themselves becoming, and

consequently classroom interactions should involve children in opportunities for them to build on and test different identities. Johnston believed that teaching and learning are more effective when classrooms support personal and social identities, and that students should leave school with a sense of agency, a feeling that they can act strategically and accomplish their goals.

### **Conclusion**

My theoretical conceptions about knowledge are grounded in philosophies centered in human experience. People actively construct knowledge through interactions in their environment (Dewey, 1938). Existing experiences, along with social interactions, support the construction of knowledge (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, language, culture and society are essential constructs in relation to the ways in which we identify ourselves. It is my belief that identities are complex, dynamic, and multifaceted constructions (Gee, 2008; Sarup, 1996), where social, cultural and linguistic contexts support the enactment of multiple ways of being in the world (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 2008, Holland et al., 1998). Identities entail our participation and agency in socially and culturally constructed figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) that provide context and meaning for our actions. Human agency plays a role in creating new ways of being; this accentuates the fluid and dynamic nature of identities. These theoretical foundations provide me with a lens through which I examined the intersections among my discourses and the identities that emerged among my students in a pre-service literacy methods course.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

I reviewed the literature in search of studies that revealed a relationship among teacher language and student identities. Because there is a limited body of literature on the relationship among these attributes, I reviewed literature from both K-12 classroom settings as well as university classrooms in teacher education programs. The studies conducted in K-12 classrooms included: 1) intersections among teachers' language and students' identities, 2) intersections among institutional language and students' identities, 3) teachers' language (independent of identity), and 4) the emergence of new student identities. The studies in teacher education settings included: 1) teacher educators supporting the emergence of pre-service teacher identities, 2) intersections among pre-service teacher identity and instructional decisions, and 3) pre-service teachers navigating competing discourses.

#### **Intersections among Teachers' Language and Students' Identities in K-12 Classrooms**

The literature on the intersections among teachers' language and students' identities in K-12 classrooms addresses the ways in which teachers' instructional language positions students to enact various identities. For instance, Triplett (2007) sought to discover how *struggling reader* is a socially constructed identity that begins in the early grades. She wanted to understand if students' struggles with reading were socially constructed within school literacy contexts. Triplett focused on the literacy lives

of 14 elementary students identified for reading intervention in a diverse elementary school. The students in the study represented the students identified for reading services at this school, including African American, European American, Latin American, and Native American. The author collected data in the context of the reading intervention classroom, as well as other spaces where students participated in literacy activities, such as their regular classrooms, the library, the cafeteria, the hallways, and the playground. Triplett found that regular classroom teachers' descriptions and responses to students differed from the interventionist's descriptions and responses to students. She argued that the testing and accountability context seemed to influence the ways the teachers described and responded to struggling readers. Additionally, observations and interviews led Triplett to discover that students were more engaged and interested during "book talk," which occurred frequently during reading intervention, than they were during any other literacy activity. Students valued time to discuss their books, and "book talk" was the difference between success and failure for many students. The author purported that "book talk" was the most important aspect of students' literacy identities. She concluded that students were not struggling readers in contexts where their teachers had literacy knowledge to help them, and in contexts where accountability and testing were not a focus.

Schmidt and Whitmore (2010) conducted a study in relation to their interest in how teachers use talk to perform ways of being and teaching. The authors selected the teacher for this study, Ms. Meyer, because they saw her struggle to maintain both her own and her students' identities in a time where legislation determined what counted as "correct" literacy teaching. Ms. Meyers taught English Language Learners (ELLs) in a

pullout program in a Midwestern community. Schmidt and Whitmore used a view-response protocol, where they used video vignettes to engage in conversation with Ms. Meyers about her practice. They also used critical discourse analysis to see how Ms. Meyers' talk revealed and constructed her identities and positions as a classroom teacher. The authors found that the teacher held beliefs about supporting the development of the identities of her students; these beliefs informed her instruction. She was determined that her students see themselves as more than at-risk ELLs, and often demonstrated "improvisation" in the classroom to help students reveal their identities. For example, she discussed with the researchers how in one instance students were thinking of themselves as ELLs rather than astronauts or dreamers, so she implemented instruction on identity to bring their attention to the fact that they were in a new country and trying lots of things at one time. She had students write to reflect the many voices they each held. The authors suggested that Ms. Meyers' skill with persuasive language led her to strategically use language to shift power and positioning in her classroom during challenging times.

Hall (2009, 2010) looked at student-teacher transactions in three content area middle school classrooms for students identified as struggling readers. Hall selected students on the basis of recommendations from the previous year's language arts teacher, as well as informal and state reading assessment scores. She used a descriptive yearlong multiple case study approach with one sixth grade social studies, one seventh grade math, and one eighth grade science class, each from a different district in a suburban area outside a Midwestern city. She sought to understand how middle school teachers interacted with struggling readers in relation to the reading demands of their content area



classrooms, and the ways middle school readers interacted with texts through the reading demands of their content-area classrooms. Hall found that teachers' interactions with struggling readers were based on their models of identity for what it meant to be "good readers" and the identities they created for their students through discourses in the classroom. For example, most teachers held models of identity for what it meant for students to be "good readers" (e.g., applying comprehension strategies, and reading and asking questions about texts). The teachers explained these models to students through language such as:

So today we're going to be working on questions that we have when we read and how to answer them. And this is important because it's a skill that good readers use. And I know a lot of you struggle to know how to ask questions . . . (Hall, 2010, p. 1805)

Hall found that students' interactions with reading tasks were dependent upon how they identified themselves as readers and their goals to prevent others from constructing an identity of them as poor readers. For example, one student marginalized herself as a reader by remaining silent while discussing texts in order to prevent peers from labeling her as a poor reader, while another student increased her participation to position herself as a good reader in her parents' eyes. Hall determined that many of the students' identities clashed with behaviors teachers expected students to use in class. Moreover, teachers were often unaware that students exhibited specific behaviors to protect their identities both in the classroom and at home.

Through empirical analysis of a ninth grade student across an entire year, Wortham (2003) shared the ways one student, Tyisha, was socialized through interactions

in a high school class. The data came from two years of research at a public high school in a large U.S. city. Wortham used discourse analysis to identify cues that served as signs of identity among participants. He traced Tyisha's identity development in the course of this class, where she was recognized as an outcast through microgenetic enactments in classroom conversations. Wortham found that the teachers and students socially identified Tyisha in contradictory ways throughout the year. Tyisha's identity shifted from "good student" at the start of the year to "disruptive student" several months later. The teacher in the study encouraged students to develop arguments as an academic discourse, though several months into the year Tyisha's statements of opinion were considered disruptive, rather than productive. Both teachers and students imposed a new identity of Tyisha as "outcast" through events Wortham called "participant examples" (2003, p. 237). This is where either the teacher's or students' participation in classroom discussion doubled, because they became characters in the discourse that influenced Tyisha's identity, as well as characters in the discourse of the curriculum.

### **Intersections among Institutional Language and Student Identities in K-12 Classrooms**

Institutional language also impacts the identities students enact in K-12 classroom. For example, scripted reading programs or the Reading Renaissance program, frequently utilized by public school districts, directly impact the varying identities students enact in classrooms. Dutro (2009), for instance, explored the fissure between children's responses and the social class-based assumptions embedded in a scripted curriculum. She analyzed third grade students' responses to a written prompt in a basal unit around the Dust Bowl. In response to the prompt, "What are some signs of hard times?" (p. 89), students connected to the story with first-hand knowledge of economic

struggle. A typical response from the children in this class included difficult times in their own lives when bills became elevated, food was scarce, or transportation was null. One child wrote, “Some signs of hard times are when the gas bill shoots up to \$300 dollars. My dad was kicked out of work. Now we can’t get gas for the car when it runs out of gas . . .” (p. 93). Dutro juxtaposed the students’ responses with the curriculum’s “possible responses” that included topics such as “businesses doing badly” or diminishing crops (p. 96). Dutro grounded her analysis in critical approaches to discourse that underscored the essential role language plays in the construction of or resistance to inequities, and the belief that identities are constructed from and through language. Dutro asserted that the official discourse of the literacy curriculum in this school was constructed through a class-privileged vision of the world, and she argued that the curriculum positioned students as immune from sustained “hard times.” She purported that the role of language in shaping perceptions of what counts as the “norm,” combined with the absence of the connections made by these children, revealed ways that the curriculum privileged some forms of knowledge over others.

Brown and Spang (2008) examined the language practices that emerged as a fifth grade Michigan teacher in an urban school altered the language of her classroom to promote the use of science language among students. The teacher functioned on an assumption that students’ use of science language would be improved if teaching involved an unambiguous effort to help them deal with the dilemma of appropriating a scientific identity, while using science language in the process of learning. The authors sought to understand the connections between classroom instruction and opportunities for students’ identity development. They identified two modes of classroom language: a) the

teacher used a hybrid method of language when explaining science ideas by integrating vernacular and scientific terminology which they termed *double talk*, and b) the students employed *double talk* during their own science explanations. The teacher provided students with multiple opportunities to explain their understanding using science language, which provided students opportunities to develop scientific identities. The authors suggested that the use of *double talk* provided multiple points of entry for understanding science phenomena (e.g., students could make the connection that a frog is an amphibian, and therefore can live in water and on land). In addition to *double talk*, the teacher engaged in a discursive strategy where she modeled scientific and academic language (e.g., What you've just done is you've classified . . . you decided different things go into different groups). Brown and Spang posited that making science language explicit could lead to an environment where scientific language allows students to concurrently appropriate scientific language and develop conceptual understanding.

McCarthy (2001) implemented a study with a fifth grade language arts teacher to understand the role of literacy perceptions and practices in shaping students' identities. The author sought to understand how students' involvement in literacy activities and the features of the literacy curriculum played a role in identity construction. McCarthy found a range in students' involvement with literacy activities. Students talked in depth about responses to literature and texts for the Reading Renaissance program. Class discussions in relation to literature were often based on strategies the teacher emphasized, such as main idea of inferencing. Students responded in an academic and detached way; while they offered evidence in relation to texts, there were generally no connections to issues in their own lives. Students' insights on themselves as readers were overtly related

to the Reading Renaissance program. They responded about their own abilities, as well as classmates' reading achievement, based on the color hierarchy of the program. Successful readers identified themselves by their "high colors" while struggling readers did not. McCarthy concluded that students' identities were shaped by the audience and context of the classroom; the public nature of the reading program influenced the reading identities the students held about themselves. For fervent readers, students defined themselves in terms of being avid readers, while unsuccessful readers resisted literate identities and instead defined themselves by personal interests outside of school. McCarthy argued that her findings supported the notion that literacy can affect our sense of self; literacy and language both play a role in students' construction of identities.

### **Teachers' Language in K-12 Classrooms**

While scholars have examined the intersections among teachers' language and students' identities in K-12 classrooms, as well as institutional language and students' identities, others have looked at teachers' language independent of identity. These scholars researched teachers' language in relation to student participation, teachers' professional identities, and the shifting of teachers' instructional practices. For example, Roche (2011) conducted an action research inquiry into her practice as a primary school teacher. She carried out the study because of her discontent with her didactic teaching style. Roche felt as if she dominated the discourse in her classroom and did not encourage her students to think critically. Consequently, she conducted an action research project to reflect on her practice and to research dialogical pedagogies that would support her students' critical thinking skills. Through her own critical reflection she explored how to provide contexts where students could exercise imaginative, dialogic

thinking. She used shorthand to transcribe conversations with students and read the transcripts back to them. Roche found that this process of writing down children's language showed them that she valued and honored their contributions to discussions. Furthermore, this seemed to increase the quality and frequency of their contributions. Together, Roche and her students engaged in "What if" and "I wonder why" (p. 331) sessions that helped her move towards a more child-centered practice. She found improved confidence among students, which led to enhanced engagement in both reading and writing. Students began using language such as, "I agree with...because" and "I disagree with...because" (p. 332). For Roche, dialogue, including dialogue with the self, was crucial to the development of critical awareness to honor others as equal beings. She claimed that action research helped improve her practice as an educator, held her accountable for her actions, and also shaped her professional identity.

Triplett (2002) reported findings on the dialogic responsiveness of a classroom teacher in a rural Southern school. Triplett viewed dialogic responsiveness as a holistic framework to synthesize, research, and describe the complexities of responsive dialogue. She purported that dialogic responsiveness, studied as a holistic phenomenon, could help others understand how dialogue between students and teachers could support children in literacy contexts. Triplett sought to understand patterns of dialogic responsiveness during literacy instruction, how dialogically responsive teachers interact with students during literacy instruction, and the ways teachers respond to the cognitive, cultural, motivational, emotional, and physical needs of young readers. Triplett conducted initial observations on several teachers to select a focus teacher for the study. During the observations, she looked for examples of dialogic responsiveness, such as verbal

scaffolding, collaborative conversations, child-relevant instructional conversations, and empathetic conversations. Triplett identified a Title I reading teacher, Ms. Martin, who Triplett believed exhibited characteristics of dialogic responsiveness. Triplett and Ms. Martin chose six focal students that would represent the cognitive, cultural, motivational, physical and emotional complexities of literacy learning. Triplett followed four of the six students into their regular classrooms to observe the responsiveness of their teachers in a literacy setting; she recorded observations 2-3 times a week for 14 weeks. Triplett also led interviews and stimulated recall discussions, where she asked open-ended questions about videotaped interactions while teaching. She found three patterns in relation to dialogic responsiveness: 1) teachers' responsiveness to what students brought to literacy learning, 2) teachers' responsiveness based on what was important for literacy learning, and 3) patterns of supportive dialogue initiated by teachers. The responsiveness of the teachers in this study influenced the literacy participation of the four focal students. Teachers listened to students and threaded their contributions into instructional conversations, initiated supportive dialogue to address literacy understanding, and created a motivating literacy environment. For example, Ms. Martin understood the need for all students to experience success, so she often called on specific students when she thought they would be able to participate successfully in discussions. Triplett suggested that dialogue provided a tool for synthesizing the complexities of being responsive to the whole child in literacy contexts.

Handsfield, Crumpler and Dean (2010) examined how a fourth-grade teacher from a small Midwestern city negotiated multiple and competing ideologies of literacy and teaching, and how they related to her professional identity. Data from this study

came from a two-year qualitative study that investigated multimodal literacies, multilingualism, and teacher development. The researchers used constant comparative analysis and microethnographic analysis of talk and visual data to examine how a focal teacher, Isabel, positioned herself with respect to various facets impacting her literacy instruction (e.g., standardization, bilingual education, writers workshop, and being a novice teacher). The authors found that Isabel articulated multiple and competing discourses of literacy and teaching. For example, Isabel valued students' funds of knowledge through engaging them in strategy instruction grounded in students' linguistic strengths (e.g., correlating Spanish/English cognates to identify unknown vocabulary). She also challenged mainstream teachers' concerns about working with bilingual students. However, Isabel also made statements about students based on their language status and skills, and told interviewers that bilingual kids are "different." The authors purported that Isabel's identification of students as bilingual contradicted times in which she challenged language as a unitary identifier. Furthermore, Isabel articulated a deficit discourse at times when she referred to bilingual students as low or lacking background knowledge, skills or experiences. Handsfield et al. argued that Isabel operated much like a "double agent" by reinscribing state-sanctioned strategies of literacy, while strategically disrupting them at the same time. They felt that Isabel's negotiations of multiple and competing ideologies of literacy related to her professional identity, and denoted the need for researchers and teacher educators to understand how teachers and students make use of and adapt multiple ideologies of literacy and teaching.

Harman (2007) conducted an ethnographic case study on Trudy, a second year urban eighth grade language arts teacher, to explore whether her participation in an



inquiry-based master's degree program contributed to a shift in her perceptions of non-dominant students and her own teaching. The author analyzed audio and video recordings from classroom interactions and interviews, as well as field notes, instructional materials, and Trudy's graduate course assignments. She found that Trudy's discursive practices at the start of the school year drew from a discourse that positioned non-dominant students as deficit learners. This was evident in Trudy's journal where she wrote about English Language Learners in a deficit manner, e.g., writing, "Why would a teenager, whose native language is Spanish, care to write well?" (p. 36). Trudy also positioned her Latino students as unintrinsically motivated to learn English, and held the belief that literacy equated to teaching "correct" English (p. 36). Trudy's discourses about literacy shifted a few months into the school year. In her graduate coursework she read about multiliteracy practices, articles about supporting struggling readers, and articles that recommended teachers build instruction from students' strengths to support their learning. Trudy then wrote in her journal about tensions between her existing practices and what she was learning through her coursework. Gradually, Trudy's literacy practices shifted as she focused on ways to design culturally responsive and integrated curriculum for her non-dominant students. After reading a short story about an elderly lady, Trudy and her students discovered their shared concern about older relatives and social problems. Trudy worked with her students to help them write expository articles, design graphic images, and produce a newsletter, which they shared with senior citizens in a retirement community. Harmon found that Trudy's participation in graduate work led her to enact more dialogic discourses that supported an array of literate identities among her students.

## **The Emergence of New Student Identities in K-12 Classrooms**

Because agency is a fundamental human desire (Johnston, 2004), students enact new identities in classroom settings; these identities are sometimes in resistance to those imposed on them by teachers or institutions. Moreover, when teachers provide opportunities that support students' agency as learners, students will enact new and varying identities. Skerrett (2012), for example, conducted a case study of the development of a reading identity in one student, Angelica, a 15-year-old Latin American who attended a diverse high school in a southwestern state. Skerrett explored the literacy experiences in school that positioned Angelica as a struggling reader, and her efforts to contest this identity. During the study, Angelica exercised agency in claiming a new identity as a successful reader, despite being positioned as a struggling reader for seven of her nine years of schooling. Angelica had decided to enact a new identity because she was tired of being in "boring" reading classes. At the same time, Angelica's teacher, Molly, created daily opportunities for students to read, write, and talk about a broad range of literature in order to enable her students to claim strong academic identities. Students shared with classmates in groups how they felt about reading on particular days, and why that may have been, as well as why they became engaged, disinterested or confused by a text, and strategies they used to preserve meaning. Molly integrated these transactions into the curriculum so students could critically inquire about their academic identities during the entire school year. Skerrett found that Angelica's reading identity flourished from exposure to a variety of texts, which increased her agency and led to her interest in reading. Her identity as a reader was further strengthened by the knowledge base of

strategies, discussed in Molly's classroom, which supported Angelica's successful and critical engagement with texts.

Through ethnographic research, Rex (2001) analyzed classroom discussions and student work samples to create cases that displayed the conditions that supported the remaking of high school readers. She collected data in a high school in which 55% of students were members of ethnic minority groups and 22% were categorized as Limited English Proficient. The academic tracking system at this school also conformed to these demographics. Students were either in a special education, English as a second language, college preparatory, or gifted and talented (GATE) tracked English class. However, the school permitted college preparatory students to enroll in GATE English courses if preferred. The focal student of the study, Kora, was a college preparatory student enrolled in a GATE English course. At the beginning of the school year, Kora received failing scores on literature quizzes, though as the year progressed Kora's performance improved, which the author linked to multiple opportunities for Kora to engage in discourses where she was not positioned as powerless or at risk. The teacher created opportunities for students to support one another, which sustained the ways in which Kora began to act like and take on the identity of a gifted and talented reader. For example, he supported students' inquires and authentic questions, and helped them assume the role of teaching in supporting one another's learning. He acted intentionally to bring Kora's questions forward to play a substantial part of the classroom discourse and support her new identity as a GATE student.

## **Teacher Educators Supporting the Emergence of Pre-Service Teacher Identities**

Over recent decades, researchers have recognized the significance of pre-service teacher identity development. Britzman (2003) purported that a teacher's identity emerges through a process of becoming, a "time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become" (p. 31). She advocated for a dialogic process of learning to teach, where one's circumstances, lived experiences, commitments, social and cultural contexts, and discourses contribute to what it means to become a teacher. Lipka and Brinkthaupt (1999) argued that teacher educators should help new teachers maintain a balance between personal and professional identity development.

Teacher educators frequently provide pre-service teachers opportunities to explore who they are becoming as teachers. For instance, Moore and Ritter (2008) conducted a literacy project between pre-service teachers and an inner city third grade classroom to acquaint both pre-service teachers and third graders with a writing audience different from their respective environments. Twenty-three third graders exchanged letters, cards, drawings, autobiographies and writing with 24 pre-service teachers for 10 weeks. The classroom teacher, Scott, was a former student in Ritter's university methods course. During the study, Scott regularly wrote detailed notes about the children's writing and the strategies he used to support them. Initially, the pre-service teachers did not know how to approach writing letters to their pen pals; they did not know what kinds of questions to ask or how to meaningfully connect with the children. Scott wrote the pre-service teachers and encouraged them to be themselves, tell funny stories, and let their personalities come through, rather than writing in a "Hi! How are you?" (p. 508) manner.

As the semester moved forward, the pre-service teachers studied language development and made connections to how to find strengths in writing. Consequently, they began to understand the children as literate individuals, and focused on the children's interests and questions. The authors purported that the project opened pathways for greater insight into the lives of children the pre-service teachers might not otherwise have known. By responding to the strengths of each child through discussion, art, and other forms of communication, this experience changed their perceptions of classrooms with multiple cultures and ethnicities. The authors suggested that the project provided a secure space for the pre-service teachers to redefine their role as teachers who support the literate identities of all children.

Seidl and Conley (2009) conducted a study where they drew on their beliefs that new teachers should co-construct with their students classroom spaces where diverse identities can flourish. They used narrative data to reveal changes they saw in students as they moved towards a more sophisticated, critically conscious and multicultural identity. The authors taught students in the Early and Elementary Masters in Education program at the Ohio State University, where they created a number of cross cultural internships that brought together experience, mediation, and narrative self inquiry to challenge and support multicultural identity development among pre-service teachers. In weekly meetings, the participants shared stories, which they analyzed as a group, and related to critical readings. The authors found that as the students developed more critical insight about culture, structural inequality and the politics of identity, they began to see implications for their teaching. For instance, they became aware of the way authority and adult-child relationships took on different forms in particular historical, political and

socioeconomic spaces. Their internship experiences challenged them shift their understandings beyond stereotypical definitions of culture, and helped them visualize ways they could shape supportive classroom spaces.

Cattley (2007) conducted a case study on the potential influence of reflective writing upon the emergence of pre-service teachers' identities during practicum placements in a Bachelor of Education program. Eight pre-service teachers wrote in reflective logs over an eight-week practicum. Cattley provided reflection log prompts such as, "What makes you feel like a teacher during this practice?" "Does anything threaten your sense of self as a teacher?" and "What emotions have you experienced during your observations?" The pre-service teachers reflected on issues such as time management, teamwork, student engagement, managing differences between parent and teachers' values and balancing the workload between teaching and personal life. The author drew links between the nature of pre-service teachers' statements in their writing and their understanding of teachers' roles. She argued that reflective writing was a valuable tool for professional identity formation, and that scaffolds, via reflection prompts, were likely to result in reflections that support identity formation.

In her work with secondary pre-service teachers, Alsup (2006) drew on theories of stories and narratives to support the development of pre-service teacher identities. She argued that pre-service teachers need educational experiences that provide them opportunities to develop professional identities. Alsup used a variety of discourse genres to facilitate professional identity development among pre-service teachers, including narratives, metaphors for identity, discourse maps, and philosophy statements. Alsup worked with six pre-service secondary education students in a two-year study designed to

investigate a premise that constructing a professional identity was essential in becoming an effective teacher. Drawing on Gee's (2005) notion of Discourses, she used narrative as one way to help students combine their core identities, student identities, as well as additional identities, to create professional identities. Alsup led students to use a range of narratives to explore their professional identities. Students wrote reflexive essays about teaching a lesson on a literary text in order to lead classmates in a pedagogical discussion. They role played "situated performances" (p. 198) from classrooms and reflected on their experiences through narratives. They wrote life history narratives in which they reflected on foundational beliefs about teachers and teaching, and they reflected on teaching practice via "five aggregates" (form, sensations/feelings, consciousness, perceptions, intentionality/actions). Alsup found that students who engaged in narratives with characteristics of borderland discourse (discourse where there was evidence of contact between disparate personal and professional subjectivities that led towards the integration of multiple senses of self) appeared to fruitfully integrate their personal and professional identities (Alsup, 2006). She purported that these genres of discourse allowed pre-service teachers to develop integrated, holistic professional selves.

### **Intersections among Pre-Service Teacher Identity and Instructional Decisions**

In teacher education courses, pre-service teachers learn theories to support their understanding of instructional pedagogies. These discourses can support the emergence of pre-service teacher identities. Moreover, their identities influence the instructional decisions they make in classroom settings. Assaf (2005), for instance, conducted a qualitative study that used theories of language and learning to explore the identities of a pre-service teacher in a reading specialization program. Participants completed three

additional course requirements beyond their general teacher education program requirements. Over an 18-month period, Assaf collected the following data on Adrianna, an undergraduate pre-service teacher at a Southwestern university: observations from class and tutoring sessions; online responses with classmates and professor; interviews; dialogue journals between participants; mentor teachers and university supervisors; a portfolio with lesson plans and a teaching philosophy; and a reflective researcher journal. She sought to understand the nature of Adrianna's discourse in the reading specialization program, and how Adrianna's identity influenced the instructional choices she made as a teacher. Assaf found that Adrianna and her peers often criticized traditional reading instruction and high-stakes testing, and struggled with their agency while teaching. Adrianna's identity as a teacher was a dialogic process, shaped by peers' common values and beliefs, and their discussions surrounding teaching and learning. The author also found that Adrianna's identities influenced her instructional decisions as a student teacher. For example, Adrianna made specific choices for read alouds that connected to her students' cultural interests, which stemmed from her own position of being a former ELL student, a time when her personal culture was not valued. Adrianna's experiences in the program enabled her to discursively co-construct understandings among classroom learning and teaching tensions.

### **Pre-Service Teachers Navigating Competing Discourses**

As pre-service teachers study theory and pedagogy in university settings, they simultaneously work with practicing teachers to practice and refine their instruction as new teachers. Sometimes, pre-service teachers must navigate competing discourses between university classrooms and practicing teachers' classrooms. For instance, Larson



(2008) researched the complexities of identity development among elementary and middle school pre-service literacy teachers in a graduate teacher education program. She sought to understand how pre-service teachers developed their identity as teachers of literacy in the midst of authoritative discourses (e.g., mentor teachers, university supervisors, and university professors), and what discourses the pre-service teachers used to negotiate competing discourses of literacy during student teaching. The participants took two literacy courses with the researcher over two semesters. Larson analyzed course documents, teaching notebooks, interviews, focus groups, and a research journal from seven pre-service teachers. She found three themes from the data: 1) deconstructive discourses from literacy biographies, literacy courses and student teaching which influenced the pre-service teachers' subjectivities), 2) reconstructive discourses (discourses in which participants imagined, explained, wondered and shared who they wanted to become as teachers of literacy, and 3) agency (strategies and discourses of literacy negotiation in which the pre-service teachers negotiated competing literacy discourses during student teaching). For example, Sienna, was positioned by her cooperating teacher in ways that impacted her identity as a literacy teacher. Sienna was not permitted to implement practices of literacy that differed from her teacher's practices, which demonstrated the power of her cooperating teacher, and the resulting impact on Sienna's identity development while student teaching. This was classified as deconstructive discourse. Larson suggested that all of the discourses the pre-service teachers navigated, combined with how they wanted to teach literacy, was critical to their identity development as literacy teachers.

Larson and Phillips (2005) analyzed the influence of an ideological conflict between a teacher education program and a school district upon the emerging identity of Claire, a pre-service teacher of literacy. The authors used a poststructural feminist framework to retell Claire's story as she faced the authoritative discourses of a scripted reading program. Claire's district selected a scripted reading program that included timed reading to support students' fluency. However, Claire's teacher education program employed a discourse surrounding a comprehensive literacy program that validates the lived experiences of readers and their experiences in making sense of texts. The authors collected data over a five-month period; data included transcriptions from meetings with the teacher educators/researchers and the pre-service teachers, e-mail communications, and reflective journals. They found that competing discourses between the university's teacher education program and the school district's requirement of a scripted reading program placed Claire in a contested space. When first introduced to the scripted program, Claire was enticed with mantra of the program: consistency and fluency. The university professor responded to Claire with alternative fluency means such as running records, models of fluency and guided reading. Claire continued to remain in a contested space; she often vocalized pros and cons to the scripted reading program. She sought affirmation from the authors/teacher researchers, yet continued to live in the authoritative discourse of the reading program. At the conclusion of the study, Larson and Phillips reflected on their own need to empower students to have the skills and language to deconstruct curriculum and mandates. They posited that enabling pre-service teachers to explore discourses of reading practice would honor their emerging teacher identities.

Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, and Fry (2004) explored the ways an elementary pre-service teacher, Sharon, negotiated different conceptions of teaching across her university program and student teaching site. The authors conducted interviews with Sharon prior to her student teaching and before and after classroom observations by her mentor teacher and university supervisor. Additionally, they took field notes during classroom observations and used artifacts such as lesson plans and the state-mandated curriculum. As part of their findings, Smagorinsky et al. considered the ways Sharon's teaching identity was affected by experiences from her university and student teaching placement. Sharon's university emphasized a constructivist approach to learning, though the authors found that a lack of consistency among faculty led Sharon to an unclear understanding of constructivism. Sharon's mentor teacher, Catherine, believed early-career teachers ought to have a strong emphasis on classroom management. She also approached teaching in a mimetic tradition, where she believed Sharon would learn to teach by imitating her methods as closely as possible. Consequently, there was little room for Sharon to construct a personal teaching style in the classroom during her student teaching experience. The following year Sharon received a job teaching kindergarten. Here she employed some constructivist activities, such as choice time where children built with blocks, painted, drew, played, and improvised; they also wrote numbers from 1 through 50 and completed reading readiness tests. The authors purported that Sharon's identity emerged through tensions between the two worlds of the university and the school district. During student teaching, she found herself in a classroom with little room for growth as a teacher. In her first year of teaching, she developed a clearer vision for her students' learning and drew from

methods gained in her university experiences. Smagorinsky et al. posited that the tensions Sharon experienced were productive in the formation of her teaching identity.

### **Conclusion**

Recent educational research has provided a rich demonstration of K-12 student and pre-service teacher identities as discursive, fluid, contradictory, and socially negotiated. Scholars have examined students and teachers engaged in identity negotiations, where social interactions in K-12 and university settings influence individuals to assign, enact or reject identities. Moreover, the discourses used in these settings plays a role in the construction of or resistance to identities. Although the study of identity is a growing field, an understanding of the relationship among teachers' language/identities and pre-service teachers' identities has not been considered in educational research. The social negotiation of identity, and the concomitant ways identities are constructed from and through language, wields influence in identity construction. In light of the import of identity construction in students' and teachers' lives, their learning, and their relationships maintained in social spaces, teacher education ought to be responsive to how identity may affect both practice and learning. The purpose of this research was to begin to fill this void that currently exists in the literature on the relationship between university teachers' language/identities and pre-service teacher identities in the teacher-education classroom.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

*“Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming; a time of formation and transformation, a scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become.”*

Britzman, 2003, p. 31

This study fills a void that currently exists in the literature on the relationship among teacher discourse and pre-service teacher identities in the university classroom. Johnston (2004) posited that “each conversational exchange between teacher and student(s) provides building material for children’s understanding of a wide range of literate concepts, practices, and possibilities, and helps shape their identities” (p. 10). He suggested that children in our classrooms are *becoming* literate; they are not merely learning the skills of literacy. Rather, they are developing personal and social identities that define who they see themselves becoming. In universities, pre-service teachers study teaching and learning in college classrooms as they simultaneously are *becoming* teachers. As a part of becoming, they merge personal, social, and professional identities that contribute to their identities as teachers (Alsup, 2006). As such, their identities are a multifaceted, dynamic, ongoing processes that include interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences (Kerby, 1991), influenced by historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

In my university classroom, I strive to create the kind of classroom space with pre-service teachers that supports the emergence of multiple and diverse identities. Pre-

service teachers transition between university and K-12 classrooms, where they study educational foundations as *students* learning to become *teachers*, while concurrently performing “teacher” with K-12 students. Their identities are shaped and reshaped as they live out these multiple roles (Alsup, 2006). This study allowed me to construct knowledge about the intersections among my discourses and the identities that emerged among pre-service teachers; it also contributed to the construction and reconstruction of my own identities as a researcher and teacher educator. Studying the intersections among my discourse and pre-service teachers’ identities will help practitioners in the field understand how pre-service teachers negotiate the complexities of becoming a teacher in university classrooms.

### **Action Research**

In this action research study, I examined the intersections between my discourses and the identities that emerged among the pre-service teachers in my class. I asked:

1. In what ways do my discourses as a university instructor intersect with the identities pre-service teachers perform in the classroom?
  - a. What messages about identity are embedded in the language I use with pre-service teachers?
  - b. What identities do pre-service teachers perform in our space together?

Because identities are constructed *from* and *through* language, I also took into account that my discourses are a part of the identities I enact, and consequently I do not view my discourses as disparate from my own identity performances.

Action research encompasses a range of practices across various fields, both in academia and fields far removed from education (Adelman, 1993; Elliott, 1991; Noffke, 1994). Action researchers engage in a cyclical process that encompasses discussion, decision, action, evaluation and revision (Efron & Ravid, 2013; McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2014). This form of research is grounded in the significance of human experience in the generation of knowledge, a principle consistent with Dewey's (1938) beliefs about the value of experience to education. Because it is often practitioners who consider themselves action researchers, action research is also sometimes referred to as practice-based research, practitioner research, practitioner-led research, and practitioner-based research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Efron & Ravid, 2013). Action research in education is a systematic inquiry carried out by teacher researchers, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gain insight, develop reflective practice, and improve student outcomes and the lives of those involved in the study (Corey, 1953; Mills, 2011; Stenhouse, 1975). Action research in education is significant because it encourages change in schools, promotes collaboration, and encourages teacher reflection (Mills, 2011).

I selected an action research approach because I was interested in studying my own intersections with pre-service teachers. McNiff and Whitehead (2006) suggested that it is appropriate to use action research when you want to evaluate whether what you are doing is influencing your own or other people's learning. Action research is a form of practice based research where practitioners focus on improving practice, which leads to the creation of new knowledge about one's own practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Reason and Bradbury (2008) posited that action research seeks to "bring together action

and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities” (p. 4). Carrying out an action research study facilitated personal reflection on my own instruction and led to action, while concomitantly supporting the identities that emerged among the pre-service teachers in my classroom.

An action research dissertation is responsive to the scope and knowledge base of academic research, while documenting practice from an emic perspective (Fecho, 1995). Because an emic perspective is an insider’s view of reality, it is fundamental to understand how people view the world around them (Fetterman, 2008). Approaching my study through an emic perspective was appropriate not only to my action research methodology, but also sides with my theoretical lens that allows for multiple realities that are dependent upon the social contexts in which studies occur. Moreover, an emic perspective aligns with the interpretive lenses I utilized in self-reflection and analysis. Inside researchers, who couple theories with an action-oriented mode, develop collaborative, reflective data, beneficial to their own practice and to the sociopolitical context in which they dwell (Glesne, 2010).

While I hoped to uncover hidden nuances and meanings through an emic perspective, provided the subjectivity that every researcher brings to a study, a solely emic perspective was impossible to achieve. My views of reality are culturally, historically and socially contextualized, and consequently multiple postures contributed to my conceptualizations and understandings generated through my research. Because researchers move across boundaries in their work, they often shift between insider and



outsider (Griffith, 1998). While I came to my study through an emic approach, my multiple identities, subjectivities, and positionalities contributed to these shifts during my study, where I was positioned as an outsider in relation to my participants.

Approaching my study through an emic perspective enabled me to generate a rich, thick description of the phenomena being studied (Geertz, 1973). However, I faced role duality of being an insider-researcher, where I worked to balance my insider role of university instructor and my researcher role. In order to conduct credible insider research, I maintained an explicit awareness of the possible effects of bias on data collection and analysis (Unluer, 2012). While I remained committed to producing credible insider research, the findings for my study are situated within the context of my classroom, representative of a given time and place. This restricts the contribution of my research to a more limited community of scholars.

Nevertheless, action research holds the potential to enable practitioners to become aware of their capability to influence the future (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). As action research is focused on improving learning, my own action research project provided me with the potential to influence the thinking of other individuals by making accounts of my own learning public. Sharing the ways my research led to new learning and action could create spaces for others to join in learning with me.

Mills (2011) claimed that action research is done *by* teachers *for* themselves. I guided my action research project through Mills' (2011) model for action research, the dialectic action research spiral (see figure 3.1). His model resonated with me because of its emphasis on teachers studying themselves to cultivate teaching and learning. His dialectic action research spiral includes a four-step process, as delineated below.

## Mills' Dialectic Action Research Spiral



Figure 3.1. The Dialectic Action Research Spiral (Mills, 2011)

*Identify an area of focus.* The area of focus should include a research topic that involves teaching and learning and ought to center on the researcher's practice. Likewise, the area of focus needs to be within the researcher's locus of control. After selecting an area of focus, the next step in the action research process is reconnaissance, when the researcher begins preliminary information gathering, such as exploring theories and educational values that impact his or her practice. The researcher then evaluates how his or her work fits into the larger context of schooling and society. Reconnaissance helps the teacher researcher clarify what he or she already knows about the area of focus and delineate why the selected topic is significant to study. Concomitant with reconnaissance, the researcher should have begun an initial foray into professional literature to better understand the selected research topic. An investment in reconnaissance and a review of the literature will lead the researcher to create an action plan, where he or she develops a research question, a timeline for the project, and a breadth of data collection ideas.

*Collect data.* Mills (2011) recommended three central types of data collection techniques for a qualitative action research project: experiencing, enquiring, and examining. Experiencing data collection occurs through observation and field notes, through means such as participant observation. Enquiring occurs when the researcher asks questions through informal conversations or interviews. Examining includes the use of records such as journals, audio and video recordings, and artifacts.

*Analyze and interpret data.* Action research studies provide the teacher researcher with data that can be used during the study to positively affect teaching. Consequently, the researcher takes time during the study to determine what he or she is learning, and determine if the research question is still answerable and worth answering. Moreover, the researcher reflects on the kind of data that is being produced and filters out unnecessary data collection techniques. While ongoing analysis and reflection is a central component of the research process, Mills (2011) cautioned against premature actions based on early analysis and interpretation of data. In order for data to be thoroughly analyzed, they must be systematically organized. Mills proposed following an iterative process of analysis that includes: *reading/memoing* to become familiar with the data to identify potential themes, *describing* what is occurring in the setting to provide detailed descriptions of the setting, participants and activity, and *classifying* research data in order to categorize and code data into themes.

*Develop an action plan.* At this phase of the study, Mills (2011) contended that the researcher should ask, “Based on what I have learned from this investigation, what should I do now?” (p. 155). The teacher researcher reflects on taken-for-granted assumptions and determines the next course of action. To facilitate this process, the

researcher can delineate a list that includes: findings, recommended actions targeted to findings, who is responsible for actions, who needs to be consulted about the findings and associated actions, who will monitor the effects of actions, a timeline for when action will occur, and resources needed to carry out the action.

Action research was an opportune methodology for my study because the tenets of this type of research underscore its constructivist and situational nature (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Mills, 2011), which are aligned with my theoretical beliefs that account for the co-construction of knowledge. I hoped that studying my own discourses with my students would lead me to generate new knowledge on effective ways to support the identities that emerged among pre-service teachers in my classroom. Moreover, action research is practical because action researchers choose questions relevant to their own concerns and professional interests (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This was parallel with my ambition to research an issue in the context of my own classroom, driven from my inquires on how to position pre-service teachers in effective, productive ways. Action research is distinct from other forms of traditional educational research because of its cyclical nature, whereby the research begins with a question and ends with knowledge gained that leads to new questions and cycles of research (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Mills, 2011). My action research project led me through a cycle of reflective practice where I analyzed the findings of my study to determine how they influenced future action and instruction in my classroom.

### **Research Context**

The study took place in a pre-service elementary literacy methods course at a public university in the Southeastern United States. The university had a total

undergraduate enrollment of 24,180 students, was set in an urban area on 444 acres, and utilized a semester-based academic calendar (U.S. News, 2014). The student body included 3% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 11% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 77% White, 3% multi-race/ethnicity, and 2% non-resident (Forbes, 2014).

Pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the literacy methods course at the time of the study were in a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education program, where, upon successful completion of degree requirements, they received a state teaching certificate for grades 2-6. This course was the first in which they were a part of the professional program in elementary education. In order to be admitted to the professional program, they must have submitted an application to the College of Education, and have passed the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators exam. They were expected to maintain a minimum of a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) grade point average for all education courses in the professional program. The pre-service teacher population at this university mirrored the majority of pre-service teachers in the United States, where they are mostly white, female, monolingual, and middle class (Howard, 2010).

The goal of the literacy methods course was to examine and implement key concepts, content, goals, and strategies in teaching reading and language arts in elementary school. The broad purpose of the course was for pre-service teachers to: a) understand the theories, frameworks, and practices to become culturally responsive practitioners, b) develop a reflective stance toward learning, pedagogy, assessment, and learning, and c) to embrace the roles of researcher, learner, collaborator, and change agent. As a part of the course, the pre-service teachers applied theories and pedagogies

that we studied in our methods courses to teach elementary children one-on-one each week during reading and writing workshop.

This was a six credit-hour course that met once a week from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. across a 14-week semester. Within each seven-hour course, I used a range of instructional practices to facilitate learning, including whole group discussions, small group discussions, collaborative, and independent work. Detailed examples of weekly class activities are outlined below in data collection.

### **Participant Selection**

Consistent with Patton's (1990) strategy of purposeful sampling, participants were pre-service teachers in the literacy methods course I taught at the time of the study. I discussed the study with everyone enrolled in my course on the first day of class in January, 2015. After learning about the study, they were invited to participate on a voluntary basis; each student was provided with a letter and consent form that delineated the details of the study (Appendix A). Because this study occurred in the context of my own classroom, data collection included a considerable number of course assignments. In order to protect pre-service teachers' participation throughout the semester, I asked them to return their consent forms in a sealed envelope, which were secured in a locked drawer at the university. I opened these after the completion of the course and submission of final grades. Everyone enrolled in the course provided consent for the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred during a 14-week academic semester. Because the goal of this study was to understand the intersections among my discourses and the identities

that emerged among pre-service teachers in my class, I used multiple methods of data collection across a variety of contexts. Using a variety of data allowed me to theorize from the data how participants' identities were situated in particular contexts. During the study, I acted as an active participant observer, because, when I was actively engaged in teaching, I was observing the outcomes of my instruction.

**Audio recordings/transcriptions of class sessions.** In order to reflect on and analyze the intersections among my discourses and pre-service teachers' identities, I audio recorded my instruction each week during the semester to capture both tacit and explicit moments in relation to my discourses and pre-service teacher identities. I audio recorded the duration of each class session, with the exception of the following: lunch, our work in the second grade classroom with small teachers, a midterm exam, and during the presence of guest speakers in the classroom. The total amount of time audio recorded across the semester amounted to approximately 64 hours, 19 minutes. Transcripts from audio-recorded instructional segments allowed me to reflexively analyze data and the ways my discourses interfaced with pre-service teachers in the classroom. I created a file for each class session with a detailed table of contents that enabled me to easily revisit sections of the audio that correlated to patterns and themes that began to emerge during data analysis. At the start of this study, I planned to transcribe at least 20 minutes of every hour of class, which would provide two or more hours of data transcription for each of the 14 class sessions. However, I ended up transcribing 20-45 minutes of every hour of audio. For segments not transcribed verbatim, I included a notation in the transcript about what occurred during that timeframe in order to easily relocate those sections, if

needed, during coding and analysis. I ended up with 915 pages of transcriptions across the 15 class sessions.

**Teacher Journal.** Herr and Anderson (2015) purported that insider researchers have unique dilemmas, such as the fact that they cannot be in two places at once; I did not have the luxury of taking copious field notes or using ethnographic approaches because I could not teach and record data at the same time. However, the use of a teacher journal allowed me to capture *in-the-moment* interactions, experiences, and conversations that informed the direction of both our weekly class sessions and unfolding analysis of the study. A teacher journal was a place to account for classroom life experiences, where I recorded observations, analyzed experiences, and reflected on and interpreted my practice across the semester (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993a). A teacher journal, similar in some ways to ethnographic field notes, fused descriptions, commentaries, and analysis to capture the propinquity of my teaching. A teacher journal allowed me to make sense of my daily work as a teacher. It was a place where I recorded observations of pre-service teachers in the classroom and their work with students, notes from class discussions, questions that arose during class, and descriptions of specific interactions with pre-service teachers. I used my teacher journal each week during class for the entire 14-week semester. My teacher journal was different from analytic memos, because I used the teacher journal *during* class to inform my knowledge of teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.

**Analytic Memos.** Analytic memos provided a space for my embodiment of recursive reflexivity (Lather, 2003) and served as a reflective tool for me to develop ideas and better understand my research topic, setting, and study. Maxwell (2013) purported



that the value of analytic memos is dependent upon serious reflection, analysis and self-critique, and systematic organization of memos for future access and examination. I wrote weekly analytic memos during the 14-week study in order to reflect on the development of my research. Each week after class I reviewed my teacher journal, pre-service teachers' weekly reflections, and early transcriptions to compose analytic memos. I critically reflected on the intersections among my discourses and the emergence of pre-service teachers' identities. I also reflected on salient points that arose during class or while I was transcribing. These memos helped me delineate ways to become more attuned to my discourses and pedagogies in subsequent class sessions. As an action researcher, analytic memos allowed me to ask critical questions of developing data, note emerging themes, connect to literature, and make changes in my teaching practices (Phillips & Carr, 2007). Furthermore, analytic memos presented a space for reflexivity on my study, where I reflected critically on my "self as researcher" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 283).

**Written Communication.** I analyzed written communication that occurred with my pre-service teachers throughout the semester, which included email conversations relevant to patterns in the data.

**Course assignments.** Each week I had a myriad of opportunities to provide written and oral feedback to my students. I analyzed my own discourses in feedback to students to better understand any potential relationship to students' emerging identities; I also used their assignments to understand their trajectories as developing teachers. Analyzing students' work, as well their completion of assignments influenced my

interactions with them in subsequent classes supported my understanding of the intersections among my discourses and pre-service teachers' emerging identities.

***Professional literature responses.*** During the study, pre-service teachers reflected on their developing understandings, theories, and belief systems that stemmed from reading professional literature. Each week they posted a 500 to 700 word reading response on a Google Community webpage created for our class, where they were required to: synthesize across all readings, include quotes and key ideas from texts, make connections, raise questions, and articulate beliefs about teaching and learning.

***Discussion leaders and written reflections.*** Each week, a group of students was responsible for leading small groups in discussion surrounding their professional literature responses. Each student was a discussion leader three times during the semester, and was responsible for sharing questions and big ideas from the readings to initiate conversation in small groups. Students had the flexibility and freedom to design literature conversation however they chose; some posed questions derived from readings, others planned engagements to help peers make connections between literature and their future classrooms (e.g., reading children's books to discuss potential ways to design literacy instruction).

After engaging peers in conversations, discussion leaders were responsible for writing a reflection that showed the questions or engagement they generated for their groups, their plan to engage everyone in the conversation, a report on how their discussions went, and key insights that their peers shared.

***Literacy histories.*** Literacy histories provided opportunities for the pre-service teachers to understand how they positioned themselves in relation to literacy events and

other actors in those events (Davis, 2013). They documented past literacy experiences and reflected on the ways those experiences contributed to their literacy development. They first created digital literacy timelines via dipity.com, where they showcased a range of early literacy experiences, classroom literacy experiences, and present day literacy experiences from across their lives. Their timelines included events from both home and school, and across early childhood, elementary, middle, high school, and college. Students integrated media, pictures, music, videos and web links into their timelines. They used their timelines to examine patterns and compose a narrative reflection about the ways their literacy histories contributed to their identities as literate individuals.

***Writer's notebooks.*** Students created writer's notebooks and composed weekly entries in their notebooks during the semester to "live like writers." They created "heart maps" in their writer's notebooks, which were visual reminders of the things they love about care about in order to develop ideas to write about across the semester. They also drafted ideas for their literacy timelines and literacy histories, reflected on themselves as writers, wrote about memories from their lives, created lists, wrote "unforgettable stories," made lists of "memories" and "places" they loved, and composed memoirs. Students also experimented with ways to revise leads, integrate repetition, and rewrite conclusions as they selected entries from their notebooks to take through the writing process and publish for a class author's celebration.

***Literature circles.*** I conducted book talks for four young adult novels (*The Red Pencil, The Turtle of Oman, Home of the Brave, and Inside Out and Back Again*) and students selected one text to read and discuss with peers in literature circles during the

later portion of the semester. Students read their texts outside of class and engaged in small group discussions during class.

***Responsive teaching cycles (RTCs).*** Each week in class, pre-service teachers worked one-on-one with a second grade student, called a small teacher, during reading and writing workshop. Pre-service teachers used kidwatching observations to understand their small teachers as readers and writers. After each class, students used their kidwatching notes to compose responsive teaching cycles (Mills & O’Keffe, 2006) where they attempted to interpret the meaning of their observations, grounded their interpretations in theory and professional literature, and made decisions on the type of instruction they designed next to support their small teacher’s literacy progress. Based on their observations and interpretations, pre-service teachers wrote a new teaching plan to facilitate the learning process for their small teacher. Responsive teaching cycles provided a space for students to practice reflexivity as developing teachers.

***Pause and Ponders.*** Students composed weekly “pause and ponder” reflections in class where they had opportunities to reflect on their interactions with small teachers, insights gained from professional literature conversations, ideas that challenged or affirmed their thinking, new learning, and wonderings that arose throughout class. I read and responded to each of their reflections and returned them the following week. Weekly “pause and ponder” reflections were photocopied prior to returning them to students.

***Responsive teaching kidwatching projects.*** Students created a culminating project for the semester, where they organized kidwatching notes, data, student work samples from small teachers, and responsive teaching cycles in a 3-ring binder. They organized and reflected on these materials to compose a final responsive teaching paper,

where they wrote about their framework of beliefs for teaching and learning, a reflection on their kidwatching notes and data from across the semester, and a narrative that provided a snapshot of their small teacher as a reader and a writer.

### **Participant Risks**

The close relationship between teacher researchers and their students insinuates the intimate nature of action research (Mills, 2011). As my research included the collection of data with detailed information about students' lives, experiences, and perceptions, I took necessary precautions to minimize the risk and ensure confidentiality for them. To conceal their identities, I asked everyone to select a pseudonym, which I used while writing findings. Furthermore, all data was secured through password-protected files. Artifacts and student work samples remained in locked files, and audio recordings were permanently deleted from recording devices after being downloaded to a secure location on my personal laptop. At the conclusion of this study, all data remained in a secure and password-protected location.

### **Data Analysis**

The challenge in a qualitative study is to make sense of substantial amounts of data, identify salient patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton, 1990). The analyses of qualitative data depends on processes of coding data to generate patterns and themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding can be thought of as a way to relate data to ideas about those data, and encompasses a range of approaches that serve in the organization, retrieval, and interpretation of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Codes link instances in the data to create categories with common elements, which can lead to salient patterns and themes,

and set the stage for the researcher to interpret the data and draw conclusions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

During the study, I employed multiple coding cycles that represent what Saldaña (2013) termed the “reverberative nature of coding—comparing data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to data” (p. 58). I looked for essence-capturing codes, that “when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 8). I used NVivo qualitative research software as an organizational tool for coding and analysis. My initial coding occurred through elemental methods of analysis (Saldaña, 2013). Elemental approaches to coding build a foundation for future coding cycles, and included descriptive and in vivo codes. Descriptive codes assign labels and provide an account of their topic, while vivo codes drew from and captured specific language found in the data (Saldaña, 2013). I coded both students’ language and my own language using in vivo codes.

In addition to elemental methods of analysis, I utilized methods from Gee’s (2005) D/discourse analysis as another layer for coding and analysis. Gee (2005) defined D/discourse analysis as an inquiry tool or “thinking device” to understand how language-in-use (discourse) and “non-language stuff” (Discourse) is used to enact activities and identities. Discourse consists of how we use language to make sense of socially constructed meanings; we use language to build identities and representations of self to ourselves and others. Gee’s methods of D/discourse analysis enabled me to investigate my language-in-use to understand how it intersected with pre-service teachers as they constructed identities. By reflecting on how “socially situated identities are mutually co-

constructed,” D/discourse analysis provided me with an analytic lens to investigate how my discourses intersected with pre-service teachers’ identity performances, and how we used language to construct our identities within the classroom context. I used two of Gee’s (2004) building tasks, “significance” and “identities,” and his inquiry tool, “Discourse models,” as another layer of analysis to understand how to answer my research questions. I found the following questions, based on the aforementioned building tasks and inquiry tool, useful in my analysis:

1. How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? (building task→significance)
2. What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact? (building task→identities)
3. What Discourse models are relevant here? What must I, as an analyst, assume that people feel, value, and believe, consciously or not, to talk (write), act and/or interact this way? (inquiry tool→Discourse models)

I used patterns across my coding to create code maps and identity categories in the data (e.g., student identities, personal identities, beliefs about instruction, embracing/resisting pedagogies, and describing teaching experiences). I then recoded the data to develop a “sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization” as I moved from my first to second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 207). As I recoded, I looked for intersections between discourses and identity performances. As classes progressed, our intersections became more prominent, and I wanted to make note of how our intersections shifted and changed across the semester. Table 3.1 is a representation of how I moved across my data through different cycles of coding.

Table 3.1

*Examples of moves across coding*

| <p><b>Excerpt from data</b></p> <p><i>*Underlined text represents 1<sup>st</sup> coding cycle: in vivo</i></p>   | <p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: Descriptive</b></p>  | <p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis</b></p>  | <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: Pattern Coding</b></p>                         | <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis</b></p>  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Gigi: <u>I'm kinda having trouble.</u></p> <p>E: Yeah, so <u>let's help Gigi...</u></p> <p>Gigi: Getting Rashaun to add things [to his writing]. Like his writing is like, he does it very well, like he had, you know, all the facts about me, like written in complete sentences. And I'd be like "Oh can you, is there anything you can add?" And he'd be like, "No." And I'd be like, "Well maybe a detail about where I've traveled to," cause he said something about traveling, and he like he just says no. [laugh] <u>And I don't know [laugh] how to respond to that.</u> I'm like (pause) <i>okay</i>, you know, it's just, "No."</p> <p>E: So you were trying to give him like a suggestion, your kind of teaching point you wanted to do today was maybe adding details?</p> <p>Gigi: Yeah...</p> <p>E: And you had trouble getting him to follow through with the</p> | <p>Small Teachers→ Reflections→ Questions</p> <p>Small Teachers→ Reflections→ Questions</p> <p>Clarifying</p> <p>Clarifying</p> | <p>Performance of student (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> <p>Performance of student and teacher (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> | <p>Seeking feedback (about teaching)</p> <p>Seeking feedback (about teaching)</p> | <p>Performance of teacher-seeking feedback/ past instruction (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> |



| <b>Excerpt from data</b><br><br><i>*Underlined text represents 1<sup>st</sup> coding cycle: in vivo</i>   | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: Descriptive</b>   | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis</b>   | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: Pattern Coding</b>                                | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <p>advice...</p> <p>Gigi: Yeah...</p> <p>E: You were giving him..</p> <p><i>[side conversation about her child talking about the difference between a sentence and a paragraph]</i></p> <p>E: So what kind of, <u>what kind of advice do y'all have</u> for Gigi? Is anybody experiencing similar things with their kid? And. Yeah, y'all talk to Gigi.</p> <p>Meredith: I, <u>I had like the same thing</u>...</p> <p>E: Mmm hmm...</p> <p>Meredith: And everything I asked was like I don't know, no, like I don't want to do that and like I tried doing a bunch of like [inaudible] add details and I tried telling her to work on punctuation and she didn't wanna do that and then we tried capitalization and she said her capitalization's perfect.</p> <p>Susie: [laugh]</p> <p>Meredith: <u>And then I tried</u> working with her on like combining several, well she had like instead of putting periods at the end of sentences she just like linked everything with "and," even when it wasn't</p> | <p>Small Teachers→ Reflections→ Questions</p> <p>Small Teachers→ Reflections→ Questions</p> <p>Small Teachers→ Reflections→ Questions</p> | <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> <p>Performance of student and teacher (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Performance of student and teacher (building task/ identities)</p> | <p>Seeking feedback (about teaching)</p> <p>Seeking feedback (about teaching)</p> | <p>Invitation to problem solve (building task/ significance)</p> <p>Performance of teacher-seeking feedback/ past instruction (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Performance of teacher-seeking feedback/ past instruction (building task/ identities)</p> |

| Excerpt from data<br><br><i>*Underlined text represents 1<sup>st</sup> coding cycle: in vivo</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: Descriptive       | 1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: Pattern Coding | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding: d/Discourse Analysis               |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>related <u>so then I tried</u> working on that with her and she said that was perfect too...</p> <p>[laughter]</p> <p>Meredith: So yeah, I, <u>I am having the same problem.</u></p> <p>E: Yeah, so you guys <u>talk to each other and help each other problem solve.</u> What kind of advice do you have for Meredith and for Gigi based on the observations they're noticing with their small teachers? Let's help them problem solve. Yeah?</p> | <p>Small Teachers → Reflections → Questions</p> | <p>Performance of student (building task/ identities)</p> <p>Supporting reflection (building task/ significance)</p> | <p>Seeking feedback (about teaching)</p>     | <p>Invitation to problem solve (building task/ significance)</p> |

Concurrent with coding cycles, I wrote analytic memos to reflect on my coding process and code choices, how the process of my action research study was taking shape, and patterns and categories that emerged from the data (Saldaña, 2013). Moreover, analytic memos served to sustain reflexivity during the research process, where I thought critically about my study, confronted and challenged my own assumptions, and recognized how my thoughts and actions influenced the lenses I brought to my data (Lather, 2003; Saldaña, 2013).

Engaging in multiple coding cycles enabled me to critically analyze, integrate, synthesize, abstract, and conceptualize from the data (Saldaña, 2013). Applying numerous cycles of coding to the data insinuates that the qualitative analytic process, like

action research, was cyclical. My goal in applying numerous coding cycles to my data was to cycle back to initial coding efforts in order to strategically cycle forward to additional analytic methods (Saldaña, 2013). As patterns continued to emerge from the data, I used concept and code maps to organize codes and categories, and to develop themes. All the while, I engaged in a reflective and iterative process as I revisited and my coding, concept maps, and analytic memos to understand and interpret my data.

The nature of action research is intimate, open-ended and often serendipitous (Mills, 2011). My study provided me with data that was used formatively and summatively, and a vast extent of the data collected was used to affect my teaching during the study (Mills, 2011). This aligns with what McNiff and Whitehead (2006) purported, that the best action research “becomes real when ideas are linked with action” (p. 13). Furthermore, because I brought an epistemological stance to my study, where I view knowledge as socially constructed, I realize that data exists within the social conditions of their making (Noffke & Brennan, 1997). As I engaged in data analysis, I shared emerging interpretations with my students to receive feedback and deepen the understandings I made from the data. Because action researchers are committed to a recursive process of action and understanding, I used my ongoing reflections and understanding from previous rounds of data gathering, analysis and action taken to engage in successive cycles of *plan-act-observe-reflect* throughout my study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

### **Positionality**

In action research, practitioners and researchers are one and the same (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994). While action research in education tends to be defined by its

insider position, there remain multiple positionalities that impact the research process; carefully thinking through my own positionality was essential, as my subjectivities contributed to my understanding of how they impacted the trustworthiness, findings, and ethics of the research process.

**Historical, Political, and Socioeconomic Heritage.** Following McNiff's (2012) recommendation on exercising critical self-reflection to achieve action research that reaches personal and social transformation, I recognize that "I am always in relation with others, past and present, and am always historically constituted and politically oriented" (p. 130). My identities characterize my positionality and impact the lenses through which I design and conduct research studies. These identities are germane to understanding my perspectives as a researcher.

The many aspects of my identity, including my class, race, gender, age, language, sexual orientation, and personal and professional experiences, contributed to the multifaceted ways in which I was positioned in my study. Nieto (2010) asserted that people are either privileged or subordinated across several dimensions of culture, including class, race and gender. As a white female, whose class, race and sexual orientation are aligned with dominant societal norms, my identities position me as privileged. Being raised in a household with identities aligned with those perpetuated in society, and maintaining an analogous position as a young married female also positions me as privileged. Hill Collins (1990) posited that privilege is defined in relation to its other, and that viewing systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppressions fosters a paradigmatic shift which account for additional oppressions, such as age, sexual orientation, or religion. Depending on the

context, a person may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or concomitantly oppressor and oppressed (Hill Collins, 1990). Race, class, and gender oppressions operate within the social structures of institutions, and become perpetuated through systems of power. In addition, oppressions such as gender or sexual orientation exist in personal relationships and individual consciousness.

Such oppressions can be perpetuated in school settings. All students, regardless of their multiple identities, are intelligent, capable learners (Delpit, 2012; Howard, 2010). Jensen's (2005) strong disposition on this matter elucidates the significance of equitable education; "If there is no equality in education, there is no equality in society" (p. 18). As an educational researcher, I seek to always enter research experiences with a lens that recognizes injustices, to work to counteract the oppression of people, challenge the status quo, and embrace multiple ways of being in the world.

**Teacher-Student Relationships.** Action research shares the same kind of border crossing that other research requires (e.g., class, race, gender), but a fundamental predicament unique to action researchers is their relationship to their participants and their setting (Herr and Anderson, 2015). Being a female graduate student with previous elementary teaching experience positions me as both similar to and different from the pre-service teachers in my classes. Though we share a similar passion for teaching and learning, my students were *becoming* elementary teachers, while I was *becoming* a university professor. My previous elementary teaching experience imparted knowledge that I shared with students, and fostered the development of relationships where we reflected on effective teaching practices necessary for providing an equitable education for all children. However, my previous teaching experience, my age, my status as a

graduate student, and my position as the course instructor in this study also positioned me as an outsider to my students.

As an instructor and simultaneous researcher of the methods course in this study, I played a valuable role in facilitating the learning experiences the pre-service teachers in my classroom encountered. A benefit of this insider position was the capacity to integrate my reflection on learning experiences into the curriculum to facilitate discussion surrounding these ideas. However, as both researcher and course instructor, I also recognized the significance of the power hierarchy between myself (as both teacher and researcher) and my students in this study. Because I view knowledge generation as a constructed process, I believe it is important to deconstruct the teacher/student power hierarchy instantiated in many classrooms. I strived to work towards this by embracing what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993b) posited, that knowledge creation in classrooms is a negotiation process between teachers and students:

Essentially, teachers and students negotiate what counts as knowledge in the classroom, who can have knowledge, and how knowledge can be generated, challenged, and evaluated. We are arguing here that through inquiry, teachers come to understand how this happens in their own classrooms and how their interpretations of classroom events are shaped (p. 45).

I regarded teaching as a process of knowledge generation *with* students, where I worked to achieve an equitable and democratic collaboration across differences in power and status. Nevertheless, my position as a teacher was static, and consequently my power as “teacher” remained ever present in the classroom with students. Since I came to my study as an insider, I worked to see “taken-for-granted aspects” of my practice from an

outsider's perspective (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 28). I remained reflexive in my research by looking closely at how my positionality influenced my students, the inherent power hierarchies, the setting, and the stories, both visible and *not* through the research I conducted (Glesne, 2010). Being reflexive meant that I remained committed to producing knowledge that aided in gaining insight into the workings of social humanity, as well as discerning how this knowledge was produced (Pillow, 2003). In order to remain reflexive during my study, I was critically conscious of how my identities, positions, and interests influenced all stages of the research process (Pillow, 2003). To maintain this on-going self-awareness, I used analytic memos as one resource to critically reflect on my positionality and how it influenced my research. Peshkin (1988) argued that researchers should "systematically seek out their own subjectivity" through reflexive notes (p. 17). Analytic memos served as a reflexive means where I visited ideas surrounding my identities, subjectivities, positionalities, and their potential effects on my study. I wrote analytic memos twice a week (typically the evening before class, and a few days after class) throughout the semester to engage in systematized reflexivity. It was important to write memos before class to capture the ways I anticipated using discourse to facilitate learning. Furthermore, after teaching I used my teaching journal, class agendas, audiotapes, as well as raw emotions from class interactions to write memos about my own reflexivity. This process was continual, as I employed multiple cycles of reflexivity throughout my study. Engaging in this reflective process both prior to, and after, teaching provided a space for me to critically reflect on the development of my study, my data analysis, my interactions with my students, and the lenses I brought to my study.

## Claims

Action researchers judge their work in terms of how they live in the direction of their own educational and social values (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). While all researchers are interested in knowledge generated from research that is valid or trustworthy, action researchers must also acknowledge action-oriented outcomes that go beyond knowledge generation (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Throughout this study I drew on my interpretive framework that comes from my own histories and intellectual interests, which precludes the need to translate findings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993b), but rather moves me towards praxis, or critical reflection on practice. Herr and Anderson's (2015) validity criteria, specifically delineated in relation to the goals of action research, provided me with an opportunity to maintain a dialogue across the continuum of action research. These methods of validity are aligned with the social, cultural and constructivist lenses through which I conducted this study.

Herr and Anderson's (2014) goals of action research and validity criteria include five criteria for validity. The first criterion, *outcome validity*, is where action researchers must be adept with both research procedures and in supporting participants to move towards successful action outcomes. Outcome validity acknowledges the cyclical process of action research, whereby the researcher reframes a problem in complex ways, which often leads to new questions. The second criterion, *process validity*, includes a process of reflection where the researcher loops back to reexamine underlying assumptions behind the question or problem being studied. The inclusion of multiple perspectives through triangulation can support a more trustworthy study, though process validity is not limited to method. The third criterion, *democratic validity*, includes an



ethical and social justice commitment, where research is conducted in collaboration with those who have a stake in the problem or question under investigation. The fourth criterion, *catalytic validity*, is where the researcher and participants deepen their understanding of the social reality under study. This highlights the transformative potential of action research because everyone involved has the potential to be moved to action. The fifth and final criterion, *dialogic validity*, focuses on validation during and after the study, where methods, evidence and findings resonate with a community of practice.

Herr and Anderson (2015) developed the five criteria of validity out of experience with insider action research studies to address unique concerns that action researchers have with workability, change and empowerment. During my study, I continually revisited the relationship between these action research goals and criteria for validity to ensure that I engaged in a credible action research study.

### **Conclusion**

Teaching and learning contribute to the process of *becoming*. Within a “spiraling synergism of action and understanding” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 87), I hoped to carry out an action research study that would promote the production of new knowledge about my practice with pre-service teachers so that I may effectively use discourses in ways that support the emergence of students’ identities. Teaching allows for a time of transformation and examination of who one can become. Within my classroom, I aimed to generate space to negotiate and deconstruct the complexities amongst teacher discourses and student identities.

## CHAPTER 4

### Narrating the Story of My Classroom Experiences

It is through narrative that we “create and re-create selfhood” (Bruner, 2002, p. 85). We continually construct and reconstruct our identities to meet the needs of the situations we encounter. Thus, our stories of identities accumulate over time; they change, they shift, they grow, especially as we modify our identities to fit new circumstances, new interactions, and new ways of being. A person’s own narrativization and telling of who one is, is a cohesive part of their identity. People are the historians of their own lives, and life stories are endlessly told tales (Mishler, 2004). As Holland et al. (1998) purported:

People tell others who they are, but even more importantly, they tell themselves and they try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities (p. 3).

The goal of my study was to tell the stories of the relationship between discourses and the performances of pre-service teacher identities as they evolved, shifted, and changed in my classroom. In identity research, the focus is on the “complex dialectic between identity-building and other human activities” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 17). In my study, identity performances occurred within a classroom environment; that context impacted the identities that evolved. The ways in which I planned activities and learning engagements in my classroom sent direct messages to my pre-service teachers about what

I value as a teacher. Therefore, in order to reveal the complex intersections between discourses and identity performances, I have narrated the story of my classroom. After providing a snapshot into “a day in the life of my classroom,” I take readers back to the decision-making points I made prior to the start of the semester and situate predictable weekly routines in my classroom context, which begin to reveal subtle identity performances to be further uncovered in chapter six. Finally, I delineate the ways I made changes by pedagogically responding to pre-service teachers’ needs as the semester unfolded.

### **A Day in the Life of My Classroom: Tuesday, January 13, 2015**

*7:20am. I arrived early to Branson Elementary School to ensure our classroom was ready for 24 new pre-service teachers. The first day of class always brings a mix of emotions: the anticipation and excitement of meeting new students, the joy of creating new relationships and helping young professionals find their voices as teachers, yet diminutive amounts of sorrow as old students’ faces foreground the presence of my mind. I created tight bonds and strong connections with my “old students,” and now they are off teaching the future generation of America’s children. What will the new semester bring? As these emotions swirl through my head, I check the six square tables in our classroom and notice that we are missing several chairs. I run off to find the janitor and beg for the rapid arrival of chairs, as I certainly would not want any of my new students to feel as if there was not a place for them on the very first day of class. My heartbeat quickens a little as I rush back to our room and set up. Our meeting space is a bit peculiar, as we are in the school’s “book room” tucked away in the back corner of the school library. There is a door on one wall that leads into the hallway, an excess of*

*bagged book sets on the left side wall, with black metal shelving along the back wall, filled with more bags of books. The right wall adjoins with the school library, separated by a long curtain. There is no extra space in our tight room for a table or a place to spread out my course texts and belongings. I notice a side platform on the computer terminal that swings out, and decide to use that as my “desk space,” where I can place my texts, pencils, and my little lavender teacher’s journal. I quickly search the room for space to place pre-service teachers’ materials: agendas, sign in sheets, handouts, and the usual materials they will need to gather at the start of class each week. I decide that the top of black metal shelving along the back provides a nice clear space to stack their materials. I lay out cardstock for them to make name cards, copies of the day’s agenda, blank pause and ponders, copies of the syllabus, the sign in sheet, and an emergency information sheet for them to fill out. I place a small pink basket in the center of each table, filled with markers, post-its, scissors, note cards, tissues, and hand sanitizer. I breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that I am ready for their arrival. But, wait, chairs. I need six more chairs. I hastily rush out again, and see our chairs coming my way. They arrive just in time.*

*A group of smiling students moves the curtain aside and enters the classroom from the sidewall adjoined with the library. “Hey, welcome to class! I’m Elizabeth Bemiss. It’s so nice to meet you.” I receive several “Hey’s” in reply and lots of grins, while at the same time another group arrives through the door leading in from the hallway. “Hey, I’m Elizabeth Bemiss, welcome!” I laughed a little to myself, seeing that students were entering from all directions. I began to give the usual “first day directions” to make a nametag, sign in, fill out the emergency information sheet and*

*settle in whilst reading the syllabus. I walked around to each group to introduce myself further and begin to try to put faces with the 24 names running through my mind. After typing 24 names in multiple places before the start of class (to assign group discussion leaders, to create our Google Community, and to create the sign in and emergency information sheets) I enjoyed the occasion when faces finally merged with names. I glanced at my watch; a few minutes before eight. I know the presence of the first day always brings the usual delays due to traffic, arriving to an unknown school, signing in at the front office, and making the way through the labyrinth-like hallways to find our cozy little classroom. I give students a few more minutes to settle in, hoping all 24 will have arrived shortly.*

**8:12 am.** *Everyone is here, and the hustle and bustle of new bodies and voices abounds. I use my wooden mallet to gently strike my small set of percussion chimes to gather everyone's attention. The soothing tones from the aluminum rods fill the air and everyone turns their focus towards me. I take a moment to introduce myself and give a little background about my former teaching experiences. To lighten the mood a little, I tell them a short story about one year when I taught third grade and had a little boy, Norm, who was a "runner." Every morning he would slowly approach the classroom door, drop his backpack, and run away from the classroom. Occasionally he would hop up from his desk in the middle of the school day and run as well. The office staff was always on alert for my call to quickly locate him in these instances. But one such day we were not so lucky. Norm ran from the classroom and no one could find him. Everyone searched high and low: in the hallways, in the bathrooms, in the gymnasium, on the playground. He was nowhere to be found. Finally, in a moment of obscurity, a staff*

member pulled the “lost and found” cart away from the wall, and tucked amongst a sea of lost sweatshirts and jackets, sat Norm. Looking back on the “year of Norm,” we always had a good laugh that one should always check the lost and found first if a student disappears. As I shared my “Norm story” with my new pre-service teachers, the atmosphere seemed to lighten, shoulders relaxed a little, and laughter filled the air. Now I was more at home, and truly ready to begin.

**8:38 am** A web of introductions. Our classroom was not exactly conducive to the types of learning engagements I planned to use with pre-service teachers, such as when we needed to form gigantic circles in the middle of the classroom for our community meetings at the start of our day or our appreciation circles as we closed our seven-hour learning adventures. But alas, we worked with the environment graciously provided to us. I asked everyone to chip in and help move the square wooden tables, chairs, and personal belongings to the outskirts of the room so we could form our first (and certainly not last) “class circle” of the semester. As we sat, I explained the directions to our “web of introductions,” whereby someone would begin, holding a gigantic spool of twine and share their name and “something personal” with everyone, then, while holding on to the twine, throw the spool across the circle to someone new. This ritual continued, as each student shared something unique, until all 25 of us had a chance to share. As the last pre-service teacher shared, I had everyone hold on tightly to his or her piece of twine and carefully stand up. I talked about the way our web represented our learning community; tightly knit, with each person an important piece of the whole. I had one pre-service teacher, and then another, drop their end of the twine to symbolize what would happen if the web weakened. This denoted the significance our new learning community, and how

*if someone was not present, mentally or physically, our web could be damaged. I talked about the goal of having a tight web, whereby we would live, learn, and teach together over the next 14 weeks.*

***9:08 am.** With everyone re-seated in our circle on the floor, I embraced the opportunity to share with them the topic of my dissertation and invite them to participate in my study. I was nervous about presenting my research ideas to them, as the unknown loomed through my head: How would they perceive my study? What if everyone said no, yet I had no idea of knowing that until the study was over? What if the audio recorder I was wearing prevents them from talking and sharing aloud in class? I decided the best way to tell them about my study would be to read them the story that I wrote as the introduction to my dissertation. I jumped in and began.*

*With a quivering voice I read them my story about Noah and my reflections on my language as an elementary teacher. Sweaty fingertips moistened my paper as I read. After reading the beginning of my story, my nervousness eased slightly, and I relaxed a little, reminiscent on my experiences with Noah, Quinterius, Leonta, and all the students who propelled my drive for this study. I finished reading my story and tautly rambled on about the purpose of my study some more:*

*E: So that's the end of my story [elongated]. And (pause) that gives you a little bit of background about it... I think that it's important to think about my language as a teacher, because I think it's important to embrace all of you guys as learners, and so for me, this is just going to be a learning experience for myself. I think as teachers, we're always learners, and we're learning, and I think this is gonna strengthen my own teaching, and hopefully, (pause), your learning*

*experiences.....So, I invite you to, say YES! So, (pause), any questions [rising] about that? Are there any questions about my study or your participation, or, yeah [to the male student with a question]?*

*Male student: Can my name be Ramone [rising]?*

*[laughter from the class]*

*Me: YES! I love that you, umm, [giggles from class], that you're asking that.*

*The laughter helped my trepidation subside even further, and I let students know that I thought it would be a great idea if they selected their pseudonyms for the study. I had everyone return to their seats, passed out the consent forms, and asked them to move into a break so I was not hovering over their presence as they made decisions about whether or not to participate in my study.*

*9:42 am. With the break over, and everyone re-seated at their wooden square tables, I began the course overview and reviewed the syllabus with students. A six credit hour course insinuates the nature of an abundance of work, and consequently a 26-page syllabus. After 30 continuous minutes of talking, my mouth was dry, my voice achy, and a sea of students looked back with glassy eyes. It was time for them to talk:*

*E: I'm gonna give you guys a couple minutes to talk at your groups about this big beast that we just went over. And talk to each other, cause sometimes I know you feel more comfortable asking each other questions first and talking that out. And then as a group you guys can share out, what kinds of questions or concerns do you have about things in the syllabus, ok? [class transcript, 1.13.15]*

*I remained distant from students, to provide them with a space to talk openly and honestly with one another, as I knew they would be more apt to brainstorm questions*



together first, and would likely nominate brave souls to speak for everyone. The room once again filled with an abundance of talk.

**10:32 am.** I brought us back together to answer any questions that arose during their small group conversations. Only two students brought forth questions. Jenn asked about whether they were allowed to use technology, such as ipads, with their small teachers. Natalie asked whether or not our class would meet during Branson Elementary School's spring break. I chuckled in my head a little, thinking that the most forefront question they had at the time revolved around whether or not they would receive an extra week off during the semester; their performances as college students resonated in my mind. After many, many seconds of awkward silence, I knew no one else had questions they wanted to ask at the time. I invited them to write down additional questions on their pause and ponders.

**11:12 am.** Writer's workshop. I provided pre-service teachers with a succinct summary to "writer's workshop." I reviewed the way our writer's workshop routines would be similar week-to-week, whereby I would begin with a brief read aloud or mini lesson, followed by invitation to engage in independent writing as I conferred with them or answered questions that arose, followed by a group share time, where volunteers could share their writing and receive feedback from one another. After reading an introductory poem about writing by Ralph Fletcher, I asked them to get out materials they brought from home to decorate their covers to present their unique personalities. They spread out pictures, movie stubs, concert tickets, quotes, apple post-its, and other belongings to paste to the covers of their writer's notebooks. I turned on some upbeat music and they began to talk, laugh, and converse as they created their covers.

*I walked around and looked over their shoulders, asked about pictures, and made connections to the belongings they treasured. Meredith brought tons of pictures, and I learned that she has “like 20 billion pictures” in her room. I discovered that Serena was from Rock Hill, where I went to college as an undergraduate. Blake covered her notebook with quotes that captured the essence of her being, while Elle, Anne, Kacie, and Belle covered theirs in pictures of family and friends. I learned that Rick was in the military and he decided to go back to school to become a teacher to “give back” to his community. Cooper shared her favorite bible verse with me, and also her engagement picture, but told me she was waiting to get married until after graduation. Rick pointed to my wedding rings and asked how long I had been married. Natalie drew a dog paw on her cover, which I mistook for a bobcat, and we laughed as I explained my connection to the mascot from my elementary teaching days. Dylan asked me where I taught, and told me she was from a nearby town where I previously taught. Alex too was from nearby, and we chatted about the recent development of shopping areas all around. Christine quietly glued fabric on her cover. Kayla shared her sticker obsession with me, and Gigi showed me a picture of her skydiving in Capetown. I laughed, as I told her even the sight of her picture made my stomach churn due to my fear of heights. Anthony sat at his table, hesitantly cutting random pieces of paper, because he forgot to bring items from home. Rachel and Jenn wrote quotes to paste on their covers, and Lisa pasted her favorite bible verse on hers. Maggy told me about the picture she brought, which was of her bible study group from the university. Lily shared a quote she carefully centered in the middle of her notebook. Savannah showed me a Dr. Seuss quote and I shared a connection with her about receiving a painting of the same quote from former students.*

*Susie and Roxy pasted concert memorabilia on theirs; as Roxy shared about her backstage pass to a Keith Urban concert, I told her about my nieces and nephew who live in Nashville.*

**11:56 am.** *Before breaking for lunch, I had students take five minutes to “share the stories” of their notebooks with a classmate outside of their “table mates.” Students reluctantly got out of their seats and ambled to greet new peers before immersing themselves into yet another sea of talk.*

**12:14 pm.** *Lunch Break. We officially had “one hour” of flexibility for our lunch break during the course. I asked students to vote on how to spend their hour, letting them know that if they elected to take a shorter lunch that we could either start the morning later or leave a little early. Students voted to take a 30-minute lunch each week, so that we could begin class at 8:15am and end at 2:45pm. They also voted to occasionally have special days for an “off campus lunch,” in which case they would stay until 3pm for “long lunch” days.*

**12:55 pm.** *Upon reconvening from lunch, I joked with students about how they would soon be accustomed to short lunches, as elementary teachers usually juggle the task of helping 20+ children open milk cartoons, clean cafeteria spills, escort children to the nurse for tummy aches or lunch time medicine, all the while shoveling a sandwich or microwaveable meal down their throat, and yet still managing to make copies and take the one restroom break they are guaranteed during their day as a teacher. My laughter was reciprocated, and perhaps they began to envision themselves in that soon-to-be position where they would likely welcome short lunches, because after all, such nuances in teaching insinuate the life of an elementary teacher.*

*Next pre-service teachers got out the children's books from home that I asked them bring in their "welcome letter." I had them take a few moments to share about their books with their tablemates. I walked around and listened in as they shared books that were "childhood favorites," "cute stories," "newfound favorites as future teachers," "books with nice messages," interactive books with tabs and pop up pictures, favorite books from kindergarten, second grade and high school, and books they "just really liked" as students. Their multiple identities resonated, as many of them revealed tidbits into their personal lives, who they were as students, and for some, their visions as future teachers.*

*After they shared, I explained that their reminiscing served as a way to launch them into their first "assignment" of the semester: their literacy timelines. I asked them to use the memoirs they shared from childhood literature to ignite reflections on their literacy histories growing up. They independently drafted timelines in their writer's notebooks before adding memories to a giant class "timeline." We charted literacy memoirs across the class on our giant timeline, and I led students in a conversation about "patterns" that began to emerge: bedtime stories, favorite "series books" from childhood, "make believe" storytelling with family members, "assigned reading" in middle and high school, "book reports," "writing assignments" linked to required reading, "spark notes," and the "ebbs and flows" of their interest in reading across their lives. As I asked pre-service teachers to reflect on their literacy engagements across their lives, they began to notice that their interest or apathy for engaging in literate events linked closely to the notion of "choice." Thus began our initial opportunities to make connections between their lives as students and their future lives as teachers; the*

*idea of “choice” was a recurrent theme that would we would continually revisit in relation to teaching pedagogies across the semester.*

*2:12 pm. Break. As pre-service teachers took an opportunity to stretch their legs, or, as many chose, stay seated at their wooden tables and check text messages, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook statuses, many began to inquire about their elementary education orientation the following day. They asked my opinion about what they “should wear,” and wanted to know if they could wear their “normal, casual, college clothes,” as that was “the only day” they could “dress down.” I cautiously told them they should probably wear “professional clothes” to orientation. They were quite bummed upon hearing this news, but agreed that it would be better to “play it safe” and dress for “school.” Once again the presence of their college student identity performances resonated in my mind, as they desperately yearned for a day of “dressing down” rather than “like a teacher.”*

*2:22 pm. Preparing to meet small teachers. As our first class drew close to conclusion, it was important for us to spend a few moments preparing to think about meeting small teachers for the first time the following week. I asked them to spend a few moments talking with their tablemates about this:*

*E: So, next week you will meet your small teachers for the first time. I thought it would be important for us to talk and reflect on, what kinds of things you can do when you meet a kid for the first time to make them feel comfortable...So, I've got a couple questions for you on your agenda that I want you guys to spend a couple minutes talking about in your groups. First, how do you make a child feel comfortable when meeting him or her for the first time? How can you get to know*

*them personally? And, then, specifically, because this is a literacy class, and we'll be working with them during literacy, what questions might you ask to shed insight into getting to know one another as readers and writers when you meet with that child for the first time?*

*I walked around and listened in to their small group conversations as they discussed “steering their interests,” “talking about favorite books,” and “making connections” to the things the children share. I smiled at the thought of knowing that already, on day one, they were shifting from performances as college students to those of classroom teachers. We came back together and shared out ideas across the whole group. Maggy said it was important to “smile,” to which I replied, “YES, thank you Maggy it’s so important to smile!” I then proceeded to tell them a story about a university student who always had a frown on her face when she worked with her small teacher, and how dreadful that must have felt to be the child working with a teacher who constantly frowned. Pre-service teachers continued to share ideas about getting to know the child’s interests and making connections to the kinds of things they share. Kayla mentioned that it was important not to ask intimidating questions and we then discussed how their meetings should be casual and conversational. Lily said she thought it would be nice to share personal things about themselves, and I gave them the idea of bringing along their writer’s notebooks to share their covers as a way to initiate conversation and make connections with the children.*

**2:56 pm.** *Four minutes until three o’clock. We did not cover everything on today’s agenda, but it was a jam-packed and successful first day. I told pre-service teachers that for sake of time we would forego our closing ritual, the “appreciation*

circle,” and instead ensure they left class “on time,” especially seeing that we had been together since 8am. I quickly reviewed their “homework” assignments and dismissed them. They speedily packed their bags, turned in their “pause and ponders” and parted ways, both through the curtained wall, and the door leading into the hallway. Maybe, just maybe, I could hit it off with these smiling, warm-hearted, and lively pre-service teachers after all.

### **Planning Course Requirements**

The literacy methods course I taught was one of four sections for approximately 76 undergraduates, all second semester juniors. Across the four sections, the syllabi had the same descriptive information and statement of goals, objectives, and administrative course requirements. The instructors had the choice to differentiate text selections as well as the academic course requirements, with the exception of a key assessment for the course, the responsive teaching kidwatching project. I selected five texts for the course that I felt aligned with the overall goals and objectives of teaching undergraduates about elementary literacy instruction: *A Writer’s Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You* (Fletcher, 2003), *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001), *What You Know by Heart: How to Develop Curriculum for Your Writing Workshop* (Ray, 2002), *On solid ground: Strategies for teaching reading K-3* (Taberski, 2000), and *Choice words: How our language affects children’s literacy* (Johnston, 2004).

I wanted to provide pre-service teachers with both theoretical literature as well as practice-based literature so they could begin to translate theories they read about to literacy practices in classroom settings. The theory I planned for them to read came from supplemental articles, while the texts connected theories to classroom practices. I chose

texts that I felt they could revisit at the beginning of their teaching careers, as these texts were similar to ones I often used when designing reading and writing workshop for my former elementary classroom. They were both practical and written on a foundation aligned with the sociocultural and constructivist theories, which would drive my instruction throughout the course.

To determine assignments for this course, I drew from my former experiences co-teaching this course and my experiences teaching previous literacy courses for pre-and in-service teachers, I chose assignments that would support their growth, both as students and as developing professionals. I planned for the following academic requirements for the course: preparation, participation, and professionalism; literacy histories; writer's notebooks; professional literature reflections and discussions; literature circles; and working with small teachers.

### **Preparation, Participation, and Professionalism**

It was important for me to help pre-service teachers understand that making the decision to become a teacher is a commitment to both themselves and the students they work with as a part of our coursework. This commitment includes pushing themselves to make connections to professional literature, contribute to class discussions, and develop and share instructional ideas, with the ultimate goal of becoming reflective practitioners. I decided that pre-service teachers would receive points each week for their preparation, participation, and professionalism by reflecting on a "pause and ponder" slip in class. I expected them to jot down questions, participate in quick writes, and make connections to theory each week on their pause and ponders. I also expected them to participate in small and whole group conversations, and maintain a sense of professionalism as they worked



with children, peers, and faculty in an elementary school environment. I asked them to self-assess their participation and explained that should I disagree with their self-assessment, I would advise them individually. I knew that my role in supporting their reflections on their pause and ponders was critical, so each week I planned to list specific questions or quick-write topics to which they could respond and that correlated with the overall content of the course on a given day (e.g., Quick write on today's discussion surrounding professional readings).

### **Literacy Histories**

It was important for me to provide pre-service teachers opportunities to explore their identities in relation to their own literacy histories, as this would inform not only their identity performances within the classroom, but also would help them reflect on the ways their literacy identities would inform their future practices as teachers. Moje and Lewis (2009) purported that the recognition of literacy practices as social has led “many theorists to recognize that people’s identities mediate and are mediated by the text they read, write, and talk about” (Lewis & del Valle, 2009; McCarthy, 2001; McCarthy & Moje, 2002) (p. 416). I wanted students to think critically on their conceptions of literacy across the semester and it was important for me to help students examine their own histories to understand how they shaped their conceptions of teaching and learning in literacy environments. I gathered ideas about the literacy history assignment from literacy instructors from different academic institutions, and put together an assignment that I felt would help them reflect on their literacy experiences across their lives, while also help them connect their reflections to ideas about teaching and learning that we

would uncover in class. Pre-service teachers would create a multimedia timeline and a written narrative as a part of their literacy history assignment.

### **Writer's Notebooks**

I intentionally planned ways for pre-service teachers to live structures parallel to those they learned about relative to conducting writer's workshops in elementary classrooms. Therefore, I planned for them to keep writer's notebooks and participate in an authoring cycle experience. Pre-service teachers would keep writer's notebooks throughout the semester, where they would create a "toolbox" of ideas from which to draw as they drafted entries during writer's workshop. I would also have them select one piece of narrative writing to take through an authoring cycle. These pieces of writing would then become part of a class anthology and an author's celebration.

### **Professional Literature Reflections and Discussions**

Reflection on theories and professional literature is important to students' growth as future teachers, and I valued a collaborative space for them to share reflections. Therefore, everyone would compose professional literature reflections and post them to a class Google Community page. In this way, pre-service teachers would be able to push one another critically, read each other's insights, respond to one another, and hopefully grow as professionals through the process.

In addition to professional literature reflections, I also planned for them to lead small group discussions surrounding professional literature. I believed it was important to provide pre-service teachers opportunities for leadership in the classroom. I thought this would help them as teachers. However, in the past I found that when I merely gave pre-service teachers a time allotment to have discussions at their table groups, that there

was a vast variation in the integrity of their conversations. Moreover, because they discussed the literature with the same group each week, conversations seemed to be less focused across time. I changed the structure of these conversations so they would have to all interact, talk, reflect, and grow as teachers. I required each of them to be responsible for preparing a small group discussion three times throughout the semester. They would organize a plan to facilitate dialogue among peers; afterwards they would compose a reflection that would show their plan for discussion, key insights from the conversation, and areas where they felt the class needed further support. At the start of professional literature conversations, the pre-service teachers in charge of small group discussions that week would share their plan aloud with everyone; peers would then have the chance to sign up for the discussion group that sparked their interest most. There was a sign-up sheet with a limited number of slots for each group, as I did not want anyone to prepare a plan for discussion, but then not have any peers sign up to join them. I thought this structure would mix up the groups, give everyone a chance to interact with classmates outside of their table groups on a regular basis, and enrich their conversations and contribute to their professional growth as teachers.

### **Literature Circles**

Literature circles would provide pre-service teachers an opportunity to reflect on young adult novels in small groups, while also letting them live a literacy structure they could one day use in their future classrooms. I selected four young adult novels and decided to give book talks about them, and then asked them to select their top two choices. The groups would construct a plan for reading the text and come together for

four weeks towards the end of the semester to discuss the text and produce visual and written responses to their text.

### **Working with Small Teachers**

Each week in class, pre-service teachers would work one-on-one with a second grade student, called a small teacher, during writer's workshop. Pre-service teachers would be expected to use kidwatching observations to understand their small teachers as readers and writers and to learn ways to observe and record children's literacy development (Goodman, 1985). I planned for them to read professional literature about kidwatching and discuss this practice in class. During their work with small teachers, I expected pre-service teachers to use kidwatching to plan curriculum and instruction tailored to children's individual strengths and needs. Because we had to work within the parameters of the curriculum in the second grade classroom in which we worked, I collaborated with the classroom teacher to plan engagements that would support alignment between the curriculum and writing workshop practices. Across the semester, they would work with their small teacher on several writing pieces and participate in author's celebrations with the children as well.

### **Planning for the First Day**

After planning the academic course requirements, I finalized the syllabus for the semester, prepared a tentative outline of weekly assignments and readings, and drafted a welcome letter to introduce everyone to the course. My welcome letter served as my first opportunity to "introduce myself" to my new students, while it also provided a chance to convey important information about the course (e.g., where to park at Branson Elementary, the titles and authors of course textbooks, and a list of course materials).

Additionally, because this was a six credit hour course, it was critical that pre-service teachers came to class on the first day prepared to begin living in our literacy structures, such as writer's workshop. Therefore, I asked them each to purchase and bring a writer's notebook to class for the first day. I let them know that we would learn strategies for helping students gather ideas for writing across the semester. The first one of those would be personalizing the covers with "stories" of their lives via pictures and mementos, which I asked them bring on the first day as well. I emailed everyone their letter and constructed a detailed agenda for the first day of class. I was ready for a new semester.

### **Living and Learning across the Semester: Predictable Classroom Routines**


Each week throughout the semester, I implemented predictable classroom routines in which I thought we could thrive as we studied and lived literacy practices. I believed that predictable classroom routines and structures would support pre-service teachers' learning, and by enacting routines in my own classroom, I hoped they would understand how to translate predictable structures to their own classrooms. The ways in which I structured classroom engagements sent messages to my students about what I valued as a teacher. My classroom routines represented part of my Discourse that I enacted as a teacher. This big D discourse (Gee, 2008) included my "little d" discourses, or everyday speech, combined with the beliefs, actions, and values I enacted in the classroom. As pre-service teachers arrived to class each week, they gathered an agenda and a pause and ponder from the back table, along with any additional materials I prepared for them to use throughout the day. Their student agendas (see figure 4.1) always corresponded with the classroom routines we I enacted each week.

## Settling In

“Settling in” was a time during which pre-service teachers could work on an independent task, such as writing an entry in their writer’s notebook, jotting down strengths and areas of growth for small teachers, reading children’s literature “like a writer” to note ideas for craft and writing style, or adding thoughts to a class graffiti board. The various assignments pre-service teachers completed in “settling in” connected to discussions we would have throughout the day and engagements we would complete when reflecting on small teachers or participating in writer’s workshop.

**EDRD 430**  
February 24, 2015

**Settling In**  
Good morning! Please select a piece of children's literature to begin reading. As you read, jot down notes about what you notice about the genre, point of view and the overall topic of the story.


 **Meeting**  
Community Communications  
RTC Patterns—YAY you for recording observations that build from students' strengths and what they can do as readers, writers, and learners. ☺

**Working With Small Teachers**

- Writer's Workshop
  - Small teachers are moving into the genre of biography
  - Today your small teacher will interview you in order to begin writing a biography of your life!
  - Be sure to take kidwatching notes. ☺

**Becoming Responsive Teachers**

- RTCs
- Sharing observations

 **Professional Discussion Groups**

- Small Group & Whole Group Discussions

**Praxis → Cambourne's Conditions & Informational Writing**  
Patterns, future curriculum, mini lessons

**Praxis → Conferencing with Writers**  
Conference with Joshua: please write down observations as you watch the video  
How did the teacher build on student strengths?

**Writing Workshop**

- Memoirs
  - Reading like a reader, reading like a writer
  - Characteristics of memoir
  - Topics & Ideas
  - Begin drafting a memoir
- Practice a “How can I support you? OR How’s it going?” conference with a classmate.

**Closing Ritual: Appreciation Circle**

EDRD 430, Spring 2015, Elizabeth Bemiss

Figure 4.1: Sample Student Agenda

## Community Meetings

We started each class with a community meeting. I believed this would help set a climate of trust and help us establish and thrive as a community. Within this community, I simultaneously supported pre-service teachers' student and teacher identity performances. During these meetings, we came together as a group at the start of the class and engaged in conversation. These meetings provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to ask questions and also share personal experiences and encounters from their elementary field placements. I used morning meetings as a space to celebrate their learning and share patterns I noticed across their weekly pause and ponder reflections. I also clarified misconceptions or addressed concerns I noticed about their reflections on teaching.

Pre-service teachers often shared experiences about their personal lives with peers in morning meetings. They commented about parents and siblings coming to visit for a sorority "parent's weekend," holidays and cultural celebrations, such as Easter, Passover, Greek Orthodox celebrations, going home to visit families, and upcoming trips with family members. They also noted more personal events, such as the time Belle shared about her nephew's upcoming surgery for cochlear implants, or when Natalie shared about a church member tragically passing away.

In addition to their personal lives, pre-service teachers spoke about the various opportunities they had to enact teacher performances in their internships. Pre-service teachers shared many commonalities in their performances as teachers: "teaching small groups," "creating display boards," "teaching informal lessons," conducting "read alouds," "helping students one-on-one," "reading aloud tests," "teaching for a substitute,"

and “teaching a formal lesson.” They also shared the ways in which they taught formal lessons and how they planned and implemented instruction for students in their internship classrooms. They often discussed how they interacted with children and filled roles as “teacher,” which they enjoyed for several reasons: because of the ways they connected with kids afterwards; their delight in receiving positive feedback from their teachers and supervisors after teaching; feeling like teaching experiences helped them “get more used to teaching”; realizing that students “actually listened” to them when they taught; and their enjoyment in helping students “do well” on tests and assignments.

### **Working with Small Teachers**

When pre-service teachers first began working with the second graders, they conducted an interest inventory and a writing interview to begin to get to know their children as individual beings as well as writers. They first worked with the second graders on a non-fiction writing piece, where each second grader selected a topic of choice to research to produce a non-fiction “infographic” (a poster with visual and text information) to present to second grade peers and teach them about their selected topics. Pre-service teachers also helped the children write biographies; small teachers interviewed the pre-service teachers and composed biographies based on what they learned about pre-service teachers’ life experiences. The final project they worked on together was a cultural memoir, where pre-service teachers sent home disposable cameras with the second graders to photograph their daily life experiences, as well as people, places, and events central to their lives. Pre-service teachers helped the children use these pictures to compose multi-genre cultural memoirs, which they made into books as a gift for the children on our final day together. While the majority of their focus with their



small teachers was on writing instruction in this course, pre-service teachers also worked to get to know their children as readers, conducted a Burke Interview with them, and observed their cue use to begin to understand their needs as readers.

### **Becoming Responsive Teachers**

After working with small teachers each week, pre-service teachers used their kidwatching notes to reflect on their experiences and compose responsive teaching cycles (RTCs) (Mills & O’Keffe, 2006) where they attempted to interpret the meaning of their observations, ground their interpretations in theory and professional literature, and made decisions on the type of instruction they designed next to support their small teacher’s literacy progress. Pre-service teachers began working on RTCs in class each week, and finished them for homework. After having time to think and reflect independently, they shared their experiences in small and whole group settings. Their work with small teachers provided a space for pre-service teachers to practice reflexivity as developing teachers.

### **Professional Literature Discussions**

Each week, I provided pre-service teachers around 30-45 minutes to participate in their small group professional literature discussions. I found that the majority of pre-service teachers were nervous about initial leadership opportunities, but most of those feelings dissipated moments after beginning their roles as leaders. After the first time leading a group, the majority of students shared how they were “nervous,” or how they felt like such a leadership role was “intimidating” or “daunting.” However, once they began conversing with their peers in their professional literature groups, they found their

conversations to be “enlightening,” “insightful” and felt that overall conversations “went really well.”

### **Praxis: Translating Theory to Practice**

It was important for me to provide pre-service teachers opportunities to critically reflect on how theories and pedagogies converge with classroom practices. Our professional discussion groups often served as a starting point for such opportunities, where we reflected further in whole group discussions on sociocultural and constructivist learning theories in relation to literacy practices. I then extended these conversations by bringing in videos of classroom structures for them to observe, or transcripts from classroom literacy practices for them to enact via reader’s theater. For instance, in one class pre-service teachers observed a video of a mini lesson on adding details in writing workshop and delineated the ways the teacher supported students as learners. I guided them to look across theories and practices to name connections to Cambourne’s conditions and the ways teacher scaffolded students through a gradual release of responsibility model. I then had pre-service teachers infer the ways the teacher in the video may have drawn from students’ funds of knowledge to build from their existing schema. I also had pre-service teachers notice the ways that the teacher provided notions of choice to support engagement among students. Additionally, we inferred how the teacher used previous kidwatching observations to inform the direction of the mini lesson, predicted the teacher’s decision points leading up to the lesson, as well as possibilities for next steps after the mini lesson. I guided pre-service teachers to connect classroom practices we observed to theories we read about, such as funds of knowledge, zone of proximal development, bonding, kidwatching, reading like a writer, agency,

identity, scaffolding, noticing and naming, gradual release of responsibility, and constructivism.

### **Writer's Workshop**

Pre-service teachers lived writing experiences similar to those they learned how to use in an elementary writer's workshop. They drew from their own lived experiences as they chose the topics they wrote about as writers. Each week I used mentor texts and mini lessons to launch writing workshop and study author's craft, followed by independent writing in writer's notebooks, and then sharing in an author's circle. Pre-service teachers often revealed aspects of their identities as they began to engage as writers in writer's workshop, where they drew from their own lived experiences in what they wrote about; this was also something they learned was essential for the students they taught.

### **Literature Circles**

During the final four weeks of the semester, pre-service teachers participated in small group literature circles, where they discussed young adult novels. They each read one of the following texts in small groups: *The Red Pencil* (Pinkey, 2014), *Inside Out and Back Again* (Lai, 2013), *The Turtle of Oman* (Nye, 2014), and *Home of the Brave* (Applegate, 2008). They read and responded to their texts at home and brought their responses to their literature circles to participate in discussions each week. I allowed pre-service teachers to choose how they responded to texts, such as using bookmarks to note key ideas to bring forth to discussion groups, or post-it notes to mark insights, questions, wonderings, predictions, and discussion topics. After engaging in discussions, they

worked on creating visual responses to their texts, such as graffiti boards or mind maps representative of characters and plots.

### **Appreciation Circles**

We often closed our day with appreciation circles, where we came together briefly to share out “appreciations” that arose throughout class. I found that it was important to bring closure to our day in this way, as there was a tremendous level of expectation from students in a 6-hour course, and appreciation circles often helped alleviate some of the pressure they put on themselves as students. When pre-service teachers had opportunities to engage in “appreciate circles” at the close of class, they often appreciated one another for their support in “great discussions” and helping with their “stress” over assignments. Moreover, they laughed and joked about the bonds they created and the good times they had in class together. Rick, for example, thanked his “table mates” during one class because “they ahh, got me hooked up with snapchat” over the lunch break. Everyone enjoyed a good laugh, and after this they often talked about the pictures they shared with one another each week, like Kayla’s little girl and her “millions” of swimsuits she wore over spring break. Susie thanked the “whole class” during an appreciation circle one day when she commented, “I think we’re all like really funny and we all talk a lot and so it makes the day go by a lot smoother and easier.” In a class that met from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on a weekly basis it was important for pre-service teachers to have opportunities to get to know one another on more personal levels. The ways pre-service teachers engaged in class activities across the semester provided a chance for them to not only reveal performances of their personal identities as college students, moms, dads, sisters, brothers, cousins, grandkids, friends, and roommates, but

also provided them with the ability to create new social identities as *students* in a literacy methods course and as future *teachers* living and learning in a literacy course together.

### **Pedagogical Responsiveness**

Part of my philosophy regarding teaching includes the need to be responsive as a teacher and use learning and unfolding events from the classroom as a basis for future instruction. I found several instances across the semester where I was responsive to pre-service teachers' needs through the decisions I made and the ways in which I designed instruction as a teacher. The first responsive change I made was in regards to how I set up their pause and ponders each week. At the start of the semester I included many places on their pause and ponders for students to make connections to and reflect on ideas we discussed in class (see figure 4.2). Additionally, I always included a space for them to compose "quick writes" on their professional discussion groups and interactions with small teachers.

As I read and responded to their pause and ponders early in the semester, I noticed that many of the ideas they wrote were repetitive of what most pre-service teachers shared aloud class, and did not provide me with additional insight into their individual thinking as students and developing teachers. For instance, when we did an activity to uncover what "learning is," I provided a space for them to record their thoughts about "learning" on their pause and ponder, but everyone included information that was discussed in class, or shared on visuals they made to represent their understanding of learning. I knew that I was not receiving detailed insight into their individual reflections and thoughts as students and teachers. Moreover, their "quick writes" on their professional discussion groups often lacked the depth I was looking for, as many students

simply listed isolated words or phrases that left me wondering more about what they were thinking.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pause & Ponder

EDRD 430, January 20, 2015

**Reading the School with an eye for literacy**  
What stood out most to you?

**What is Learning?**  
How do we learn new things?

**Professional Discussion Groups**  
Quick write on today's discussion surrounding professional readings.

**Free Write (Ongoing during Class...)**  
What did I learn new today? What challenged or affirmed my thinking? What surprised me? What am I wondering?

EDRD 430 Preparation, Participation & Professionalism Points    on time \_\_\_/1    preparation, participation & professionalism \_\_\_/2    TOTAL \_\_\_/3

Figure 4.2: Pause and Ponder (early example)

Consequently, I changed the structure of their pause and ponders (see figure 4.3). I eliminated some of the extraneous places for them to record ideas we had already uncovered as a class, and changed the design of their “quick write” on professional literature discussions. Instead of an open-ended “quick write,” I wrote, “Please select one of two italicized ideas below and write a **detailed paragraph explaining your thoughts**: Aha moments? Beliefs confirmed? Formation of new beliefs? Merging of ideas?” I

found that making the requirement more specific gave me richer reflections on their discussions, and also provided a window into their individual thinking regarding theories and pedagogies they discussed in their groups. Once this proved to give me robust information about their development as teachers, I kept the reflection format for discussion groups on their pause and ponders the same for each subsequent week across the semester.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pause & Ponder

EDRD 430, March 3, 2015

### Conferring with Small Teachers

*How'd it go??* Take a moment to reflect on both your language and interactions in the conference, as well as your small teacher's language and interactions.

### Professional Discussion Groups

**\*\*Please select one or two italicized ideas below and write a detailed paragraph explaining your thoughts in detail.**  
*Aha moments? Beliefs confirmed? Formation of new beliefs? Merging of ideas?*

### Free Write (Ongoing during class...)

What did I learn new today? What challenged or affirmed my thinking? What surprised me? What am I wondering

EDRD 430 Preparation, Participation & Professionalism Points    on time \_\_\_/1    preparation, participation & professionalism \_\_\_/2    TOTAL \_\_\_/3

Figure 4.3: Pause and Ponder (later example)

Another change I made was including a place for them to reflect on their interactions with their small teachers each week. I shifted from asking them to compose a “quick write” about their teaching experiences to posing more specific questions about their performances as teacher. For instance, one week I wrote, “What did you **notice** about our time with small teachers today? How does this influence, change, or make you think...about **you** as a **teacher** of your small teacher?” I found that probing them to reflect on their observations and interactions with children allowed me to develop richer insight into the identities they performed as teachers. These reflections, coupled with their thoughts about professional discussion groups, greatly enhanced my understanding of their development as teachers and subsequently informed the direction of future class meetings.

Another pedagogical response that I made during the semester was the way I structured their leadership opportunities for professional discussion groups. Everyone had an opportunity to lead small discussion groups three times across the semester. By the time we neared the end of everyone’s second cycle, I knew I wanted to make changes to their structure for their final leadership opportunity. I noticed when they lead their groups that, because I required them to turn in a reflection afterwards, discussion leaders often focused so much on scribbling detailed notes during their discussions that they lost an opportunity to fully engage as leaders. Another thing I noticed was a vast variation in how they prepared for their discussions. Some prepared minimal questions to pose while others prepared detailed engagements to connect theories to classroom practices in small groups. Consequently, I decided that for their final group leadership opportunity I would remove the reflection component so they could fully engage during their leadership roles.



Additionally, I required them to email me their leadership plan ahead of class so I could provide feedback to them before their discussion. I found this to be a very beneficial change, as they indeed engaged more in the moment during their small groups, and I also helped circumvent unnecessary conversations by reading their plan ahead of time. For instance, in Blake’s plan for her discussion, she wanted to pose the question, “What cueing system do you think is the best to emphasize, and what do you do if the district disagrees?” Because we had not yet uncovered enough information about cueing systems for them to engage in a productive conversation about this, I responded to Blake in a way that explained why her particular question would be counterproductive to ask. I wrote:

...we'll touch on this more together, but what I want everyone to understand is that we work to help readers use all 3 simultaneously; the ones we emphasize over others in strategy instruction with readers varies based on what we notice them using as readers. We'll discuss ways to uncover these—both through informal assessments, miscues analysis (which we'll discuss), conferring, and listening to students read. So I guess in a nutshell, I'm saying that this particular question would be counterproductive to ask. (email correspondence, 3.23.15).

Another way I was responsive in my pedagogy to pre-service teachers’ needs was through listening to the nuances in language as pre-service teachers reflected on theories and pedagogies. I often used my observations to impel discussion points and make future instructional decisions. For instance, a small change I made in my own discourse early on was to facilitate more dialogic talk among students when they reflected on their instruction and interactions with their small teachers. When I invited them to debrief in

our whole group, I noticed that as they shared about their teaching experiences, their peers sat in silence and did not respond to their peers' comments. I thought about what I needed to change in my discourse to invite everyone to reflect on these individual experiences. I changed my language to probe them to all reflect together. For instance, I said, "As people share, I'd like for you to listen in and think, what kinds of advice can you give to your peers?" or "What kind of understandings are we beginning to make about this child?"

Beyond listening to the nuances in my own language, I often listened in to their language to see how it informed my instruction. For instance, pre-service teachers often spoke about children's families and the types of experiences they believed students did or did not have in their lives. Some of them believed that students from lower socioeconomic homes had more limited experiences than students from wealthier families and that this would impact the types of ideas students would have to write about in their writer's notebooks during writer's workshop. Christine talked about this with her peers one day in a professional literature conversation:

Christine: Umm, also coming off of just the demographics of your teaching in terms of money. Some kids don't have experiences so how do you like encourage them to write in their writer's journal? Like, I asked Kyra [my small teacher] last time, oh what'd you do over the weekend, and she was like, nothing. And I'm just like how do you encourage them to find things to write about, the kids that don't leave their home or classroom? (class transcript, 2.3.15)

Christine's comment that "kids don't have experiences," coupled with their previous conversations about families, led me to think about ways to help pre-service teachers

learn about students' family lives and the many funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 1992) students bring into the classroom from their homes and communities. For instance, the cultural memoirs they wrote together became a major point of instruction for me to help them deconstruct ideologies like the one Christine shared above. Through creating the cultural memoirs, I helped pre-service teachers reflect on the diverse experiences all children bring to school in order to learn how to build from children's experiences in classroom spaces.

I hoped that my responsiveness in the classroom would serve as another means for supporting the construction, the reconstruction and the social co-construction of pre-service teachers' identities as they began to formulate ideas surrounding who they were becoming as teachers across the semester.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a framework in which readers could envision the types of class engagements and interactions that occurred in my classroom context. My classroom environment provided a space for the embodiment of identities relative to literacy, learning, and teaching. The learning engagements I planned sent messages to my pre-service teachers about what I value as a teacher, and more importantly what I value in their becoming as teachers. While their identity performances occurred within our classroom environment, the context, concomitant with our intersections, impacted the various identities enacted across time. In chapter five, I will delineate the many ways identities evolved, shifted, and changed in our classroom environment.

## CHAPTER 5

### Findings

#### Intersections between Discourses and Identity Performances

When I began this study, my goal was to understand more about the intersections between discourses and identity performances in my classroom. As I analyzed the data, I noticed times when *student* and *teacher* identities converged and diverged. *Student* identities were enacted based on classroom experiences where pre-service teachers demonstrated who they were as learners, while *teacher* identities were performances based on pedagogical knowledge and teaching interactions as a result of educational methods courses. I also noticed the ways pre-service teachers' *becoming* as teachers shifted and changed as we interacted throughout the semester. *Becoming* symbolizes the different aspects that contributed to pre-service teachers' performances as they merged course experiences with tangible teaching encounters with children.

#### Converging Identities: *Student* → ← *Teacher*

Converging identities occurred when pre-service teachers enacted identity performances that drew from both their identities as *students* as well as who they envisioned themselves as *teachers*. This happened when they discussed their K-12 schooling experiences, during our writer's workshop experiences, and through professional literature discussions.

## **K-12 Schooling Experiences**

Pre-service teachers' performances as *students* converged with their performances as *teachers* when they reflected on their own literacy experiences as K-12 students. In our first class, they used the words “engagement” and “excitement” and “boredom” and “apathy” to describe literacy events they experienced as K-12 students. These events impacted their identity performances as students. For example, Dylan explained that reading “boring assigned chapter books for history classes just made me not want to read.” Many peers made connections to Savannah’s comment, “As I got older, like in high school, like I noticed that we were assigned texts. Like, honestly, I didn’t read a lot of em’.” Lily recalled that in elementary school when she first began using writer’s notebooks and had opportunities to write freely during school, and “that’s when I really started liking writing” (class transcript 1.13.15). Because their lived experiences influenced their engagement as K-12 *students*, pre-service teachers began to name how these ideas would become central to their pedagogies as future *teachers*. For example, Natalie wrote in her literacy history, “Children need independence and choice in their reading and writing and I want to create that for my children in my future classroom.” (literacy history narrative, 2.3.15). Rachel reflected on how her “experiences as a reader formed me as a person and a teacher” and as a result she hoped to “give students choice” as readers and writers in her future classroom.

## **Writer’s Workshop**

Pre-service teachers also connected their experiences as *students* in our writer’s workshop to their developing ideas as *teachers*. They commented on their experiences with “free writing” and “choice” in their writer’s notebooks and discussed how this

influenced their thinking as *teachers*. Meredith, for instance, wrote, “My favorite item [from the writer’s notebook] was writing small because I got to describe, in detail, one of my favorite memories. I think that these entries encouraged me to have a writer’s workshop in my class because I enjoyed participating in one myself” (writer’s notebook self assessment, 4.7.15). Kayla said:

I truly enjoyed this experience. The idea of a writer’s notebook and the strategies displayed in this class were extremely useful to me as a future educator...I found a writing process that worked for me, and I am thankful for all the new strategies I will be able to use for my own writing, as well as when I teach writing (writer’s notebook self assessment, 4.7.15)!

Pre-service teachers’ enjoyment with drafting in writer’s notebooks helped them realize that they too can provide pleasurable writing opportunities for elementary students in their future classrooms.

### **Professional Literature Discussions**

Pre-service teachers’ identity performances as *students* converged with who they envisioned themselves becoming as *teachers* through the professional literature conversations they participated in each week. They connected foundations they read about *students* to teaching practices they observed, encountered, or envisioned using in the classroom as *teachers*. In planning their professional literature discussions, for example, several of them planned activities similar to those they read about: viewing videos of read alouds, developing mini lessons with children’s literature as mentor texts, analyzing children’s and young adult books relative to Taberski’s (2000) stages of reading, using rubrics that connected cultural relevance to literature circle texts, creating

editing checklists with examples of children’s writing, and analyzing elementary writing examples to facilitate discussion surrounding spelling patterns and instructional decisions.

Kayla planned an activity for her professional discussion group where they looked at student writing samples and editing checklists after they read about the idea of checklists in Fletcher’s (2001) text. They used sample writing pieces and checklists to engage in a discussion about ideas such as how teachers and students can use checklists, how many items should go on a checklist, and which pieces of writing students should use with checklists. After this discussion, one of Kayla’s peers, Blake, wrote on her pause and ponder about the way her participation in this activity as a *student* influenced her thinking as a *teacher*:

During our group time, Kayla had us read four samples of student writing and complete a checklist for each student. The checklist experience confirmed the importance of giving students immediate, specific, and meaningful feedback. Furthermore, the checklist solidified my belief that students should be given the opportunity to conduct peer feedback so that all the negative feedback and praise is not in the hands of the teacher. Also, this use of peer feedback allows students to see themselves as editors, a role that will hopefully transition to their personal writing (pause and ponder, 2.24.15).

Christine’s group spent time discussing Accelerated Reader (AR) tests in one professional literature conversation, as AR was something they all observed in their internships. They felt that AR test scores were “too public,” and “” which would be negative for students’ self-image and motivation. As a result, they decided if they had to

use something like AR as future teachers that they would keep results private, focus on “big picture questions” (versus the kinds of minuscule details AR tests are known to ask about) and “be more involved” in students’ reading.

Early in the semester, the majority of pre-service teachers’ comments in an “appreciation circle” revolved around their participation in professional literature discussion groups. Their comments revealed the ways their *student* and *teacher* identities converged, as they shared about their performances as *students*, while simultaneously envisioning themselves as *teachers*:

Gigi: Umm, I'll thank Blake. I thought her discussion, I wasn't in her group, but I thought her discussion was really good, and I liked how they did an activity [about teaching]. I thought it was easier for the whole class to see kinda what they talked about.

Anne: I *was* in Blake’s group [laughter] and I was gonna say the same thing, but I thought it was creative and we got a chance to draw and picture our future classrooms. So you did a good job.

Christine: All right, I'm just gonna follow and appreciate my group leader, cause I really liked drawing and I liked being able to picture something from the articles for my future classroom...

Blake: I wanna appreciate my whole discussion group, cause you made my job so much easier and less awkward than it had to be.

[laughter]



Elle: Umm, I wanna appreciate my discussion group, because they did make it flow a lot better than I thought it was going to, and they had a lot of good points, and related it back to like our internships and stuff.

Lily: Umm I wanna appreciate Savannah, cause in our discussion group she really made me, umm think about choice from a teacher's standpoint rather than just a student, cause if you give students a choice, like really that teacher has the choice to make a positive impact on the children's lives as well. So we have the choice too.

Maggy: Umm, I just wanna appreciate Lily. I thought she did a great job in our discussion, she just really made me think about teaching in the classroom... (class transcript, 1.20.15)

Opportunities to converse as *students* served as a means to help them problem-solve and expand on their knowledge as developing *teachers*. Belle, for example, wrote about how her planned engagement as a discussion leader broadened her conceptions and ideas about teaching. She wrote about this in her discussion leader reflection:

To begin my discussion, I introduced my group to the book *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt. I read the first few pages to allow my group to get the feel of the story and I then skipped towards the end for the sake of time. After I skimmed the story, I asked my group in what ways they could see this being used as a mini-lesson. Side note: What I loved most from our responses is that each of us had totally different ideas which allowed me to see why collaboration is so important with other teachers. Lily explained that she realized how each of the crayons were all the same, yet they struggled with an issue that needed to be

solved. She then explained how she would use this as a tool to show students that we are all the same (humans with hearts) and that we will all face different problems in life. She then stated that students needed to know that it is vital that we all express our concerns so her class community is there to support one another. Elle went on to explain that she could see this book used as a read aloud to build on communities and shared experiences. This idea of Elle's coincides with *Writing Workshop's* statement, "Read aloud builds community. It helps glue the relationships between the teacher and the students...Reading aloud can work magic on a classroom community. It creates common experiences that bind us together (p. 75)" (discussion leader reflection, excerpt, 2.3.15).

As part of their converging identity performances, pre-service teachers sometimes endorsed teaching practices that contradicted those we studied in class. "Prompt writing" was one such example. This was a practice that many pre-service teachers observed in their classrooms, and often thought was effective, though responding to prompts is not a belief aligned with those I supported, nor was it parallel to writing workshop practices. Kacie wrote in her second discussion leader reflection about the ways a coaching teacher gave students "weekly ungraded, writing practice prompts," which everyone in Kacie's group thought was a good idea. Kacie wrote:

Alex mentioned that she is in a second grade class so they do not take the standardized test but her teacher has them respond to weekly, ungraded, writing practice prompts. An example she gave was "If you had to choose between a snake and jaguar for a pet, which would you choose and why?" We all really liked this because the prompts seemed interesting for the students and still gave them

some choice in their writing, yet they were responding to a prompt which provided them with practice for standardized tests...we all came to the conclusion that we think that workshop helps students develop the necessary skills, but it would still be hard for them to put all those skills to use in one, timed setting as it could be very stressful. We agreed that it is important to find a balance in the classroom between writing workshop and “test-prep” such as timed writing or using prompts (discussion leader reflection, 2.6.15).

Moments such as these became important for me as a teacher, as I needed to work to challenge pre-service teachers’ beliefs about what they “liked” regarding literacy instruction. I often responded in writing to such statements, and followed up on those ideas in my instruction during the coming weeks. In this instance, I wanted Kacie to understand that regular and consistent opportunities to write in a writer’s workshop format grows writers. I also wanted her to begin to reflect on the ways this varies from having students respond to “prompts” to prepare them for a standardized test. I responded:

...we’ll discuss this notion a little further too [standardized writing test prep] so you all gain a sense of writing workshop and assessments...because the important thing is that kids engage in the act of writing on a regular basis in order to improve...and teaching prompt writing as a *genre* can prepare them for standardized tests---but writing *all year long* in writer’s workshop will also prepare them. It’s important to expose them to practice, so as long as it doesn’t come down to “teaching to the test.” That will kill any kid’s motivation and engagement and will not lead to successful results. I used to teach prompt writing

as a genre, and they would get the feel of test prep close to the test, after engaging in authentic writing and growing as writers all year long during writer's workshop.

I hoped that such comments would push them to reflect further on teaching practices in order to support their development as future teachers.

### **Diverging Identities [Student] ← or → [Teacher]**

There were also moments across the semester when pre-service teachers performed disparate identities as students *or* teachers. These performances were quite different from converging identities, because while converging identities merged notions of student *and* teacher, diverging identities were *separate* performances. Their diverging identities emerged in three main ways across the semester: the ways they planned writing instruction for children, their lived experiences in literature circles, and their drive for academic achievement.

### **Writing Instruction**

Early in the semester, pre-service teachers named the ways an overemphasis on editing limited their own ability to engage as writers. Kayla wrote in her writer's notebook, "If I stop to edit my writing I might not get to the most important part" (writer's notebook entry, 1.27.15). Pre-service teachers also began to reflect on this relative to their work with their small teachers. One day, for instance, Natalie commented that her small teacher focused on content as a writer, and did not let the form of conventions disrupt his ability to write. She said:

Natalie: Ok I don't know if she's [the teacher] like taught them this or like what, but I know that my small teacher that I work with, like all he does is write, like he

doesn't use capital letters or periods and if he comes to a word he doesn't know how to spell it he just spells it the best way that he can [inaudible] and doesn't ask me.

E: Mmm hmm...

Natalie: And then like at the very end he'll go back and he'll be like I don't think I spelled this word right. And then he'll ask me if he spelled it right.

E: Mmm hmmm....

Natalie: And he waits until the very end and then goes back. And he'll like capitalize and put his period and then spell the word. So I don't know if she like taught them to do that, or if he just does that from prior experiences. Or like where he got that from.

E: Ok. That'd be a good question for us to ask. How did you support your kids to live this notion of get the content first and then move on to the conventions...

Natalie: Yeah, cause you can see in his mind like processing the information. He's just trying to write it as fast as he can (class transcript, 2.10.15).

While many pre-service teachers embraced these ideas early on, later in the semester some of them lost sight of their revelations on the significance of focusing on content before conventions in writing. For instance, during one class I had pre-service teachers name “strengths and possibilities for growth” for their small teachers as writers; nearly everyone named conventions such as “capitalization” and “punctuation” when describing their child. Anthony, for example, named the way his small teacher “has a lot of creativity...and good sentence structure. But a lot of his weakness, like he could grow on is that he doesn't capitalize anything [inaudible] his first words” (class transcript 3.17.15).

After pre-service teachers shared strengths and possibilities for growth, I asked them to group their small teachers according to common needs in order to plan mini lessons based on the data they shared. I told them they would "...decide as a group, what stands out the most that you would like to focus on for a mini lesson to teach a small group next week...and you guys are gonna work together and plan that today." Several pre-service teachers planned mini-lessons on "details," "revising," or "expanding sentences," but about a third of them focused on "punctuation" and "capitalization," even though they named content driven needs among their small teachers. Blake, for example, said that her small teacher was able to talk about his writing, "but when it comes down to actually putting it on paper he struggles a lot." In a similar manner, Anne said that one of her small teacher's area for growth was to help him "focus on getting his ideas down in a way that he can identify later." However, they chose to focus on teaching "punctuation" in their mini lesson the following week.

### **Literature Circles**

Another way that pre-service teachers' identities as *students* and *teachers* diverged was when they participated in literature circles during the later portion of the semester. One of the reasons I chose to implement literature circles was to help them understand how to use such a structure with children in elementary classrooms as future teachers. Similar to the way I structured writing workshop, I wanted them to live the structure of literature circles in order to see how to translate this practice to an elementary classroom. Many of them, however, did not engage with their literature circle text, and subsequently only demonstrated *student* performances across their literature circles. During the first week of literature circle discussions I sat in with Cooper, Kacie, Roxy,

Belle, and Maggy as they discussed *The Red Pencil* (Pinkney, 2015). I noticed that they were quiet and did not talk much or collaborate at the beginning of their discussion time. I joined them to try and find out why. I asked, “What'd y'all think so far?” Roxy said, “It's *all right*...I mean it's not my favorite. I can't really make any connections to it.” Cooper commented that she “didn't have any wonderings really to write down.” They felt that the beginning of the book was just “background” on the characters and that a third of the book was “setting it up,” which made it difficult to enjoy.” (class transcript 3.31.15). As meetings progressed, this particular group admitted that they felt the book was slightly more interesting as they read on, but were disappointed that the plot had become “sad.” They were compliant in participating in literature circles and reading the text as *students*, though genuine disinterest for the text prevented them from embracing literature circles as a structure they could envision themselves using as *teachers*.

Another group of pre-service teachers, Lisa, Rachel, Savannah, and Natalie, never connected with their text, *The Turtle of Oman* (Nye, 2014). I noticed that they often had very quick conversations in their literature circle, or they did not talk about the text at all, but rather completed reflections on pause and ponders; their performances as *students* resounded in these instances. When I noticed that they skipped their conversation time one day, I asked if they were “not into their book” and Natalie responded, “Oh no, we're done.” Then they proceeded to tell me that they “weren't that into the book,” which impacted their engagement, because none of them found anything enlightening about the text to discuss:

Natalie: Because I just feel like there's no point, like it's just like a story. Like, it's not, exciting,

E: It's not capturing you?

Natalie: There's no mystery or anything to it. It's just like...

Rachel: They're all kind of different and [inaudible] and it's just kind of boring.

Savannah: It's like, here's a sentence, and this is how I think, and there's no explanation...

Natalie: There's no deeper meaning or anything (class transcript, 4.7.15).

Only one particular group of pre-service teachers, Blake, Lily, Jenn, Anne, and Kayla, seemed to enjoy their text, *Home of the Brave* (Applegate, 2008), as they consistently engaged in genuine and enthusiastic conversations surrounding their text each week. I sat with them as they conversed in animated conversation surrounding their text, where they made connections, posed authentic questions, asked about wonderings, empathized with characters, and laughed at humorous events in the story. Their conversation demonstrated their interest in the book, which led to their engagement and detailed conversations.

As literature circles wrapped up at the end of the semester, the majority of the pre-service teachers continued to perform diverging identities. As they prepared for their final discussion, I asked them to prepare a visual text response to their book that they would share with the class in a gallery walk to gain a sense of everyone's text as well as a variety of ways teachers can bring closure to literature circles with students. I also asked them to work on a self-assessment when they finished their visual response and told them that now they would turn in all their written responses from the book with their self-assessments. As they moved into their groups, I noticed right away that some groups skipped their conversation or the completion of their visual response and began



completing written responses to turn in (which should have already been complete at this point). I went around to each group and asked those who had not yet begun their visual response to go ahead and do so. I noticed that many of them continued to work on their old written responses. Their performances as *students* became prominent because they chose to complete previous work (that had to be turned in as part of a grade) rather than engage as readers, prepare a visual for their gallery walk, and share their learning about their literature circle with peers.

As I reflected on their pre-service teachers' performances across the implementation of literature circles, I was disappointed that the majority of them were apathetic during group discussions and activities. I noticed that those who did not engage as readers demonstrated performances only as *students*, whereas the few who connected with their text and participated in authentic conversation began to converge *student* and *teacher* identities. For instance, Anne, who enjoyed her experience, wrote on her pause and ponder one day, "I've really enjoyed our literature circles and the book I'm reading. I'm in the Home of the Brave group and could definitely imagine using it in my own future classroom" (pause and ponder 4.7.15). Gigi, who was also in Anne's group, wrote:

As I have been reading Home of the Brave I have constantly been imagining myself in Kek's place or even Kek's teacher's place. I would really love to hear students' thought on imagining themselves in Kek's shoes and how they would feel if they had to leave their home and family (pause and ponder, 4.7.15).

However, Anne and Gigi's reflections were undoubtedly outliers among their peers. For the majority of the pre-service teachers, their performances as *students* in literature

circles remained distant from their *teacher* performances. I wrote a memo about this during my second coding cycle:

As I reflect back on literature circles I noticed that there was mainly a prevalence of “student identity” performances among some pre-service teachers. Perhaps I was looking more to connect to their teacher selves. Maybe this is what is missing; just living them [literature circles] as students did not help them bring it to life and connect closely to how it would influence them as teachers. Perhaps we needed to engage children in literature circles as well (analytic memo, 8.7.15).

I intended to use literature circles as a structure for them to participate in as *students*, while also helping them learn how to use a similar structure as future *teachers*. For pre-service teachers who authentically connected with the experience, I think I accomplished such goals. But for those who had a difficult time connecting with their story, or those who became more concerned about the work they needed to turn in as *students*, I failed in helping them successfully live a literature circle model that would help them transfer such structures into their repertoire of pedagogies as future *teachers*.

### **Academic Achievement**

Pre-service teachers’ identities as *students* and *teachers* diverged in relation to their drive for academic achievement. I knew that teaching in a college classroom would entail many performances of *student* identities, especially in regards to grades and achievement. However, because I was teaching this group of *students* to become future *teachers*, I hoped to merge their notions of *student* with who they were becoming as *teacher*, even in regards to their achievement. I aimed to do this by offering specific feedback on their reflections and assignments that would help them grow into

performances as *teachers*. I often told them that as their teacher, I valued their growth and reflection more than grades, and that while I realized grades were important to them, conversations regarding academic performance should push beyond letters and numbers and embrace a stance of reflection and growth.

Many of them inquired about grading processes before completing an assignment for the first time. When they completed their first responsive teaching cycle (RTC) in class, for example, Natalie asked if I was going to “go easy on them” while grading them “since it’s our first time.” Because I knew that grades were integral to achievement for them, yet I also valued learning and growth as a part of achievement, I offered to give everyone feedback on their first RTC, without a corresponding grade; a “freebie.” That way they could focus on the reflective component of RTCs rather than that of performance before receiving grades to equate with achievement.

Sometimes they would email to inquire about ways to improve their achievement. For example, when Serena received her grade for her first reading response, she emailed to ask how she could improve. Serena took the initiative to push herself to improve her reading response, and wanted to know how to make her responses “more insightful” rather than emailing to inquire about how to improve her score.

Hey Elizabeth, I hope that you are having a wonderful Sunday! I am just emailing you to ask how I can improve my reading responses? I saw that I got a 6/8 and I really want to push myself to the best of my ability so I would love some feedback on how I can make my reading responses better and more insightful! Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing back from you (email correspondence, 1.25.15)!

I wrote her back with specific details on how she could begin to push her reflections further to try to merge her performances as *student* and *teacher*:

Hi Serena, Thanks for checking in about your response. I definitely know you read thoroughly and carefully based on your reading response because you touched on all the texts in the way you responded. So, nice job comprehensively covering the texts. I'd like to see you take the big ideas and themes from the texts that you touch on and make connections to them (based on previous schooling, internship experiences, classes, small teacher, etc). Also, it is helpful to take a step back from the texts and begin to pose questions that are spurred from reading them, or ideas you'd like to explore further. In this way, the response becomes more than a summary of the readings, but will begin to include connections and questions that advance your ideas about teaching and learning in relation to the texts. Thank you so much for emailing; I think your dedication says a lot about you as a learner. Let me know if this helps, and if you have any other questions or concerns (email correspondence, 1.25.15).

Academic achievement continued to be on the forefront of pre-service teachers' concerns. Kacie brought up her grade one day in class because she received "meets expectations" (rather than "exceeds expectations") on her RTC and was concerned that her score would negatively impact her grade. Kacie and I went over her RTC so we could look over my feedback together. She wanted to know if part of the RTC could just "not be a part" of her grade because it was an instructional plan completed for a different child than her regular small teacher. I did not agree to remove this portion of her grade, but instead

gave her advice on how to push her thinking, elaborate on her plans more, and take an additional step in reflecting as a *teacher* to try to achieve “exceeds expectations.”

As the semester progressed, it became more and more obvious that pre-service teachers had consistent concerns about their academic achievement as *students*. This was apparent not only through their informal conversations in class and in their group discussions, but it was expressed through written reflections as well. They began to connect grades to professional literature we read surrounding ideas of agency, and named grades as key to their own agency as *students*. One professional discussion group, for instance, talked about how “grades” helped them develop a sense of agency. Alex shared with her group that she “would feel proud and successful when she got an A on a paper or test, but also defeated when she made a low grade.” Her group discussed how “this is true for us even now as college students and realized a lot of our sense of agency is based on the grades we receive” (discussion leader conversation excerpt, 2.17.15).

An important association regarding pre-service teachers’ identity performances as *students* is that per the Elementary Education department guidelines, all students were required to earn a grade of B or higher in this course. Nevertheless, I also wanted them to understand how to use my feedback to reflect and grow as both *students* and *teachers*. I brought this to their attention in a class meeting one day. I told them that I really valued a dialectic interaction with them in regards to my feedback on their assignments, but that I felt like so much of the feedback was closed off, where they “write, reflect, and complete assignments” and I subsequently respond to them, and “the conversation ends there.” I told them that I had been reflecting on ways to open more two-way conversations where my responses to them were not “this is your feedback, these are my

thoughts,” and this is the end, but more open “conversation and learning between students and instructors.” I asked what they thought about this and if they had suggestions to accomplish more “dialectic interactions” regarding performance and feedback to help them grow as both *students* and *teachers*. Many of them commented that the grades signified “the end” of the conversation. Someone said, “Maybe because we already have the grade there though, we’re just like, well there’s no point in responding back.” Rachel made a suggestion that teachers could make grades tentative for a day to provide an opportunity for students to ask questions. Kayla commented on the fact that emailing professors doesn’t really “change anything” because “they’re like ahead of us, I mean they’re in charge.” Jenn said that it was not necessary for teachers to check in with every single student, but that if they offered a time period for students to email about something they wanted to discuss, they “would be more apt to think about it, cause I see the grade and I’m like okay.” The majority of them emphasized that their grades are “just important,” though they also “read feedback,” and that “comments help us change.” They agreed that they “look at the feedback and then the next time we do it [an assignment] we try to do what you said in the feedback.” I commented, “That’s what I do when I grade too, is I look to see, ok what kind of feedback did they get, and are they making attempts to change these things, or am I not seeing that?” We closed our conversation by deciding that consistent open invitations from me to “have conversations” about my feedback would help them feel comfortable in approaching me to initiate such conversations. These interactions not only showcased their identity performances as *students*, but also helped me reflect on ways to offer more open

possibilities regarding feedback for students. After this interaction, although no one emailed to discuss their feedback, I did leave it open as an option.

### ***Becoming Teachers***

Across the semester, pre-service teachers enacted fluid and diverse performances relative to who they were *becoming* as teachers. The ways in which they demonstrated performances in their *becoming* connected to recursive reflections relative to four main themes: pedagogy, praxis, beliefs, and competing discourses (see Figure 5.1).

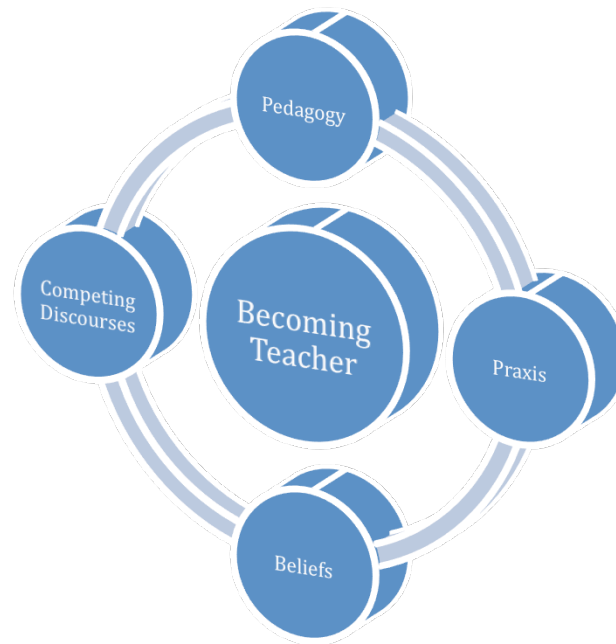


Figure 5.1 Becoming Teacher: Recursive Reflections

#### **Pedagogy**

The pedagogies we studied contributed to pre-service teachers' conceptions of who they wanted to become as literacy teachers. While we studied many literacy practices across the semester, pre-service teachers primarily drew from *writer's workshop, conferences, kidwatching, and sociocultural and constructivist theories* relative to their identity performances as teachers.

**Writer's workshop.** Pre-service teachers read several texts about the structures, practices, and routines of writer's workshop throughout the semester and worked with small teachers during writer's workshop each week. Many pre-service teachers shared early on that writer's workshop was new to them, as they did not experience this practice themselves as students. As they studied these pedagogies, they named how they would embrace elements of writer's workshop in their own classrooms, such as "incorporating writing everyday with choice," "providing students time to write," "conducting conferences," and having "author's celebrations." Cooper, for instance, thought about the ways "sharing writing" in writer's workshop is effective. She wrote, "It is useful to have 'share time' so students can gain confidence in their writing and build upon one another's thoughts" (pause and ponder, 2.3.15).

As they discussed elements of writer's workshop, such as guiding students through the writing process, conferencing, and providing feedback to students, they sought more information about how to effectively engage in such practices as teachers. They brought forth questions to their peers in professional literature discussions: "How can we help guide our students through the writing process?" "How would you set up your conferences?" "How do we avoid making students writing our own?" "How do we guide seed ideas without giving them [students] what to say?" They wanted to understand how to apply practices they learned about writer's workshop as teachers, but named their lack of experience and their own routines of being "being brought up in school" as a constraint. Consequently, they often opened spaces with their peers to support one another in understanding how to use writer's workshop effectively with



elementary children. Maggy, for example, wrote in her discussion leader reflection about how they talked about “guiding a student” during writing workshop:

Something I think the class needs to further support is in the area of guiding a student during Writer’s Workshop. We were all confused on how we can guide a student without actually giving them what to write. It seems hard not to limit the student when we are so used to how we were brought up in school. Some of the quotes that Katie Wood Ray used where she said teachers should not say are “I like the first part” was convicting for all of us because that is something we have said. So were [sic] still questioning how to reverse our habits and make Writer’s Workshop a place where students take responsibility. We did come to a conclusion that it will most likely take experience (discussion leader reflection excerpt, 1.20.15).

I used their reflections to guide my future instruction as a teacher and support who they envisioned themselves becoming as teachers. Part of my response to Maggy’s reflection was:

Thanks for sharing this. I’ll make some time in class to discuss this, and give you all a chance to practice this with each other too (discussion leader feedback, 1.20.15).

The opportunities to read about writer’s workshop structures, discuss these practices with peers, and reflect on their experiences with writing all contributed to pre-service teachers’ *becoming* as teachers.

**Conferences.** Pre-service teachers learned about conducting conferences during reading and writing workshop to help support children’s literacy progress. As they read

about this practice in professional literature, discussed how to confer with peers in professional literature discussions, and engaged their small teacher in one-on-one conferences each week, pre-service teachers began to form understandings of how conferring could positively influence teaching and learning. They posed questions regarding conferences: “How often do we confer?” “Are conferences very important for students?” “How do we direct conferences with students?” and “How can we make the best use of our time [to conduct conferences]?” After discussing Mills & O’Keefe’s (2006) excerpt of a teacher and a child in a reading conference, Gigi expressed a concern about conferring with a student who might not be as “responsive” as the student in the text:

Gigi: Umm, we kind of talked about in the first [article] where, I guess it was Tim, the teacher had the one on one conferences with the student Victoria. And, we were just kinda, we liked the idea. But we're just kind of worried, or I guess confused as what we'd do if a student wasn't as responsive...

E: Ok...

Gigi: As Victoria...

E: Great questions...

Gigi: He definitely had a lot of insight of her own reading. So I just feel like, a lot of students who I've worked with, wouldn't be able to, I don't know, recognize that about themselves.

E: Ok. So, that's a great question. And that's a very legitimate concern. Ok, so let's talk about umm, Gigi's question. So she was thinking about the idea of kidwatching and this one to one conference. So what kinds of things come to

mind, as Gigi talked about? And so, how do you create the conditions to have successful one to one conferences? Is that kind of what you're asking?

Gigi: Yes (class transcript, 1.27.15).

I facilitated such conversations to help pre-service teachers engage in collaborative discussion on how to build ideas to implement the pedagogies we studied in effective ways, both with their small teachers and in their future classrooms. As pre-service teachers continued to read additional literature about one-on-one conferences with students, they continued to ask questions and seek additional information on using this practice effectively. In one class, as Roxy shared her plan for professional literature discussions with the class, she commented on how she wanted to continue a discussion on conferring with her peers: “Umm, I just have a lot of questions about like writing workshop, about umm, how to conduct meaningful conferences. Umm, how to improve not just a piece of writing but [inaudible] the student as a writer overall (class transcript, 2.3.15).” Roxy’s discussion group discussed suggestions such as “less talk on the teacher’s part” to get students talking about their writing, “ask them [students] what they’re struggling with” and “ask the right questions to get students thinking.” After continuing additional discussions on how teachers confer with children, Elle wrote, “Through conferences we get to know our students as a person while also getting to know them either as a reader or a writer” (final paper excerpt, 4.27.15). Through conversations and independent reflections, pre-service teachers thought about pedagogies like one-on-one conferences, and ways to effectively confer as future *teachers*.

**Kidwatching.** Early in the semester pre-service teachers began to study the practice of kidwatching, observing and recording children’s literacy development. They

read professional literature about kidwatching and discussed this practice in class.

During their work with small teachers, I expected pre-service teachers to use kidwatching to plan curriculum and instruction tailored to their children's individual strengths and needs. As they began to develop knowledge about this practice, some of them resisted the concepts and practices surrounding kidwatching. They brought forth concerns with their peers in professional literature discussion groups to discuss "how to effectively use kidwatching techniques," "how to realistically incorporate that in your classroom with 20 or so students" and they often wanted to discuss "other strategies that aren't one on one." While some pre-service teachers resisted this practice early on, others worked to help highlight the potential influence that kidwatching could have on teaching and learning. Rick discussed kidwatching in a professional discussion group with his peers and then wrote about this conversation in his discussion leader reflection:

The first question [I asked] was about kidwatching. From the article by Heidi Mills and Tim O'Keefe entitled "From Kidwatching to Responsive Teaching: Coaching readers during independent reading". I asked, "Who has time to keep all of those detailed notes day after day on each of the 20+ students in the class?" Rachel made the point that it may seem like a lot of time, but it is worth it, because you get to know the children and how best help them. After you have practiced kidwatching for a while, you will be able to do much of the analysis in your head. Then, Cooper elaborated by stating that new teachers will not be able to do all of the kidwatching and interpreting at once. This is a skill which improves over time and is done in steps. The teacher will gain experience, and

get better acquainted with the child. After that it will not require as much time to analyze what is being watched (discussion leader reflection excerpt, 1.20.15). I responded to Rick in a way that I felt that honored his reflection, while at the same time reinforced kidwatching as an effective practice. I wrote:

I'm glad you guys are beginning to think through these ideas. We'll discuss (as well as live) ways to be systematic about kidwatching in a classroom of 20 or more kids. I agree that it is one of the best ways to get to truly know your students and their needs as learners (discussion leader reflection excerpt, 1.20.15).

I hoped that continued reflections, class discussions, and actual practice with kidwatching would help them learn about the positive influence of kidwatching on instructional practices. This was not only a practice that was new to them, but one they had not seen used in their internship experiences. When they began to use kidwatching with their small teachers, some still articulated their trepidations. They experienced frustration trying to multitask working with a child and writing kidwatching observations at the same time. Kayla asked a question about this at the end of our fourth class:

Kayla: I just had a, as far as you said, like collecting kidwatching data and stuff, the notes we take, it's just kind of hard to take notes as we're like interacting with them.

E: Yes.

Kayla: Cause like every time I like try to write something down he's like *OH*, what are you writing? And it just, like, I mean I can remember it if I like talk about it right after, but like as far as writing [inaudible] notes, are we gonna have to turn in [inaudible--announcements on PA.]

E: Yeah, so you'll have to kind of transition into the habit of doing that. It is kind of a habit that you've gotta develop, and it's not a natural habit at first. Umm, (pause) one sec, we'll just let this stop [waiting for PA to stop].

E: Ok, so Kayla had a really good question that I think everybody can listen in and learn from. Kind of talking about that tension of it's a little awkward or uncomfortable or not natural to take these kidwatching notes in the moment while you're working with your kid. And just start getting in the habit. And if your kid, you know next week you might just say, you know, as a teacher I like to learn about you and it helps me to remember what kinds of things we learn together if I write these things down. And just let em' know that's what you're doing...

E: The other thing I was gonna say too, is, get in the habit when your small teacher's on the carpet [during mini lessons] and you're observing, take some notes then. What do you see and hear your kid doing when they're on the carpet? What are you noticing when you're not sitting side by side with them? So those are good opportunities to get those kidwatching notes too, ok (class transcript, 2.3.15).

Across the semester, pre-service teachers built their knowledge on this practice and gained additional practice with kidwatching; they eventually grew in both their appreciation and experience with kidwatching.

**Sociocultural and constructivist theories.** Across the semester, pre-service teachers studied pedagogies grounded in sociocultural and constructivist theories. In doing so, they connected this knowledge to pedagogies and teaching experiences that shaped their own *becoming* as future teachers. They named theories and concepts they

hoped to use as future teachers, such as “providing choice for students in the classroom,” “building from students’ interests,” “respecting disinterests,” “valuing students’ home language,” and “bonding with students.” Pre-service teachers named these concepts in many ways: during professional literature conversations, in reading responses on Google Community, during whole group discussions, on pause and ponders, in quick writes on beliefs about teaching and learning, and in responsive teaching cycles. For instance, after they read a chapter about bonding with students by Routman (2003), this idea surfaced in various ways. The concept of bonding resonated with Lisa because it helped her connect to the relationship she hoped to build with her small teacher and realized how this would support a relationship where learning could thrive. Lisa wrote about this in a Google Community post one week:

In the article "Bond with Your Students," the writer states, “Bonding with our students is the ‘human essential,’ the intimately personal connection that is the core of responsive, excellent teaching,” ("Bond with Your Students," 12). This entire article made a very good point; how is a student supposed to thrive in our classrooms if we do not get to know them on a personal level? We are supposed to be getting to know our small teachers in class because we cannot help them learn if they do not trust us and know that we are human just like them. “We teachers have the power to make magic happen in our classrooms. Once our students bond with us and trust us, anything is possible, ("Bond with Your Students," 14) (Google Community post, 1.19.15).

Many of Lisa’s peers made similar connections to the significance of bonding across the semester. Alex wrote, “To start this bond it is important to share personal information

about yourself so your students see you as a ‘real’ person and to share stuff about themselves with you.” (pause and ponder, 1.20.15). In a similar way, Elle said, “...a good way to establish this bond is through writing. The student can write in their journal and then as the teacher we could respond to them and provide feedback to establish a bond” (discussion leader reflection, 2.17.15). Serena connected these ideas to her work with her small teacher when she wrote that “[my small teacher] loves to share her personal information with me and it shows how much she truly trusts me...in order to bond with our students we must show interest and learn about them” (RTC, 2.3.15). Many of them connected the notion of bonding to their teaching experiences in their final paper for the semester as well. Rick, for instance wrote, “To receive information from [my small teacher], I was willing to give information about myself to create a bond” (final paper excerpt, 4.27.15).

Pre-service teachers also took advantage of opportunities to ask questions and make clarification about theories relative to themselves as teachers. Jenn, for instance, wrote questions on her pause and ponder (2.3.15) about the zone of proximal development: “The idea of zone of proximal development—do we have set zones? Can some zones be different from others? These questions have got me pondering ZoPD.”

They connected theories they learned about to their own *becoming* as teachers, such as when Kacie wrote:

I learned more about scaffolding, General [sic] Release of Responsibility, and zone of proximal development, all terms I’ve heard before, but now I actually know what they are/where they come from. I think all of these theories affirmed a lot of my thoughts about teaching, such as learning being social, students being



shaped by experiences and that someone doesn't have to be older than you in order for you to learn from them (pause and ponder, 2.3.15).

Pre-service teachers also began to use knowledge of theories they learned about to connect to their work with small teachers. For instance, after we discussed gradual release of responsibility, many pre-service teachers linked this theory to their work with small teachers. They named this theory as one that supports children and teachers in “working together” before trying new strategies “independently,” which can “support students’ work and their confidence too.”

As pre-service teachers expanded their knowledge about learning concepts and theories, they immediately connected some ideas to their own becoming as teachers, such as bonding, scaffolding, and gradual release of responsibility. Other ideas needed more time, experience and discussion for them to connect to their becoming as teachers. For instance, when they initially learned about Camborne’s Conditions for Learning (immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, employment, approximation, feedback), they were unsure about the relevance of these conditions in classroom environments. During our discussion on professional literature discussion during the second class, most students either avoided discussing Cambourne’s Conditions with their peers or they talked about the condition of expectation because “high expectations” has been “a regular part of coursework.” Rick wrote a question about one of the conditions. He asked, “How far should I allow approximations to go before I redirect?” (Pause and Ponder, 1.20.15). Some pre-service teachers also shared the ways they attempted to reflect on this theory with peers and how it might relate to their own classrooms. Rachel wrote about her group’s confusion of this theory in her first discussion leader reflection:

Our discussion took a little different direction when we started talking about the Language, learning and literacy article. We discussed how we were a little confused by this one and weren't exactly sure how it would apply to our classrooms. To work through our confusion we looked at each of the different conditions and discussed them as a group. After doing this, we decided on a few that we thought would really apply to us as teachers. The ones we chose were feedback because of how feedback has the ability to motivate someone just as easily as it can tear someone down. We also related to the expectation condition because it resonated with our lives and how our parents have always had such high expectations of us (discussion leader reflection, 1.24.15).

Moments such as these led to my realization of the need to better support pre-service teachers' understanding of learning theories, and the ways they connected to the work we do as teachers.

Pre-service teachers initiated opportunities to contemplate pedagogies and theories with one another as they set up their professional literature conversations with invitations to "share experiences in our internships" and "give each other advice on things to do in [our] internships and share experiences that we may experience too." They wanted to know about ideas and practices we studied in our literacy course relative to how they looked in their internship classrooms, such as "how much time classroom teachers spend on reading and writing," "how classroom teachers teach writing," how classroom libraries are organized," "how students check out independent reading books," "how classroom teachers grade writing," or how they "integrate reading and writing" into literacy and other subjects throughout the day. They also inquired about ways coaching

teachers implemented literacy assessments, like DIBELS, Accelerated Reader (AR), and benchmark writing tests. Additionally, pre-service teachers wanted to know how “reading strategies” worked for ESL students and how students receive school services, such as those offered by a reading coach or an ESL teacher. They also asked one another about observed practices we studied, and “whether or not” they observed them in their internship classroom. It was important to pre-service teachers to be able to discuss practices that we read about and discussed in class to begin to conceptualize what they “looked like” in classrooms.

### **Praxis**

The merging of theories and practices through praxis contributed to the ways in which pre-service teachers demonstrated performances in their *becoming* as teachers. It was important for me to provide pre-service teachers opportunities to critically reflect on how theories and pedagogies converge with classroom practices. Therefore, I integrated notions of praxis into our class time each week. I also helped them translate theory to practice through their work with children. These actions contributed to the identities they performed in their becoming as teachers. Literacy practices, reflective language, noting social and academic behaviors, and pedagogies and theories were all aspects of praxis.

**Literacy practices as praxis.** I often helped pre-service teachers deconstruct literacy practices they could use to support the instruction they would implement with their small teachers, as well as instruction I hoped they would use in their future classrooms. During one class, for example, we watched a video of an elementary teacher conducting a mini lesson on adding details in writer’s workshop. I asked them to draw from theories and pedagogies we studied to name what they thought was effective about

the mini lesson. They named ideas such as, “playing with words,” “making connections to students,” “providing a demonstration,” “providing students choice,” “[the use of] praise,” and “Cambourne’s condition of expectation.” Blake noted that the teacher “put them in the place of readers to connect to their role as writers,” which related to a concept we studied, “reading like writers” (Ray, 2002). Susie commented that it was nice to see how the teacher linked the lesson in a positive way to the task of having students revise and add details to their own writing: “She didn't say ‘you guys aren't good at details, you need to fix that,’ she said, go find what you think you can't picture and you know ‘vividize’ it...it's them like revising their own work.”

In addition to talking about literacy practices, many also wrote “insights” on their pause and ponders from this video and debriefing conversation. Lisa wrote that the “teacher gave praises to students and made them expand on their descriptions and why they could visualize that. Praise encourages students and doesn’t make them feel like they have failed/didn’t do something right.” Kacie said,

Watching the mini-lesson was an “Aha” moment because it put a lot of what we have read together and showed good examples of the different components. We got to see what it looks like to use familiar texts and gradual release of responsibility. The video was very helpful for us. I wonder how the rest of the lesson/vividization went (pause and ponder, 2.10.15).

Having the opportunities for pre-service teachers to see theories and pedagogies translate to actual classroom practices influenced their reflections about teaching and who they envisioned themselves *becoming* as teachers.

Another instance that showcases how literacy practices as praxis contributed to their *becoming* was when they compared and contrasted different examples of elementary writing conferences. I showed them a video of a teacher conferring one-on-one with a child about a piece of narrative writing, and then pre-service teachers read a “reader’s theater style” script of a different teacher conducting a writing conference on a narrative piece. Having the opportunity to read about the practice of conferring and then see a video and demonstrations of different styles of conferences gave pre-service teachers an opportunity to reflect how the examples contributed to their knowledge as teachers. Christine, for example, wrote about how this influenced her thinking: “Watching the video and hearing the conferences helped solidify my ideas about what a conference is and how a teacher behaves. Seeing differing perspectives on conferences also allowed me to question my beliefs about how I want to approach conferencing” (Pause and Ponder, 2.24.15). Alex used our conversations about conferences to not only reflect on the differences between the examples I showed in class, but also began to wonder how this might influence her interactions with her small teacher:

I really liked talking about the two different writing conferences. It was really interesting to notice what was the same between the conferences and what was different. There were bits and pieces from both I really liked and want to use in my future classroom. From the first conference I really like how the student had a set plan and the teacher asked questions. These questions really seemed to get the student thinking and focusing on the process. From the second conference I really liked how the teacher asked what the student wanted to focus on. I also like how the teacher asked for permission to give advice. These two things really made it

seem student led and helped the student understand the conference about them.

After thinking about both conferences I really wonder which style conference would work best with my small teacher Jaelee (pause and ponder, 2.24.15).

Using knowledge about pedagogies and practices often served as a foundation for pre-service teachers to visualize what such practices might look like in their future classrooms, as well as how it would shape their instruction with their small teachers throughout the semester.

**Reflective language as praxis.** Early on, many pre-service teachers used language filtered through a deficit lens; the majority of their kidwatching notes and RTCs included deficit observations. I sought to help them take on identities as teachers who were advocates for the children with whom they worked. Therefore, it was my responsibility to help them confront and outgrow deficit lenses. I knew that I needed to help them understand the power of language and the ways we describe learners, and how negative language can infiltrate our lenses of the children we teach. During our community meeting the week after I noticed this deficit pattern, I sat the class down in a circle on the carpet to discuss the way we frame our observations of children.

E: If you will just listen. And I want you to just notice, I want to hear what you notice. What do you notice from these observations that I share? Umm, [reading] “She struggles reading by herself. He couldn't find facts quickly. She didn't keep her eyes on the text. He struggles with writing. He wasn't quick to answer my questions. He couldn't come up with words to write. She does not write complete sentences. He's not a good speller. She does not stay focused.”

E: What do you notice about that?

Alex: [softly] They're all negative.

E: Say that a little louder.

Alex: They're all negative.

E: They're all negative. Did you guys notice that? Did anybody else notice that?

How does that make you feel when you hear those about a kid? (silence, six seconds) What if they were about you? How would that make *you* feel?

Gigi: Like hopeless [inaudible] so much stuff to work on.

E: Maybe a little hopeless, like, gosh, what can I do? Like I have so much to work on, what can I do? So I want us to start thinking about ways that we can capture what kids *can* do. I always want us to start with what we notice kids can do. Ok. When we start with words like “struggles,” “couldn't,” “didn't,” “wasn't,” “not,” that puts us in a deficit mind frame. And when we're in a deficit mind frame the language that we use begins to become deficit as well (class transcript, 2.10.15).

I proceeded to help them understand how to note observations through a strengths based approach by using their examples to help them understand how to note what children *can* do. One by one we looked at ways to turn around what children “can't yet do” to name what they could do as learners. I closed our conversation by asking them to think about what Peter Johnston said in the chapter they recently read from *Choice Words*. I said to them:

He [Peter Johnston] said speaking is as much an action as hitting someone with a stick or hugging them. And the same goes with written language as well, ok? So when we write and say things from a deficit lens, I want you to think about what happens about *us* as we reflect on that child as a learner. And I want us to think

about trying to change that deficit lens and start building on strengths (class transcript, 2.10.15).

My emphasis on avoiding deficit language sent messages about how I wanted them to develop teaching identities that surrounded a culture of care. I deeply care for my pre-service teachers and the students they teach, and know that deficit frames of thinking are detrimental for all involved; though, I also reflected on the fact that pre-service teachers likely did not deliberately approach their kidwatching observations through a deficit lens. I used moments such as this though to help them avoid negativity in the language they used as they performed identities in their *becoming* as teachers.

While this conversation brought awareness to pre-service teachers' understanding of why I wanted them to outgrow deficit thinking, pre-service teachers slipped in and out of deficit frames across the semester. The week after our "deficit language" talk, I noticed that many of them made subtle changes in their language when describing their children in their RTCs. For instance, Susie wrote in her RTC on 2.3.15 that her child "has trouble staying focused when reading." However, in her RTC the following week she wrote that her whenever her child was reading something she was interested in "she would grab the book and look at me and say 'ooooh wait!!'" (2.10.15 RTC). I wrote a note in the "Community Meeting" section of their agenda on that week to celebrate their improvement. I wrote, "RTC Patterns-Yay you for recording observations that build from students' strengths and what they can do as readers, writers, and learners" (class agenda, 2.17.15).

When I noticed that pre-service teachers slipped back into deficit lenses, I provided direct feedback on alternative ways to reflect and frame their thinking. For



instance, when Natalie wrote in her RTC, “Darrien does not write capital letters at the beginning of his sentences,” I crossed out “does not” and wrote, “Darrien begins his sentences with lower case letters.” I provided new ways her to view observations throughout her RTC and wrote a note to her at the end, which said, “Take a look above at some places I’ve crossed out and see what you notice. Remember that we want to build on student strengths and notice what they can do.” I continued to work throughout the semester to help pre-service teachers embrace and enact teacher identity performances that emerged through a constructive lens, rather than a deficit one.

Their performances as teachers were recursive; as they worked to outgrow deficit lenses, they easily slipped back into negative mind frames. For instance, Lisa, who continually took on fluid identities as a teacher that was strength-based at times, while deficit at others, was irritated one day when things did not go well with her small teacher. She said aloud to the class, “I can’t even describe how awful today went. Like he started out asking if I knew the names of some wrestlers and he just got done doing that [for the previous writing piece] so I wasn’t getting on to him about it or anything...he like just kept getting distracted” (class transcript, 2.24.15). I drew from my repertoire of “dialogic talk” to open a conversation to the class. I said, “So let’s problem solve Lisa’s [situation] together as a class. What would you do? What can you say to Lisa to continue to support her child?” Lily suggested that Lisa could work to make connections so their time together was “a little more personable” because “making small little connections” with her small teacher helped him “open up” and he subsequently became “more interested and engaged.” Kayla shared that her child was a little disinterested at first as well so she shared how she was “so excited” to work with him and she tried to make their

interactions “fun” to maintain his interest and engagement, which worked for her. Blake commented that because her child tried to constantly get up and walk away during their time together, she used their classroom teacher as an authority figure. She said, “Would you behave like this if your teacher was right here?” “It kinda sucked, she said,” “but it was necessary” because that was the most productive time they ended up having together. I also let Lisa know that it would likely come down to some “trial and error” as she worked to respond to her child in ways “that would work best for him as a learner.” I hoped that opening room for such a conversation might help not only Lisa, but also other pre-service teachers who may have felt similar frustrations in their position as *teacher* through previous interactions with their small teachers. Later in that class, Maggy wrote on her Pause and Ponder, “Deficit mindset. I think it’s easy to go to this mindset so being reminded every week not to take this on is helpful” (pause and ponder, 2.24.15).

During one class later in the semester, I asked pre-service teachers to look back over all their data on their small teacher and record their child’s strengths and possibilities for growth as a writer on an index card. When I walked around the classroom and looked over their shoulders as they wrote, I noticed some observations written through a deficit lens (e.g., “does not use capitalization/punctuation,” “[needs to] ask better questions-biography”). As we transitioned into sharing observations with one another, I reminded them again to be aware of their language when describing children as learners. I said to them, “Remember when you describe your writer to avoid deficit language at all times.” I asked them instead to use language that described “strengths” and “possibilities for growth.”

At the end of the semester, many pre-service teachers reflected on how they outgrew deficit thinking in their final paper, and how this influenced their development as a teacher. Cooper, for instance, reflected on the ways she “unknowingly wrote with a deficit lens” (e.g., “It was difficult for her to write without talking...she struggled with spelling”) when reflecting on her small teacher, though she “quickly realized” that meeting children’s needs begins with their strengths as learners (e.g., Lala uses her *I’m Not Afraid of My Words* sheet when she is unsure of how to spell a word”). Through her realization on the importance of building on strengths, Cooper’s kidwatching observations began to help her understand how to use strengths-based observations to “plan future experiences” with her child. Cooper’s reflection demonstrated the ways her performances as *teacher* shifted from that of a deficit to a strengths based approach across the semester when capturing kidwatching observations.

Lisa, as shown in aforementioned examples, shifted in and out of deficit and strengths based approaches in her instruction throughout the semester. In her final paper, she reflected on how she learned to “ensure success” when working one-on-one with children. She wrote:

Before taking this class, I was not sure why I needed to take this class; I believed I knew how to help students with their writing. This class taught me so much about observing students and learning from their behaviors in order to ensure their success. My small teacher taught me a lot about working one-on-one with a child and using appropriate techniques to ensure their success. I feel more prepared for interacting with my future students in regards to writing and reading (excerpt from final kidwatching project, 4.27.15).

Pre-service teachers' interactions with second graders served as a pivotal point in their *becoming* as teachers. The identities they enacted were fluid, dynamic, and sometimes conflicting. I consistently worked to support pre-service teachers to engage in authentic reflections that would support their growth as teachers.

**Noting social and academic behaviors as praxis.** As pre-service teachers developed in their *becoming* as teachers, they reflected on their interactions with their small teachers. I noticed that they did this in two main ways: they noted children's social as well as academic behaviors.

**Noting social behaviors.** Pre-service teachers often reflected on children's social behaviors across the semester through many ways: in class conversations, on pause and ponders, in the RTCs, in kidwatching notes, during debriefing conversations, and in their final papers for their kidwatching projects. They used their reflections on small teachers' social behaviors to better understand the children with whom they worked and to plan future interactions with them. They noted behaviors such as small teachers': "confidence," "creativity," "eagerness," "interest level," "engagement," "multitasking," "following instructions," "focus," "shyness," "work ethics," "eye contact," "physical actions," "attitudes," "talkativeness" and "enthusiasm."

After observing small teachers share their non-fiction "infographics" at their first author's celebration, everyone noted small teachers' social behaviors in one way or another. Many were "so proud" of their children and the "confidence" they displayed during the author's celebration. Serena noted how "polite" her small teacher was, and was contented that her small teacher "introduced" Serena to her peers before sharing her work. Many pre-service teachers also noted social behaviors in their small teachers that

surprised them, as some children displayed behaviors different from what they expected, based on their previous one-on-one interactions with them in the classroom. Meredith, for example, worked with a child who usually had “a large personality.” Consequently, Meredith accepted that her small teacher would be outgoing and excited to share during the celebration. This was not the case, as her child hid behind Meredith’s jacket and “screamed that she was too shy.” Savannah wrote on her pause and ponder that day that “it was exciting to see the difference between Nicolas presenting to his friends and then presenting to his classmates” (pause and ponder, 2.17.15). Elle noted that she was “very proud” of her child, who displayed a “boost of confidence” that she had never seen before. Maggy reflected on how her child’s apprehension to share influenced her decisions as a teacher during the author’s celebration. When her child was “too scared to talk” she “asked him specific questions” to get him talking. She also noted that outside of the classroom he became “more relaxed” and talked to her “more than usual” (pause and ponder, 2.17.15). Christine used the author’s celebration experience to think about the ways peer audiences allowed the children to receive “support and enthusiasm” from peers, which she thought served as “a good motivator” for the children. Pre-service teachers’ reflections on their experiences during the author’s celebration contributed to their becoming as they began to connect these reflections back to themselves as *teachers*.

Pre-service teachers’ reflections on their small teachers’ social behaviors continued across the semester. Several of them jotted such behaviors in their kidwatching notes on a regular basis. Dylan, for instance, wrote in her kidwatching notes one day: “enthusiastic; first person to read [writing with others]; a little scared to show

illustration; wanted to hear other students; creative” (kidwatching notes, 3.17.15). She then wrote about these behaviors in a quick write:

He was VERY energetic today. He was jumping around a lot but I let him because he was still responding. He had a good biography and seemed to have formulated his questions into good sentences...[Afterwards] he wrote half of his letter to his mom and seemed most excited to take pictures [for the cultural memoir] of his friends and his cousin (written reflection 3.17.15).

Susie and Jenn wrote on a group reflection, after teaching a small group one, that they “Overall they [the small teachers] were very talkative and willing to share ideas” (RTC, 3.24.15). Having the children talk to one another and share out ideas about writing in a small group was one of their objectives during their lesson, which pleased them as teachers. After giving small teachers a Burke Reading Interview towards the end of the semester, many pre-service teachers noted children’s social behaviors through their reflections on the process. Rachel drew from her former experiences with her small teacher to reflect on the ways her small teacher enthusiastically talked about reading during the Burke Interview. Rachel connected the fact that her child was “very articulate” and “loves to read” to her child’s interest and engagement in answering questions about reading (reflection 4.7.15). In a similar way, Alex reflected on her child’s social behaviors in an RTC and wrote about the ways these behaviors connected to her child’s engagement as a reader. Alex noticed that her child “read with a lot of emotion” during a book she was interested in, but then that her “attitude changed” once she began reading a book that her intervention teacher selected for her practice reading (RTC, 4.14.15).

In their final papers for their responsive teaching projects, many pre-service teachers reflected on *why* they noted small teachers' social behaviors in their kidwatching observations. One of the questions I asked students to think about when talking about data collection in their final paper was, "What kinds of things did you choose to write down [in your kidwatching notes] and why?" Lily reflected on how tuning into her child's social behaviors helped her know how he "was feeling" during their time together. She connected his social behaviors to his engagement as a learner and then reflected on the ways that other influences in his life could influence his mood and engagement:

While I worked with Aiden, I recorded many observations about our interactions together and I chose to write down observations that would help me become a responsive teacher. Some things that I wrote down are ways that he interacted with me, such as making eye contact, the way he presented himself, what he was doing with his hands while we were interacting (for example, playing with his pencil, picking at his socks, and ripping apart paper), and his facial expressions. I recorded these observations because they told me a lot about what Aiden was feeling during our engagements, which really had an impact on the way we interacted on some days. On the days that he was laughing and smiling, he was very engaged and motivated to do the assignments we were working on. On the days that he hung his head low and avoided eye contact with me, we didn't get as much done as we would have during our time together. This tells me that there might be something else going on that is determining his mood when he is engaging in class (excerpt from final paper, 4.27.15).

Christine made similar connections in the ways she reflected on her small teachers' social behaviors. She reflected on how she paid attention to the ways her child made "eye contact" or "smiled" in order to better understand her small teacher's "mental activity" throughout their time together. Belle also reflected on the way she noticed her small teacher's social behaviors during the semester and connected her observations to her own "teacher personality," which she knew focused on "attitudes, beliefs, and strengths." The various ways that pre-service teachers reflected on their instruction and interactions with small teachers across the semester impacted their thinking about their children's social behaviors, while at the same time influenced their own *becoming* as teachers.

***Noting academic behaviors.*** Pre-service teachers reflected on small teachers' academic behaviors across the semester in class conversations, on pause and ponder, on written reflections, during debriefing conversations, and in their final papers for their kidwatching projects. They noted ideas such as small teachers': use of "capitalization," "punctuation," "spelling," "sentence structure," "topics as writers," "details [in writing]"; they also commented on children's "strategy use" as readers, how they "skipped words" or "sounded out," and whether the children engaged in "meaning making" as readers. They often used their observations of children's academic needs to think about how this influenced them as *teachers*. Natalie wrote one day about the academic changes she noticed in her small teacher and how this influenced *her* as a teacher:

I was really surprised by the way Darrien wrote today. Today he was really focused on his spelling and he's never been so focused on spelling. He's usually just more anxious to just get the content down. I need to think about how to get



Darrien back to that point of focusing on content and less on spelling (pause and ponder, 2.24.15).

Pre-service teachers shared similar reflections across the semester as they performed *teacher* through their interactions with children. Dylan, for instance, reflected on an interaction she had with a small teacher one day. She wrote that she “challenged him to add more detail” to his biography by asking him about his “favorite sentence” to help him understand how to make more of his sentences as detailed as his “favorite” one (pause and ponder, 3.3.15).

They also reflected on the ways instructional modifications influenced student learning. Anne, who worked with a small teacher who was repeating second grade, wrote about a one-on-one interaction that went “really well” after modifying writing instruction for her child. Anne tried a shared writing experience with her small teacher during writer’s workshop one day to help him to focus more on getting his ideas and content down in a biography he was expected to write, as he previously worked tirelessly to write basic words, which he then had trouble rereading once he finished writing. Anne shared her excitement in how well this modification went and that it was “one of our best meetings.” She commented on the way her small teacher experienced success with the shared writing experience and then connected this to his increased confidence and willingness to share his writing with his teacher and peers.

As pre-service teachers reflected on their small teachers’ academic strengths and needs, they often sought help from me about how their observations should inform their future decisions as teachers. Roxy, for instance, called me over during one class when she was reflecting on her experiences with her small teacher and said that she felt like her

child “needs to be challenged more.” She knew that her child needed a “challenge” as a writer, but was unsure of how to handle that instructionally. When I tried to probe Roxy for her thoughts on how to accomplish this, she deferred to me through her reply, “So I don't, I don't know.” I began sharing ideas as Roxy listened intently and said my recommendations were “a big help,” though afterwards I reflected on how I did not do a lot in the conversation to support her own independent reflections as a *teacher*, and instead told her how *I* might provide her small teacher a challenge.

Savannah sought my advice during one class when she was planning future instruction for her small teacher as a reader. She called me over to talk about her reflections from her kidwatching observations and how this informed her thinking. She knew that her child read fluently, but recognized that he was not taking meaning away from the text. Savannah was cautious as she named instructional decisions and sought affirmation in her new instructional plan for her child (“Do you think it’d be a bad idea to have sticky notes for him?”; “[Should I have him] pull out three main ideas or something?”). Savannah knew her kidwatching data, and she knew the most important thing her child needed instructionally as a reader; she simply wanted advice on *how* to plan future instruction for her child as a reader. (class transcript, 4.14.15)

**Pedagogies and theories as praxis.** Another element that influenced pre-service teachers’ becoming as teachers was when they connected the theories and pedagogies we studied to their instructional experiences with their small teachers. After we read about or discussed ideas such as different strategies teachers use when conferring, or strategies to support readers, pre-service teachers connected these ideas to their work as *teachers*. They all tried using a conferencing strategy we read about from Anderson (2000) where

you can begin a writing conference with “How’s it going?” Afterwards many of the pre-service teachers named what did or did not go well in their initial attempt at conducting such a conference. Gigi, for example, wrote, “I feel like my language and questions could have gone better” (pause and ponder, 3.3.15). Cooper reflected on the way her conference opened up not only “talk about her biography,” but also about “how she looks forward to reading and writing.” Cooper’s “How’s it going?” conference helped her see both her small teacher’s strengths as a writer, and also her “confidence building and excitement towards literacy and learning.” Elle wrote, “Today with my small teacher our conference was short and we ran out of things to talk about after a little while.” It was important for me to help pre-service teachers realize that conferring with children is a practice that grows over time, both for teachers and students. I replied to Elle by writing, “That’s ok—you’ll both become more comfortable with practice.” We often talked together about the ways teachers set conditions in their classrooms to effectively use structures like conferences, because when children are not accustomed to talking one-on-one to teachers, they can easily remain distant and quiet when a teacher confers with them.

After reading Johnston’s’ work (2004) about the nuances in language and how to use positive feedback with students, many pre-service teachers began to pay attention to the language they used with their small teacher. They shared about what they tried to change in their language or feedback with small teachers, and often reflected on this in RTCs or on pause and ponders. Blake, for instance, wrote in an RTC about a change she made in her language with her small teacher:

In offering Brandon praise, he appears to appreciate praise that revolves around his effort, rather than the work of the teacher. Since beginning to use prompts that include “You should be proud of yourself,” Brandon has acknowledged the praise through further continuation of action (Johnston, 2004). This type of praise appears to be meaningful, specific, and motivating” (RTC, 3.3.15).

Pre-service teachers often tried new practices after we studied them in class, and they frequently wrote about or shared these experiences with one another in class, thus demonstrating the ways their expanding knowledge of theories and pedagogies influenced who they were *becoming* as teachers.

### **Beliefs**

By the end of the semester, all pre-service teachers named specific beliefs that shaped their performances as teachers during the semester as well as who they wanted to *become* as future teachers. Their beliefs centered around two main themes: student centered classrooms and pedagogies.

**Student centered classrooms.** Pre-service teachers drew from their early experiences with small teachers and internship experiences, as well as their former and current schooling experiences to name ideas about the importance of building relationships to create student- centered classrooms and place students’ needs at the core of teaching. Through class conversations, professional literature discussions, reading reflections posed on Google Community, quick writes regarding beliefs about teaching, and informal reflections, they named how they believed that teachers should accomplish this. For example, they often made comments in class about how “teachers build positive impressions [for students]” and that “it is the job of the teacher to inspire or encourage

the learners to want to learn.” They named ways that teachers develop student centered classrooms by “supporting and encouraging students,” building a safe, comfortable classroom environment” and “showing students how teachers care about them.” Pre-service teachers believed that teachers should be “a safe person students can confide in” and that “classrooms should be safe and comfortable.” Rachel wrote in her final paper that in order to get students excited about learning that teachers must get to know students and also allow students to get to know them. She wrote, “By getting to know our students we have the power to make our teaching personal and meaningful. We can allow the students to bring their cultures, interests, backgrounds, and stories into the classroom and celebrate them...” (final paper excerpt, 4.27.15). Lily reflected on the importance of building student centered classrooms “before teaching students any type of content.” She wrote:

...I believe that teachers must first create a classroom where all students feel welcome and cared about... Teachers need to create an environment in which students are valued and where is voice is not only heard, but also listened to (final paper excerpt, 4.27.15).

Pre-service teachers drew from professional literature, discussions, and experiences teaching children, which all contributed to their *becoming* teachers who would take time to “build safe learning environments,” “connect with students” and create student centered classrooms.

**Pedagogies.** Pre-service teachers named beliefs derived from theories and pedagogies we studied across the semester. They did this through professional literature discussions, class discussions, individual reflections, on pause and ponders, on Google

Community, and through debriefing about teaching experiences. They named beliefs that connected to course texts and theories and practices we studied and analyzed, such as: “agency,” the “power of language,” “pointing out [students’] successes,” “the importance of share time [for students] in relation to identities,” “letting students select [writing] pieces for assessment,” “supporting writers without telling,” “giving freedom in writing,” “teaching from patterns,” learning that “sounding out is not the best way,” reflecting on the “benefit of reading alouds,” “teaching students to self edit, no teachers with red pens,” “the use of checklists,” “how to vary what needs a checklist,” “not teaching skills in isolation,” “focusing on the positive first,” valuing “independent reading time,” the importance of “one on one conferences,” “being a responsive teacher,” “bonding with students,” “looking for strengths,” “kidwatching,” “knowing a child’s background,” and “providing choice.”

Class engagements, professional literature, teaching experiences, and class discussions all influenced the beliefs pre-service teachers named. Cooper, for instance, named several beliefs on her pause and ponder that included a range of thoughts derived from what we discussed together as a class. Cooper wrote:

I learned that I am beginning to find patterns in how I plan to teach my students.

- High expectations
- Accountability (think pair share or conferencing)
- Authentic feedback (after individual writing time)
- Try to give free choice when I can
- Make it fun/hands on/experience the material

-Allow them to discover their own ways or processes of writing/reading/learning (pause and ponder 2.17.15).

Many theories and pedagogies we discussed influenced the ways in which pre-service teachers planned “to teach” their students. They continued to share beliefs in various ways across the semester. Conferencing with children was another common practice pre-service teachers believed was important to use in the classroom. Savannah wrote, “When conferencing, ask encouraging questions to the student” (pause and ponder, 2.24.15). Anthony wrote in a discussion leader reflection about the ways that his entire discussion group developed beliefs about conferences:

A common belief we all shared was that we should have our students engage in independent reading time, then pull students aside for one-on-one instruction. We agreed that this would keep the whole class occupied, allowing us to have uninterrupted individual conferences with each student (discussion leader reflection excerpt, 4.14.15).

Conferences also came up in pre-service teachers’ final papers for the semester, as they all agreed on the benefit of this classroom structure for both reading and writing instruction. Lily, for example, wrote:

Conferences are another great way students can grow into better writers. Before this class, I never really appreciated the importance of conferences and what an impact they can have on students. I now believe that conferencing with students is a crucial part in every student’s writing process (excerpt from final paper, 4.27.15).

Reflections on conferences and the “impact they can have on students” was common among all pre-service teachers’ named beliefs at the conclusion of the semester.

Pre-service teachers named additional beliefs surrounding ideas about literacy pedagogies as future teachers. After having discussions about classroom libraries and reading professional literature surrounding this topic, Roxy wrote, “I don’t like labeling books. I like the idea of organizing books by genre so they can see what they’re interested in and not worry about having to only read only one level of books” (pause and ponder, 3.31.15).

Though many pre-service teachers were reluctant about the practice of kidwatching early in the semester, they all named kidwatching as something they valued by the end of the semester. Maggy wrote about the progression of her beliefs regarding kidwatching in a Google Community post, which resonated with many of her peers:

The articles were discussing strategies teachers can use to effectively teach their students writing. Time and time again “strengths” came up...The way to find out the strengths of children is by observing. Watson again states, “...Kidwatching teachers believe that curriculum must be based on the strengths of children; that making a mistake is not the end, but rather an indication of what readers are trying to do.” (p. 127) I felt this quote put a lot into perspective for me. In class we have been discussing a lot about kidwatching and what our small teachers strengths are. It was hard for me to understand where to begin with my small teachers strengths when trying to teach him something. This quote was helpful in that it made me rethink the way I look at the mistakes of my small teacher. The mistakes are indication of what he is trying to do. By looking at his mistakes in this way they do not take a negative outlook. I can take what he is trying to do, and I can look at his strengths and see exactly where he is at with whatever the content is. This is



because I am looking at what he is trying to do rather than what is he not doing. (Google Community post, 3.24.15)

Maggy's comments about how she was able to clarify her confusion regarding kidwatching as a way to identify strengths and teach to students' needs was well accepted by her peers, who replied to her post on Google Community. Lisa wrote:

I like what you say about kidwatching. At first it was difficult for me to figure out exactly what it meant to kidwatch and how to do it. I am glad we have learned how to kidwatch because it has not only helped me with my small teacher, but the students in my internship class. Kidwatching is so important when helping a child in literacy. I believe standardized tests just do not fully diagnose the level a child is on. The teacher needs to know the child, observe their reading, and help the child how they believe the child needs to be helped (Google Community post, 3.25.15).

Anthony too agreed with Maggy's points:

I was also drawn to your points about kidwatching because I could relate to them. I never understood what kidwatching was nor understood its importance until we began working with it in this class. I am thankful to have this new knowledge because I feel that using kidwatching, I can better assess my students' knowledge and feel more successful as a teacher (Google Community post, 3.25.15).

It was not until pre-service teachers had opportunities to live this practice and then connect it back to professional literature later in the semester that they began to appreciate kidwatching, and name its value in teaching. Pre-service teachers also shared their beliefs about kidwatching in casual conversation in the classroom and in their final

papers. Dylan, for example, wrote about the influence of kidwatching on her beliefs as a teacher:

This kidwatching experience at Branson Elementary has been a very eye-opening experience and has taught me greatly about myself as an educator and about student's learning from my small teacher Keiran. My opportunity to engage in one-on-one conversation with Keiran weekly has shown me his specific learning style and allowed me the opportunity to specialize the curriculum to best meet his needs. My beliefs on teaching have changed greatly since I have been in this class (excerpt from final paper, 4.27.15).

Pre-service teachers named additional beliefs about pedagogies in their final responsive teaching project, which included ideas such as: being a responsive teacher (e.g., “observing, conferring, implementing workshops and making plans to enable growth of students”), bonding with students, listening to students, mini lessons, looking for strengths and needs, kidwatching, providing choice, knowing a child's background and culture, and consistently engaging in reflection as teachers. Many pre-service teachers shared that prior to this course they had never developed any “firm beliefs” about teaching, or that they had never thought “specifically about teaching readers and writers,” or even that they were “not sure why” they need to take a literacy course because they already “knew how to help students in their writing.” Savannah, for example, wrote about the ways her beliefs developed throughout the course:

My beliefs about teaching readers and writers have really evolved throughout the introduction of this literacy course. Over the course we have learned not only through our texts, our class teachers, but also through our small teachers the

importance of illustrating our beliefs on reading and writing to our students. I have learned that incorporating choice, a democratic classroom, language choice, writing workshop, and responsive teaching into my classroom are some of the things that will help my students achieve their best reading and writing (excerpt from final paper, 4.27.15),

In a similar way, Alex reflected on the evolution of her beliefs:

Prior to this class I had never thought specifically about teaching readers and writers. I thought I would teach writing and reading just like every other subject in school. You teach a lesson, do group practice, do individual practice, review, and give an assessment. I thought it was very cut and dry and would be somewhat easy to do. I never thought about how different every student is as a reader and writer and how no two students are the same... My main belief in teaching reading and writing is that any student can be a great reader and writer. With support and great teaching students can grow into readers and writers and become confident in them. Teaching reading and writing requires a lot of patience, time, support, and individual mentoring (excerpt from final paper, 4.27.15).

While pre-service teachers named beliefs that stemmed from class texts and discussions, they each named their beliefs in individual and unique ways, and drew out what was most important to them regarding their beliefs and who they were *becoming* as teachers.

### **Competing Discourses**

As pre-service teachers contemplated the way teaching practices influenced who they were *becoming* as teachers, they sometimes experienced competing discourses

between what they studied in methods courses and practices they observed in classrooms. For instance, they talked about competing discourses regarding “writing instruction” (e.g., prompt writing), “responding to students’ writing” (e.g., using red pens to “correct” students’ work) “worksheets,” “reading groups,” (e.g., teachers grouping students by “level”), and “book choices,” (or lack thereof). Jenn shared in a professional literature discussion about competing discourses she observed after we began to read *Choice Words* (Johnston, 2004). She shared a sullen story about the way her coaching teacher said to a child in an authoritative voice “*Get out!*” and the child “got her stuff and went wherever she supposed to go.” This saddened Jenn because the child “grabbing her stuff” and leaving indicated that this was the not first time the child was told to leave the classroom in such a manner. The next day the child got in trouble for not having her homework even though it was assigned after she was kicked out the classroom, to which the teacher said, “*Up, she should a got it from somebody else.*” When the children had a test later that day she did not do well, and the teacher announced to the class, “*I don’t know why y’all thought you would do well if you didn’t do all your homework.*” Jenn was distraught after hearing this, and she commented that the way the teacher addressed the children is “kinda like frightening” (class transcript, 2.17.15). Later in our whole group conversation, Jenn shared that “some of us are in really positive situations where teachers use good language,” whereas she was not. She commented that she used her observations to note “how a teacher addresses a situation and this is a bad way.” She believed that there were different ways to use language to “take notice of something.

Pre-service teachers also shared the ways they sometimes had to engage in practices in the classroom that they disagreed with, or that contradicted the theories and

practices we learned about in class. From the consistent use of “writing prompts” to “ability based reading groups,” pre-service teachers shared differences across practices we discussed and read about to those they sometimes experienced in current classrooms. Susie, for example, shared about an experience where her coaching teacher had her “circle mistakes and misspelled words in kids writing,” and that she “didn’t really think this was effective, but was being told to do it.” She then added that she felt like her coaching teacher did this “because of the pressure she has to prepare kids for a [standardized] test.” I told Susie, “I don’t know, I think that comes into play in our beliefs as teachers about, what do we believe about teaching and learning?” I then said, “I think it’d be great for you to share some of the things you’re learning with her, just talk about it [literacy instruction methods] and how it might work in writer’s workshop.” Susie was in a difficult place as a pre-service teacher, as she was learning about theories and practices for literacy instruction, but yet was being asked to engage in contradictory practices during writing instruction in her internship classroom. She did not feel as if she had the authority to tell her coaching teacher she would rather not circle “mistakes and misspelled” words in students’ writing, even though she disagreed with this practice. I consistently tried to support pre-service teachers’ agency as teachers, and I often told them how their coaching teachers also learn from them, as learning in classrooms stem from everyone’s interactions, knowledge, and experiences. I suggested that they engage in conversations with their teachers about what they learned in their coursework and to also ask questions they have about what happens in the classroom. Most pre-service teachers, though, did not feel comfortable questioning a coaching teacher’s “authority.”

Anne told a story one day about a competing discourse she witnessed regarding read alouds and assessment. She had the chance to observe a classroom in which the teacher used a read aloud in a social studies class. A couple of days after the teacher finished the book Anne said the children “got a little quiz” on the read aloud, which Anne “did not think much about” until her regular coaching teacher commented that she did not agree with assessing the read aloud. Anne asked me, “So what are your thoughts on that?” I opened the conversation up to class; Anne’s peers commented that the assessment “wasn’t necessary because the teacher should have been using observations all throughout the read aloud,” that “read alouds build confidence,” and “support discussion and meaning making.” Anne then decided that the “assessment undermined all these things.” Susie said that her coaching teacher engages children in consistent talk about read alouds all along, and “in a way she’s assessing it in that way.” Kayla then added, that while she agreed with what was being said, assessing a read aloud was actually a standard she had to teach in her internship. This led me to open a conversation about finding a “meaningful way” to meet the standards. Gigi and Meredith shared ways that they had used read alouds to give children opportunities to “compare characters,” and create collaborative writing pieces. I concluded that while Anne observed a practice contradictory to one that we would use, that there are alternate ways to give “engagement, meaning, and purpose” to the decisions we make as teachers (class transcript, 4.7.15).

After reflecting on this conversation, Anne’s comment that “I didn’t really know anything else” clouded my mind as I coded the data and thought about the ways they contemplated teaching practices. My considerations about this conversation highlighted

the importance of providing pre-service teachers opportunities to have such conversations, because, as they argued their points, they drew on theories and practices we read about and discussed in class, practices they observed, as well notions of accountability. Such a conversation helped them contemplate teaching, which led to their *becoming* as teachers, as they named what they observed as effective (or not) and gathered additional opinions and examples to broaden their knowledge about teaching. These conversations are critical spaces to provide for pre-service teachers. When pre-service teachers study theories and teaching practice in college classrooms, and then go into current classrooms and experience conflicting or competing discourses, it is essential that they have opportunities to name such dissonance and reflect on the effectiveness behind practices they observe and are asked to use as pre-service teachers.

### **If You Knew Me as a Teacher, You Would Know That...**

As our semester drew to a close in our final moments on our final day of class, I asked everyone to briefly reflect on their *becoming* as teachers as they completed one final assignment for the semester: a giant class poem, entitled, “If You Knew Me as a Teacher, You Would Know that...” Everybody spent time reflecting on what they wanted to share out about “who they were” as teachers and many expressed difficulty in narrowing it down to “just one line” for the poem. After much deliberation, we formed our final circle of the semester, as each of us shared one aspect of our teaching identities that was unique to us *in that moment*:

E: All right, if you knew me as a teacher you would know that...

Susie: I'm learning and growing every day and I couldn't be happier.

Gigi: I see potential in every student I meet.

Kayla: I view my students as equals, but not the same.

Rick: When you see my class, you're watching a community of excellent helpers.

Christine: I want my students to learn to be curious.

Alex: I want my class to be like a family.

Dylan: My heart breaks for the students who need love.

Natalie: I value a close classroom community.

Anne: I value a comfortable and welcoming classroom.

Blake: I love to hear my students laugh.

Serena: I love to watch the light bulb go off as the information clicks in their heads.

Elle: I love to see students grow.

Lisa: I love read alouds, and will use them daily.

Roxy: I learn something new from my students every day.

Meredith: I love making my students smile.

Lily: I will create a community, where all my students will feel welcome, cared about, and *loved*.

Maggy: I aim to create a positive identity for all of my students.

Kacie.: I have my students' best interest at heart.

Rachel: I love to learn about students' lives outside of school as well as inside.

Anthony: I am very caring, and love to see my students grow.

Savannah: I love incorporating choice in the classroom so I can see my students smile.

Belle: I love to squat down to my kids level and interacting with them.



Cooper: My ultimate goal is establish a safe environment for all my students to learn.

Jenn: I believe knowing my students and establishing community are *crucial* [emphasis] for my classroom.

E: Building a sense of community on a foundation of relationships and trust is the best part of teaching, along with seeing my students grow throughout our time together and hearing how their futures unfold.

Everyone clapped, we said our goodbyes, and closed the door on that chapter of our *becoming* as teachers.

## CHAPTER 6

### Discussion and Implications

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching pre-service teachers is the prospect of supporting their professional identity development. To create conditions in my classroom that provide the potential for them to construct, reconstruct, and socially co-construct fluid identity performances that support their becoming as teachers, I attempt to create a learning community in which pre-service teachers can blossom in their becoming, while also hoping they will draw from the discourses I make available to them.

My study not only impacted pre-service teacher identity development, it impacted my identity performances as a teacher and the ways I think about teaching future teachers. Marsh (2003) proposed that teacher educators need to understand “that the ways we choose to render our identities as teacher educators provide limits and possibilities for the prospective teachers with whom we work as well as the children who will inhabit their future classrooms” (p. 154), and that we must recognize the discourses that permeate our instruction in order to make choices about the pedagogies we enact in our classrooms. Eleven concepts/terms permeated my performance throughout the course I was teaching: “bonding,” “relationships,” “deficit (and its avoidance),” “strengths,” “areas for growth,” “reflection,” “responsive(ness),” “support,” “choice,” “engagement,” and “language of pedagogy” (e.g., mini lessons, conferencing, kidwatching, writing content, writing conventions, reading strategies, meaning making,

and data-driven decisions). Those beliefs intersected with identity performances of pre-service teachers.

### **Teacher Educator as Learner: Reflections and Implications for *My Practice***

The first three phases of Mills' (2001) dialectic action research spiral (*identify an area of focus, collect data, and analyze and interpret data*) informed the recursive and cyclical nature of my reflections throughout this study. The final phase is to *develop an action plan*. Mills (2011) contended that at this final phase of the study, the researcher should ask, "Based on what I have learned from this investigation, what should I do now (p. 155)?" To address this question, I identified tension points between the identities pre-service teachers performed as teachers (e.g., when they approached kidwatching through a deficit lens) and the identities I envisioned them taking on. I tottered on a fine line as I wanted to support pre-service teachers' agency and autonomy as teachers, while at the same time wanted them to implement literacy practices that I believed would best support their children as learners. Four of the major tension points significantly influenced me as a teacher educator: shared wisdom, hasty interjections, contradictory instruction, and missed opportunities.

#### **Shared Wisdom**

I felt that pre-service teachers should share aloud with their peers their reflections about teaching performances as a way of helping everyone in the class think about themselves as teachers and their students as learners. I noticed early on that when pre-service teachers did this, our conversations overwhelmingly excluded everyone else in the room; it was as if the pre-service teacher sharing his or reflection(s) was having a one-on-one conversation with me. I often felt uneasy after such conversations, as I

sensed that many pre-service teachers were consistently excluded from these whole group debriefing sessions. Once I realized this tension point existed, I changed how I asked pre-service teachers to share their reflections. I used language such as, “As people share, I’d like for you to listen in and think, what kinds of advice can you give to your peers?”; “What kind of understandings are we beginning to make about this child?”; “How can we support each other in this process [of reflection]?”; “What are your thoughts on this?”; “What kinds of questions do you have?”; “Let’s problem solve this together as a class. What would you do?” Through changing my language to invite everyone to collaborate on pre-service teachers’ individual reflections, I hoped to build a stronger sense of who they were becoming as teachers. I wanted them to use the lenses of their peers to turn inwards and reflect on themselves as teachers; I also wanted them to understand the power of collaboration and its influence on our thinking as teachers. Such invitations increased pre-service teacher’s participation in collaborative class conversations or the reflections they wrote about peers’ contributions on their pause and ponder slips.

**Future pedagogy.** This tension point and its resolution helped me understand and value the importance of providing routine opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on their becoming as teachers. Education students need to habitually engage in reflection regarding their instruction, their decisions as teachers, who they see themselves becoming as teachers, and tension points that arise throughout this process. The ways in which reflection benefits pre-service teachers varies. Some benefit more by sharing aloud their celebrations and frustrations in order to problem solve collaboratively, while others benefit from listening to reflections from peers and then turning inward to reflect on their own selves as teachers. What matters most though is that I provide opportunities

for pre-service teachers to systematically and consistently engage in routine reflections, where I act as a facilitator, listening and responding to reflections and posing thoughtful questions to further support their identity performances as teachers.

### **Hasty Interjections**

There were times during the semester when I provided my thoughts and opinions to pre-service teachers without providing opportunities for them to think and reflect as teachers themselves. Pre-service teachers often sought advice and opinions from me about their small teachers and their decisions as teachers, and, in some instances, I would engage them in reflective conversations as a way to support the formation of their own beliefs, without imposing mine. For example, when Gigi said she was having trouble getting Rashuan to add details to his writing, I invited her peers to “offer advice” before providing my own suggestions. However, at other times, I interjected my own beliefs without providing pre-service teachers autonomy in reflecting on their dilemmas. For instance, when Roxy said her small teacher “needed a challenge,” I provided my own ideas without offering a chance for her to reflect independent of my suggestions.

**Future pedagogy.** Instead of immediately offering my own propositions that reflect my identities as a teacher, I need to seek to better understand their performances as teachers so that I can respond to them in ways that honor their experiences, while at the same time push them to reflect on autonomous decisions as teachers. I can use language such as, “Tell me more” or “Before I share my thoughts, tell me what you are thinking about this.”

## **Contradictory Instruction**

A third tension point involved pre-service teachers making instructional decisions incongruous with theories and practices we studied in class. As I worked to enhance their knowledge about instructional practices as teachers, I also aimed to help them use patterns from kidwatching observations to inform their instructional decisions. At the same time, I wanted to support their agency as teachers to make choices about what kinds of instruction to implement with their small teachers each week. However, at certain times during the semester, I imposed my authority as teacher when they made decisions disparate from literacy practices we studied. For example, some pre-service teachers early on wrote in their RTCs about the ways they wanted to help their small teachers “sound out” words. In these instances, I asked pre-service teachers to observe their children’s strategy use more “to better understand how he or she uses strategies as a reader and a writer” and wrote, “please do not teach him or her to sound out words until you have a better understanding of what cueing systems he or she uses as a reader, and what strategies will best support his or her growth.” In these moments, I used very explicit language and palpably told them “not” to use teaching strategies until they knew their readers better. While I often tried to use language and questions in productive ways that would support their reflection and thinking, at times the identities I performed were authoritative, and consequently did not lead to genuine reflection or agency among pre-service teachers.

Additional tensions relevant to instructional decisions arose during the semester in which I did not take an authoritative stance, but instead inadvertently supported pre-service teachers’ use of contradictory practices. In these instances, I was cognizant of

pre-service teachers' identity performances as teachers and did not want to thwart the sense of agency they displayed as they made decisions. For instance, when I asked all of the pre-service teachers to come together to name strengths and needs for their small teachers and to create groups based on patterns and plan mini lessons for an upcoming writer's workshop, some pre-service teachers planned practices on which I should have helped them reflect, and re-think, before moving forward with the instruction they chose to plan. However, I wanted to honor the agency they exhibited as teachers, and instead focused on the ways they planned "demonstrations," incorporated notions of "choice" into their mini lessons, and reflected on ways they planned to "engage" their children as learners. During those moments, I was more concerned with supporting their identity performances as *teachers*, as they all took on and enacted performances that revealed their thoughtfulness about planning and making genuine connections to children.

**Future pedagogy.** Reflecting on this tension point led me to realize that if I make decisions, as a teacher, to allow pre-service teachers to plan instruction contradictory to literacy practices we study, I need to help them name that dissonance. Talking about instructional practices and the differences in the ways teachers plan instruction relative to the differences that exist across theories and practices can underscore the importance of reflecting on the alignment between instructional practices and the theories, pedagogies, and beliefs we hold as teachers. I can also bring them back to their own non-teacher identity performances, especially when they named their own processes as writers (e.g., when Natalie wrote, "I just like to write and not worry about the grammar and simple mechanics till later" or when Kala wrote, "If I stop to edit my writing I might not get to the most important part"). I can help them make explicit

connections between their processes as writers, and how these align with or contradict theories, pedagogies, and instructional practices they propose to use as teachers.

### **Missed Opportunities**

A final major tension point that arose during the semester was related to pre-service teachers' diverging identity performances relative to their lived experiences with literacies. Pre-service teachers' engagement as learners was central to their identity performances as they interacted with peers during literature circles (e.g., some took on identities as "students," performing a task for me, whereas others took on identities as "readers" genuinely engaged in a text, and some as "teachers" as they read their text through the lens of a teacher). As discussed in Chapter 5, there was a vast difference in the authenticity of each group's discussion surrounding their literature circle text. Some groups disengaged with the assignment because they could make no genuine connections to the text and found it "boring," whereas others did not engage because they were too concerned about components of the assignment that would be graded versus the ones that would not be graded. A final set of students engaged in authentic discussion each week as they made connections, posed questions, asked wonderings, empathized with characters and laughed at entertaining events from the text.

**Future pedagogy.** I recognize that their engagement, or lack thereof, during this assignment was a missed opportunity for me as a teacher educator. In those moments during class where I noticed the differences in their engagement, I merely apologized to the ones who did not like their text, and redirected the group that tried to complete an old assignment once they knew it had to be turned in as part of their grade. I accepted their varied identity performances as "students," "readers," and "teachers." Instead, I could



have drawn from their identity performances in those instances to help them reflect on the implications of their own engagement. Using their own experiences to draw out the differences across the literature circles could help us problem solve how to create changes. For example, I could have given *The Turtle of Oman* group the opportunity to change books or given the group concerned with completing their “reading responses” a chance to self-select products to be graded. Using their own responsiveness as students can help pre-service teachers know how to respond to similar circumstances in elementary classrooms, where they will find a variety of engagement among their own students as readers. Moreover, doing so will also help me better understand how to change structures in my university courses with pre-service teachers.

### **Discursive Intersections: Tracing Identity Performances of Pre-Service Teachers**

As a result of reflecting on pre-service teachers’ identity performances, and seeking to understand how my discourses intersected with their identity performances, I developed a model that makes explicit our intersections across the semester. This model accounts for the fluid nature and shifting performances of identities, and also acknowledges the copious intersections that occurred alongside the construction and reconstruction of identities. The creation of this model has allowed me to theorize about the intersections between my discourses and the identity performances of pre-service teachers in our classroom space. I have accounted for the dynamic environment of our classroom and how pre-service teachers enacted multiple, sometimes conflicting, identities. Additionally, theorizing about our intersections elucidates the ways in which multiple interactions took place and contributed to various and fluid identity performances across the semester. My interactions with pre-service teachers had the

potential to intersect with the identity performances of everyone in this study; an essential facet of these identity performances is the diverse and numerous intersections that influenced performances across time. This model demonstrates how my intersections with pre-service teachers across the semester consistently interlaced to reveal varied performances of identities.

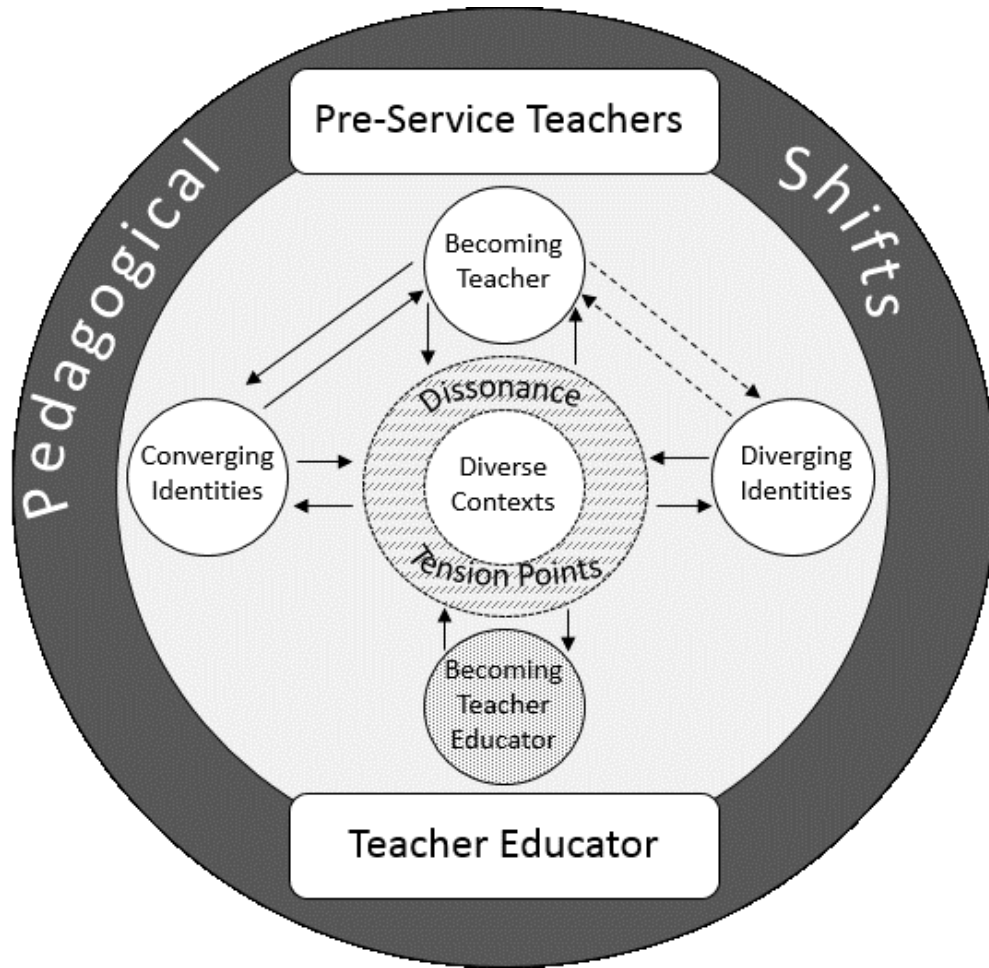


Figure 6.1: Intersectional Relationality

The light grey circle adjoined by pre-service teachers across the top and teacher educator at the bottom represents our multiple and varied intersections across the semester. The smaller white circles within the model symbolize pre-service teachers' performances of converging and diverging identities and the ways in which they

demonstrated their *becoming* as teachers. The center circle, diverse contexts, represents our many interactions in the classroom, and the diverse lived experiences each of us brought from outside the classroom context into our learning space. It denotes the unique identities we carried into the classroom every week and the identities we performed as a result of the theories and pedagogies we studied, the teaching interactions that occurred, small and whole group discussions, and routine reflections from both pre-service teachers and myself. The diverse contexts circle is surrounded by moments marked by dissonance and tension points that impacted all of us throughout the study. The dotted lines around these circles (diverse contexts and dissonance/tension points) symbolize the permeability of each of these. The bottom dotted circle, becoming teacher educator, represents the ways our intersections led to my own becoming as a teacher educator. The dark, bold arrows stand for substantial and reoccurring intersections, while the dotted arrows represent intersections, albeit not as significant. The final layer of the model, pedagogical shifts, signifies the ways our intersections, coupled with all the identity performances enacted across the study, led to changes in pedagogies for me and for the pre-service teachers.

### **Diverse Contexts**

The patterns of pre-service teachers' lived experiences, derived from diverse contexts, concomitant with my discourses and pedagogies as a teacher, intersected with pre-service teachers' converging and diverging identity performances, and the identities that revealed their *becoming* as teachers. Their identities became prevalent through course assignments such as drafting in writer's notebooks, creating literacy histories, reflecting on teaching experiences, and participating in small and whole group

discussions. The diverse contexts from which each of us came, coupled with my discourses/pedagogies as a teacher, intersected with the performances of their identities, and the ways they converged or diverged. For example, pre-service teachers viewed me as having an integral role to their academic performance as *students*, an identity performance that remained disparate from their performances as *teachers*. They valued the “grades” they received and often sought feedback on how to maintain or improve “performance” as students. Our conversations became critical to both their future performance and my decisions as a teacher. For example, they helped me understand the value of my offering “invitations” to engage in discussion surrounding graded course assignments, and of my emphasis on helping them reflect and grow as learners, rather than focusing on “grades.”

Beyond intersections with their converging and diverging identities, my discourses, identities, and pedagogies continually intersected with the ways pre-service teachers demonstrated their *becoming* as teachers. For instance, the ways pre-service teachers initially used deficit language when describing their children as learners influenced me to have conversations with them about the egregious effect of deficit thinking (e.g., “I want us to think about trying to change that deficit lens and start building on strengths”). Subsequently, subtle shifts in identity performances began to occur among pre-service teachers. As they took on identity performances as *teacher*, they began to alter their approaches to describing children, and consequently changed the performances of their identities as teachers (e.g., “He struggles reading challenging words” → “He is able to use pictures to figure out unknown words.”). However, this was not a steadfast and linear shift; it was fluid and recursive. Pre-service teachers sometimes

reverted to using deficit language and approaches when thinking about and describing children (e.g., “He doesn’t use capital letters,” “I can’t even tell you how awful today went”). I continually intersected with them as their performances and their notion of *becoming* shifted, and often prompted them to reflect on whether they used deficit speech when describing learners.

### **Dissonance and Tension Points**

Dissonance and tension points occurred as a result of *conflicting experiences*, *competing discourses*, or *disparities* between teaching and learning that all of us experienced throughout the study. For instance, this occurred when pre-service teachers navigated competing discourses between writer’s workshop practices that we studied that conflicted with those they saw in internship classrooms; when their theories preceded their practices; when pre-service teachers were hesitant to embrace the practice of kidwatching; and when pre-service teachers’ levels of engagement with literature circles varied because of their interest in the book or their concern for academic performance.

My responses were sometimes the source of the dissonance. For example, Meredith and I engaged in numerous conversations over the course of the semester about her relationship with her small teacher, who often resisted trying the reading and writing strategies Meredith taught when they worked together. When I suggested that Meredith try out a firmer teaching persona (rather than that of a “friend”), Meredith told me, “I’m not really a firm kind of person.” This caused dissonance with Meredith, as I recommended she take on a teaching identity with which she was uncomfortable. This intersected with the various teacher identities she did perform, as she moved between a teacher who was more like a friend, to a teacher who futilely attempted to be firm, to a

teacher who experienced success with being firm. These performances were not linear, but intersecting and fluid, as she tried to take on different teacher identities that would help her interactions when working with her small teacher.

Other times, pre-service teachers experienced dissonance both from me and from external influences, such as when Anne shared a story about her elementary internship students taking an assessment several days after the completion of a read aloud in their classroom. The classroom practice she observed created dissonance for Anne, which she wanted to discuss. When I opened a space for pre-service teachers to share their beliefs, additional tension points arose as Kayla connected to the fact that assessing listening comprehension is a state standard. I further complicated the dissonance they experienced by raising the point that there are many “more meaningful” ways to cover a standard, and that assessment should not undermine pedagogies and practices. When pre-service teachers became aware of the dissonance they experienced, it intersected with the ways they reflected as teachers. The discourses that I used to respond to them were pivotal to the dissonance they experienced, as I probed them to reflect on who they saw themselves becoming as teachers, as well as who they performed as teachers when working with their small teachers. It is significant to note that the dissonance/tension points we experienced was generative, both for students and their reflections on who they were becoming as teachers, as well as my own becoming as a teacher educator.

### **Becoming Teacher Educator**

When I began this study, I sought to understand more about the intersections between my discourses as a teacher educator and the identity performances that emerged among pre-service teachers in the classroom. While I developed a thorough and

comprehensive understanding of these intersections, our many interactions also led to *my own* becoming as a teacher educator. My reflections throughout the study, coupled with my in-depth analysis of data, underscore the ways in which I enacted identities that contributed to my becoming as a university instructor. For instance, my revelations about dialogic language invitations during whole group discussions helped me recognize how my discourses facilitated or inhibited genuine learning between everyone involved in our conversations. My continual reflections on how I intersected with my students' becoming as teachers in turn influenced my own becoming as their teacher.

### **Pedagogical Shifts**

The outer dark grey circle surrounding the model depicts the ways that our intersections and the enactment of various identity performances influenced pedagogical decisions, both from pre-service teachers and myself. A part of our becoming included pedagogical shifts that we made as we enacted identities as teachers and as teacher educator. Our diverse contexts in which we learned, the dissonance/tension points we experienced, and the multiple performances of identities continually intersected with our interactions in the classroom and subsequently led to shifts in our pedagogies. For instance, when I helped pre-service teachers confront the reality of their deficit discourses, they aimed to shift their discourses and embrace more strengths-based language practices. While they worked to alter their discourses, I aimed to support them in genuine ways that would not hinder their agency as pre-service teachers. I was cautious in my instructional approaches, and gave considerable attention to my own discourses. As I helped them navigate the demands of supporting children's identities, I

too, was supporting their identities. In turn, this contributed to my own identity performances as teacher educator.

### **Intersectional Relationality**

Through the process of building a model to depict our intersections across the semester, I acquired a deeper understanding of how I intersected with the various identity performances of my students. As I intersected with pre-service teachers in our classroom space, multiple identity performances were enacted. Their performances converged within the classroom, which included not only myself, but also pre-service teachers and each of their peers. The patterns of our intersections shaped the performances and the ways in which identities shifted and changed throughout the semester. This model in its entirety represents what I call intersectional relationality which I define as all the intersections that led to the fluid and dynamic identity performances among pre-service teachers, the productivity spawned by generative dissonance, named tension points, and resulting shifts in pedagogy. Understanding intersectional relationality helps teachers at all levels access the potential of interactions in classroom spaces.

### **Teacher Educator as Teacher: Implications for the Field**

This study began as a teaching inquiry that would facilitate personal reflection on my own instruction and lead to action, with the transcendental goal of supporting the identities that emerged among the pre-service teachers in my class. What I learned has implications for teacher educators who want to support students whose theories are ahead of their practices, maximize the role of reflection for both teacher educators and students, and enhance the power of talk/dialogic classrooms.



## When Theories Precede Practices: Supporting Students' Alignment

Through reflecting on pre-service teachers' named beliefs regarding theories and instructional practices, juxtaposed with the practices they chose to implement with small teachers each week, it became evident that, at times, their beliefs were ahead of their practices. For example, some pre-service teachers named the ways in which writing processes should include focusing on content before conventions, yet chose to plan mini lessons for children that focused on conventions first. This suggests that teacher educators should intentionally help students critically analyze the link between their beliefs and their practices. They can ask students to name, discuss, and reflect on their beliefs regarding theories and pedagogies *before* planning new instruction and use discourses that will help students engage in critical thinking about theories, beliefs, and practices. For example, before having university students plan writing instruction for K-12 students, teacher educators could ask students:

1. What theories can you name about different ways teachers support students as writers?
2. What beliefs do you hold regarding effective practices for writing instruction?
3. What kind of process do you envision being helpful for writers? What process works best for you as a writer?
4. What do you think is critical to help students *engage* as writers?
5. What *conditions* do you believe are essential for helping students achieve success during writer's workshop?

Teacher educators can lead students in collaborative conversations surrounding such questions to help them think about theories, pedagogies, and practices before planning

new instruction for students. Open and reflective questions will support students to aid in the alignment of their beliefs and practices, ultimately supporting their identity development as teachers. Moreover, as evidenced in this study, students often draw from both non-teacher and teacher identities when making decisions as teachers; such questions and collaborative discussion can provide opportunities for students to draw from multiple identities when reflecting on theories and planning new instruction.

### **The Role of Reflection from Teacher Educators and Students**

While the role of reflection in education is ubiquitous, the implications of this study suggest the need to impel reflections that reveal insights on the intersections between teacher educators and their students. As a result of this study, I was able to use reflections on my own intersections with students to better understand their identity performances in the classroom. For instance, when I noticed the pervasiveness of pre-service teachers' performances as *students*, and their concern for academic achievement, I was able to reflect on the ways I intersected with such performances. I sought to understand how I could further support their performances as students, while simultaneously helping them learn to reflect and grow as teachers. I wondered how my feedback to them on course assignments played a part in that role, and how we could engage in more dialogic conversations regarding their growth as both learners and teachers. I used my reflections on these ideas to have an open conversation with students and gain ideas about how to move forward as their teacher. They taught me that academic performance was critical to them as students, yet that they also valued my feedback and utilized it to change and improve as students and teachers. Additionally, they helped me understand that open invitations from me to engage in dialogue

surrounding their course assignments were important, as just the extension of the invitation aided in their comfort to approach me or participate in a discussion regarding their progress. It seems critical for teacher educators to understand how, as teachers, they intersect with the students in their classrooms. Using reflections to bring forth questions and concerns in the classroom can support relationships between teachers and students and further influence the improvement of teaching.

Moreover, facilitating reflections among students, both private and shared, and authentically responding to students' reflections led to a deeper understanding of how I intersected with the pre-service teachers in my classroom. I was better able to determine who they were becoming as teachers, and how my role intersected with their becoming. My analysis revealed many instances where students sought support from me, and the ways we problem solved teaching instances and future planning. The ways I responded to students, offered advice, and opened invitations for everyone to reflect together influenced the identities students performed across the semester. Teacher educators can ask themselves questions such as:

1. How did I provide opportunities for students to reflect on who they see themselves becoming as teachers?
2. How did I support students' identity performances as teachers?
3. Did I provide a chance for students to reflect on, and articulate, their beliefs without imposing my own?

### **The Power of Talk/Dialogic Classrooms**

The results of this study suggest that pre-service teachers and teacher educators benefit when teacher educators embrace dialogic teaching, or instructional designs and

practices that provide students with frequent and sustained opportunities to engage in *learning talk*, talk that actively stimulates learning (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013). Implementing dialogic practices in my classroom supported the varied identity performances pre-service teachers enacted across the semester. This also afforded me an additional means to understand and reflect on the ways my discourses and identities intersected with pre-service teachers. For instance, my aforementioned tension point, *shared wisdom*, allowed me to think about dialogic practices, and the ways I initially did not actively facilitate frequent opportunities for *all* pre-service teachers to engage in talk when reflecting on their teaching performances. When I looked inward, I realized I needed to change my language invitations to facilitate dialogic practices that invited everyone in the classroom to share, talk, and reflect about their experiences as teachers. Teacher educators can develop a repertoire of classroom talk and teaching practices that support the identities that students take on as they learn, reflect, grow, and enact identities central to who they are in the classroom. In my classroom, two of the routine dialogic practices I implemented were debriefing sessions to discuss connections between classroom practices and instruction, and professional literature conversations to make connections, articulate beliefs, pose questions, theorize from practice, and envision practices that reflect current theory.

I learned that it was important to think about how classroom spaces are conducive to dialogic talk. In my classroom, when we engaged in whole class dialogic talk, we often moved our desks aside to make a circle with our chairs or went to a large carpet space in the library to sit where everyone could see one another. This gave everyone an opportunity to listen, share, and participate in talk. I found that when I made space for

everyone to see one another as they shared, that dialogic talk was much more productive than when students remained seated at square tables of four. This also helped me step away from the role as teacher (especially teacher as authority figure), and helped me become more of a facilitator. This contrasted with times when I stood in front of the classroom and attempted to facilitate dialogic talk. In those scenarios, students tended to raise their hands and talk one by one, rather than conversationally. Providing opportunities for students to engage in dialogic talk supports who they are becoming both as students and teachers, while simultaneously facilitating tremendous growth on the beliefs they form and the decisions they make regarding teaching and learning.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A qualitative action research study is grounded in the significance of human experience and the generation of knowledge. Nevertheless, all qualitative researchers must make decisions about what to take account of and what to leave out when telling the story of their research. Every researcher brings subjectivities to his or study which contribute to the interpretations and conceptualizations generated through research. While I thoughtfully and carefully represented the story of my research, the lenses through which I see and understand the world limit my interpretations, and thus the representation of my data. I realize that I (or anyone else) can revisit my data and see findings anew, as interpretations are bound by moments in time.

### **Future Research**

This study represents my initial endeavors to understand the intersections between my own discourses and identities as a teacher with the identity performances of my students. As my study progressed, I encountered new questions that I believe will lead to

a deeper understanding of the intersections between teacher educators and the identity performances of their students:

1. How can teachers systematically reflect on their intersections with students in practical ways (e.g., outside the parameters of an extensive research study)?
2. How can such reflections be utilized to support teaching and learning, both “in the moment,” and for future instruction?

The findings of this study suggest a need for both teacher educators and K-12 educators to study the ways teachers intersect with students. Classrooms are social spaces and we need to better understand how students’ identities are shaped by the words and practices teachers use in classrooms.

### **Teacher Educators**

The findings of this study suggest the need for teacher educators to critically analyze the ways their discourses and identities intersect with those of their students. While data analysis revealed the ways my discourses and identities influenced the words and practices I used in the classroom, and as a result intersected with the performances of my students, future research should be conducted in university classrooms with both pre- and in-service teachers. Although the implications provide some approaches for beginning to do this, future research might build on these suggestions to provide teacher educators with additional means to reflect on the ways they intersect with students. One possibility for future research entails the construction of a reflection model for teacher educators to reflect on themselves as teachers (such as their discourses, identity performances, and classroom pedagogies) to understand the ways they intersect with students in the classroom. This could lead to changes in the classroom for both teachers

and students. There is also a need to identify additional strategies that will contribute to accomplishing this goal.

### **K-12 educators**

The findings of this study also suggest the need for K-12 educators to critically examine the ways their discourses and identities intersect with those of their students. Students in K-12 settings encounter a variety of teachers on a daily basis. In elementary classrooms, students spend a considerable amount of time with classroom teachers; they also interact with special area and related arts teachers (e.g., music, art, physical education, library, computer, and foreign language), ESL teachers, RTI coaches, and special education teachers, among others. In secondary classrooms, students spend time with a variety of content area teachers (e.g., English, science, math, history, art, music, and physical education) as well as special education teachers, specialized teachers, school counselors, and other school personnel. The sheer magnitude of interactions a student has with teachers over his or her K-12 education is significant. Each teacher (or staff member) with which a student interacts has the prospect to influence students' identity performances. Therefore, it is critical that K-12 educators reflect on the ways their discourses and identities may intersect with and potentially influence the students with whom they work.

One possibility for future research is for educators to create and utilize a reflection model to understand the ways they intersect with students in the classroom; they could create a professional development group or study sessions where they discuss, reflect on, and share ideas central to this topic. Teachers could also read and discuss literature that relates to discourses and/or identities, such as *Choice Words* (Johnston,

2004), *Opening Minds* (Johnston, 2004), *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn* (Denton & Bechtel, 2013), or *Inspiring Dialogue: Talking to Learn in the English Classroom* (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013).

They can use their own inquiries about the ways they intersect with students to conduct an action research project. This could potentially lead to change in the classroom for both teachers as educators, and students as learners. There is also a need to identify additional strategies that will contribute to accomplishing this goal with K-12 educators.

While I realize the findings of this study are not generalizable, they did contribute to a model that revealed the intersectional relationality in my classroom, as well as how intersections led to generative dissonance, tension points, changes in my pedagogy, and considerations for future pedagogy. My insights from this study will guide my future pedagogies and have helped me understand that imminent intersections will lead to the creation of new practices and identities as a teacher educator. I believe that teacher educators must reflect on and experiment with our discourses and re-think our pedagogies, just as we ask our students to do, because, as Britzman (2003) eloquently stated, “Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming.”

### **Elementary Teacher to Teacher Educator**

I am indebted to the many students I have taught over the past 12 years who have contributed to my growth and becoming as a teacher. My transition from elementary school teacher to teacher educator has been a rewarding journey. I often think about my former elementary students who have grown up and are making their own paths as young citizens in the world, and am grateful for their presence in my teaching life: Noah, who endured the heartbreak of a lost parent; Leonta, who eagerly awaited adoption her entire



third grade year; Quinterius, who brought his mom by my classroom at Open House every year to say hello and give a tender hug; Roderick, who shared his toothy white grin with me every day and held his head high, despite his movement among foster families; and each and every of the warm-hearted young children who contributed to my shifting identities as a teacher.

While my former elementary students ignited my inspiration for this study, it concludes with the pride I have for the pre-service teachers from this study as they prepare to embark on their journeys as elementary teachers. I smile at the thought of them entering their first classroom as new teachers: Susie, who embraces delight in learning and growing as a teacher every day; Gigi, who finds potential in every student she meets; Kayla, who values her students as equals, though knows equal is not the same; Rick, who transitioned from the military to school teacher to give back to the community he loves; Christine, who supports the innate curiosity in all her students; Alex, who seeks to make her classroom a home away from home, Dylan who provides endless love to all her children, Natalie, who embodies a close, tight-knit classroom community; Anne, who imparts her caring nature to help every child feel comfortable and welcome; Blake, who loves to fill her classroom with laughter, the secret to classroom success, Serena, who delights in seeing the light in children's eyes fill with information and wonder; Elle, who takes pride in seeing students grow; Lisa, who dedicates time for reading aloud to her students on a daily basis, despite the intense and growing demands of elementary teachers; Roxy, who loves the opportunity to learn from her students every day; Meredith, whose heart fills with delight as she sees her students smile; Lily, who strives to create a community built on trust and love; Maggy, who seeks to build positive

identities in all the children she teaches; Kacie, who always holds her students' best interests at heart; Rachel, who appreciates the lives her students have outside the school walls; Anthony, who yearns to support all children's growth by showing he cares; Savannah, who understands that choice will always be reciprocated with a smile; Belle, who honors the integrity of her children by looking into their eyes as she interacts with them; Cooper, who knows a safe learning environment is the key to triumph; and Jenn, who holds steadfast to the wonders of knowing students before teaching students.

As these 24 soon-to-be teachers go off into their classrooms and teach their future Noah's, Leonta's, Quinterius' and Roderick's, I know the infinite imprint they will have on each and every child that enters their classroom doors. As each of them embarked on a journey to becoming teacher throughout this study, I traversed a trail to becoming teacher educator. I am much obliged for their charisma, their support, and the knowledge they bestowed to me throughout this process; our discursive intersections will leave an everlasting impression on the footprint of my *becoming* as a teacher educator.

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## APPENDIX A Consent Letter

January 13, 2015

Dear Pre-service Teacher,

My name is Elizabeth Bemiss. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education at the University of South Carolina. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements of my doctoral program. The title of the study is *Examining the intersections among a university teacher's language and the emergence pre-service teacher identities*.

The purpose of my proposed study is to examine the intersections of my instructional language as a university teacher and the way it may or may not contribute to your identities as pre-service teachers. I will research the language I use as a teacher in our course in order to better understand the ways it positions you as students and developing professionals. Carrying out this study will facilitate personal reflection on my own instruction to transform my teaching and your learning. The findings of the study will add to the limited body of knowledge about the relationship among teachers' language and students' identities in pre-service education classrooms.

Class sessions will be audio and video recorded so that I can accurately reflect on my language during our time together. The recordings will only be reviewed by myself and members of my dissertation committee. I will analyze the feedback I provide to you in course assignments, as well as our interactions in class together. I will use pseudonyms when writing about my findings to protect your confidentiality.

Study information will be kept in a secure and password-protected location. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also withdrawal from being in the study at any time. Participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your grades in any way.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. If you have questions you may contact me at (phone number) or [elizabethbemiss@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethbemiss@gmail.com), or my faculty advisor, Dr. Diane Stephens, at [stephens.diane@gmail.com](mailto:stephens.diane@gmail.com).

Thank you for your consideration. Please sign the attached consent form and enclose it in the provided envelope. Please do not write your name or any other information on the outside of the envelope.

With kind regards,

Elizabeth Bemiss  
[elizabethbemiss@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethbemiss@gmail.com)

### Consent Form

I have read and understood the letter of invitation from Elizabeth Bemiss describing the study titled *Examining the intersections among a university teacher's language and the emergence of pre-service teacher identities*. I have read and understood the details of the study and the following ethical considerations:

- There are no risks associated with participation in the study.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- I can refuse to participate in any part of the study.
- All data will be coded to ensure confidentiality (using pseudonyms).
- Data will be accessible to the researcher and her committee only.
- Data will be stored securely by Elizabeth Bemiss via password protection.
- The findings from this study will be disseminated to the academic community through publication as a doctoral dissertation, publication in refereed academic journals and presentations at conferences.
- I can request a summary of the findings by emailing the Elizabeth Bemiss.
- Participation in the study will not have any effect on grades.

\_\_\_\_ I consent to participate in the above study.

\_\_\_\_ I do NOT wish to participate in the above study.

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Printed Name

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Signature

Date