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The Emergence of Teacher Self in the Elementary Classroom

Chelsea Cole

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### The Emergence of Teacher Self in the Elementary Classroom

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Significant research and ongoing inquiry highlight the importance of understanding and recognizing the development of identities and beliefs among teachers. These studies use techniques of reflection on the past or present to elucidate the developmental process of teacher identities and beliefs and their impact on the profession. The development of teacher identities and beliefs commence during childhood. A dearth of research exists that addresses the emerging developments of teacher identities and beliefs from the perspective of young children. This study uses qualitative methods through focus groups and individual interviews to examine the identities and beliefs held by fifth-grade students who plan to become teachers. Revealing the early developing identities of future teachers provides necessary insight into the emerging curricular needs of teacher education programs.

Keywords: teacher identity, teacher beliefs, vocation, emerging identity, young children, qualitative research, focus group, teacher education

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Helping teachers change their practice stands as one of the greatest challenges in education (Britzman, 2012; Hoban, 2007; ten Dam & Blom, 2006). Bullough (2005) states that classrooms of today and today's teaching practices do not look that much different from 100 years ago. This occurs in the face of hundreds of studies on student learning, literacy, and numeracy development that suggest current research-based classroom organization and teaching practices lead to consistent student progress toward learning goals (Hoban, 2007). For many years, research has indicated that one of the strongest reasons for teachers not changing their practices to research-based ones is their beliefs about teaching and learning (Cota Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013). Many people who become teachers begin practicing the role of teacher early in their lives (Young & Erickson, 2011). Yet, most work that has focused on teacher identity formation is conducted when these people are preparing to teach as young adults.

This led me to wonder: When are teacher identities and beliefs initiated? Young and Erickson (2011) considered the long-term influence of their own early perceptions about teachers, teaching, and being a teacher across their years as teachers and teacher educators. When these two practitioners looked back on their early imagining of themselves as "teacher" in their younger years, they found that these imaginings and their early beliefs continued to shape their teacher identity formation throughout their lives. Holt-Reynolds (1992) confirmed in her study of two students' preconceptions of teaching programs that the teaching apprenticeship, begun at the earliest ages, impacted these individuals for years to come, stating, "Students of teaching indeed come to their formal studies of teaching with powerful, personal, history-based lay theories about good practice" (p. 326).

Just as Young and Erickson (2011) suggested, as I engaged in teaching as a full-time profession, I found the echoes of my earlier imagined teacher identity and beliefs affecting my planning, teaching, and reflection. My experiences as a learner had acted as an ironclad apprenticeship for my becoming a teacher (Lortie, 1975). This apprenticeship may have been strengthened or clarified because at a young age I had already made the choice to become a teacher. Indeed, as I have reflected on my practice and its beginnings, it is difficult to separate current practice from its embryonic formulation.

In the field of teacher education, the influence of preservice teachers' beliefs and assumptions about teaching is well known; however, once that is acknowledged and perhaps taught or explored early in their preparation, it is mostly ignored. Typically, teacher education programs focus on helping preservice teachers gain knowledge about teaching rather than building on the beliefs and knowledge they bring with them (Clandinin, 2010). In contrast, Clandinin (2010) argues that there can be two approaches to teacher education. One approach focuses on what teacher educators identify as the knowledge of teaching. Under this focus teacher educators make lists of what preservice teachers need to be taught and then distribute these fragments across teacher education coursework. Clandinin argues for another approach based on "teachers' knowledge." Under this approach, teacher education draws forward, expands, and builds on teachers' knowledge—the knowledge preservice teachers bring with them from their experiences and imaginings. This knowledge then shapes what is taught and learned in teacher education.

Research indicates that many individuals enrolled in a teacher preparation major experience feelings of disconnectedness, confusion, and crisis (Hansen, 1995). These feelings emerge when prospective teachers begin a program with a fledgling teacher identity—a vision of

how their practice and classroom should be conducted—and a perception of who they want to be and how they want to act as a teacher. Negative emotions occur as their pre-formed identity is ignored, set aside, or directly resisted by the program facilitators (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Britzman, 2012; Bullough, 2005; Hammerness, 2007; Sachs, 2005).

Of course, sometimes changing teacher knowledge is necessary. Teacher knowledge may include misconceptions, weak understanding, or contradictory ideas about what it is that teachers need to do to promote student learning (Berliner, 2001). From a teacher knowledge perspective, change in beliefs is more likely to occur when teacher education builds, adjusts, challenges, and provides new ideas that inform that knowledge. As research on the long-time stability of teacher beliefs suggests, these beliefs are less likely to change in a vacuum where the approach to teacher education is based only in the “knowledge of teaching” and teachers’ personally constructed knowledge is silenced, ignored, or treated as irrelevant. Through participants reflecting on their life and its impact on their career, Britzman (2012) makes clear that her participants’ life experiences—long before they entered classrooms as teachers—impacted their actions, successes, and failures as teachers. Hammerness’ (2007) work also uncovers the enduring effects of these pre-formed images and visions on teaching practice. Her participants continued to enact their beliefs and visions of teaching for the five or six years she studied them. This documented trend in the literature suggests that preservice teachers’ inherent notions of teaching constructed early in life shape both their response to teacher education and the teacher identity maintained across much of their teaching career (Hammerness, 2007; Young & Erickson, 2011).

Moving into a graduate program helped me to identify and reflect more skillfully on these shifts. My peers in the graduate program (all practicing teachers) shared their early imaginings of

themselves as teachers and learners. As we learned together, and they revealed details about their practice and their experiences with students, it was clear that their early beliefs continued to influence their current practice and thinking about teaching.

As I was learning about teacher beliefs and teacher identity and interacting with my own students, to my surprise, I found my fourth-grade students already creating a teacher-self as they participated in the day-to-day affairs of the classroom—teaching each other, making class presentations, and helping evaluate each other’s work. Students who said they wanted to be teachers requested responsibilities, enacted leadership roles among their peers, engaged in impromptu tutoring sessions, and suggested planning, organizational, pedagogical, or community-building ideas for the classroom on a regular basis. All students made suggestions and shouldered responsibilities, but focused observation revealed that, more frequently, those who were considering the possibility of becoming a teacher were more serious and consistent in performing these roles.

These combined experiences made me wonder (a) what elementary aged students know about acting as and being a teacher, (b) what beliefs about teaching and identities of being a teacher are or may be formed in their elementary school experiences, and (c) what beliefs will potentially influence who they become if they take up teaching as a career? I watched their action in teaching roles and I wondered what beliefs (even at their young ages) had already influenced how they acted in those roles and how they may continue to act as they became teachers. I wondered if they had already taken up an identity as a teacher, and what that identity might look like.

While some work has been completed on the formation of a teacher identity and the beliefs that teachers hold once they enter teacher education, little work has been focused on how

children planning to be teachers think about teaching, identify themselves as teachers, or their beliefs about teaching (Bullough, 2005). Therefore, I proposed to study the identities and beliefs about the teaching of children who plan to be teachers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Consistent teacher change and improvement has been an issue for teacher education and professional development programs for decades (Hoban, 2007). Additionally, Karavas and Drossou (2010) found that teachers have trouble changing the beliefs and identities they have previously formed, which continue to influence their work for their whole career. Indeed, it has been proposed that these beliefs are highly unlikely to undergo change due to teacher education and teaching experience (Karavas & Drossou, 2010). The primacy of teacher identities and beliefs has been recognized as essential and a necessary topic of understanding for the development of teacher education programs, and multiple studies have asserted that these identities and beliefs develop when teachers are children (Bullough, 2005; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; John, 1996; Johnson, 1994). However, these studies all focused on adults reflecting on their life, rather than on children who are considering becoming a teacher later in life.

A greater understanding of the identities and beliefs preservice teachers have developed over their lifetime can help teacher education programs highlight the distinction between teacher knowledge and knowledge of teaching (Clandinin, 2010). This distinction can help teacher preparation programs determine the value of students' implicit teacher knowledge and build on the solid parts of that foundation as the program develops knowledge of teaching among teacher education students (Clandinin, 2010; Smit, 2012).

## **Statement of the Purpose**

While many studies have addressed the need for an understanding of the identities and beliefs of preservice teachers (Borg, 2003; Bullough, 2005; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Freeman, 2002; Hoban, 2007; John, 1996; Johnson, 1994; ten Dam & Blom, 2006; Young & Erikson, 2011) there exists a dearth of both qualitative and quantitative studies that have considered the impact of the early development of those identities and beliefs, and what these early beliefs and identities actually are. The purpose of this study was to uncover the beliefs and teacher identities of elementary school aged children who claimed they wanted to be teachers as adults.

This study explored the budding identities and beliefs of children who currently wished to become teachers. Seeking enlarged understanding of the formation of teacher identity and beliefs and its influence on teacher growth and behavior is indispensable. As students are “learning to teach” in these earliest settings, it is necessary to know what they are learning so their intents and practices can be considered in teacher education. Student voices revealed the identity and beliefs about being teachers that students in the elementary setting embrace. Studying the voices and thought processes of elementary school students revealed trends and ideologies helpful in uncovering the teacher knowledge students bring with them to a teacher education program and profession.

## **Research Question**

The focus of this study was elucidating the identities and beliefs of children who wish to become teachers and was guided by the following research question: What identities and beliefs about teaching are fifth-grade students who currently desire to become teachers developing?

This study delved into the specific identities and beliefs young students exhibit or describe as they act in a teacher role and the potential implications for those teacher-selves as they move into teacher preparation settings.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Literature

Teacher beliefs and identities are a crucial area of educational research (Bullough, 2005; ten Dam & Blom, 2006; Young & Erikson, 2011). These identities and beliefs form from an early age and are difficult to change (Karavas & Drossou, 2010). Despite the recognized importance of this aspect of teacher education, little to no research has been completed on the topic of young students' conceptions of themselves as teachers and the effects of those conceptions on a teacher's later identity. Conversely, extensive work has been completed on teacher identity and belief formation (Freese, 2006; Mead, 1934; Zembylas, 2003) defining teacher identity and beliefs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004), the expectations and practices for preservice teachers (Freeman, 2002; John, 1996), and students and teachers learning to teach (Borg, 2003; Britzman, 2012). This review will consider each of these elements in turn, narrowing and defining the issue in terms of the proposed study and explicating the case for further research on the topic of young children's conceptions of teachers.

#### Teacher Identity

This review will focus only on the research of teacher identity rather than on identity as a whole, as the other identities children are developing are not the focus of the study. The researcher also recognizes that these identities are developing and not determined, and an understanding of the meaning of teacher identity at an early age needs further exegesis.

Children's career identities begin configuration from a young age. Howard and Walsh (2010) created a model for the stages of career choice and attainment (CCCA) for children. Children move from an imaginary association of careers to planning for careers based on likes and interests, before eventually settling into a relational and logical method of career choice



(Howard & Walsh, 2010). Fifth-grade students comprise the sample for my study. This parameter was determined by the students' situation in the CCCA model and because they had shown an interest in practicing the role of teacher in my fourth-grade classroom. Howard and Walsh suggest that this age group can make choices for careers based on their likes and interests, but they also demonstrate the beginning stages of logical reasoning, making the careers they consider more likely to occur at some future point. For the first time, students in fifth grade move beyond imaginary constructs and into actual considerations of what they would like to pursue based on their interests and beliefs (Gianakos, 1999). This makes fifth-grade students an appropriate population for exploring the evolving beliefs and identities that potentially affect their eventual action as teachers.

In the last few decades, a great deal of research has been focused on what a teacher's identity means, how it should be framed, its definition, and how it is enacted. Bullough (2005) declared, "Who we are as teachers emerges from who we are as humans" (p. 238), meaning that teacher identity is grounded in an individual's identity, creating a complex relationship. These teacher identities begin to emerge when teachers are young and contribute to the way teachers perceive themselves throughout their career. Most practicing teachers found the beginnings of their identity when young, either by observing other teachers or during their experience as a student (Bullough, 2005). Yet, as evidenced in the studies described below, while reflection is seen as a key aspect of unlocking current professional identity, a dearth of information exists related to the exploration of those identities as they are forming.

Teacher identity is framed in a variety of ways. Teacher identity research can be used as an analytic lens, to uncover influences on a teacher's career, as a means to confront the varied contradictions and tensions teachers face in their career, and as an organizational tool of

sense-making for a teacher's educational and professional life (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). These different framings of teacher identity allow for a broad range of research, though the topics deemed most applicable for this study were teacher identity to uncover career and teacher identity as an organizational tool. Studies that use these lenses (Erickson et al., 2011; Freese, 2006; Sachs, 2005; Søreide, 2006; Zembylas, 2003) focus on elucidating what teacher identity is, what it means for the individual and society, and how that identity affects the teacher and work. The typical tool for such research uses some form of reflection, whether it be narrative reflection (Bullough, 2005; Freese, 2006; Søreide, 2006) or reflection in another form (Erickson et al., 2011; Zembylas, 2003). These studies suggest that teacher identity begins to develop in childhood, but the researchers explore those implications only through review.

Not only is teacher identity framed in a variety of ways, but the definition of teacher identity varies significantly. This divergency exists as, "We are inevitably multiple selves depending on the range and variety of contexts we inhabit, each of which calls forth a different self" (Bullough, 2005, p. 237). Teacher identity then is quite the potpourri, its fragrance intensified by time, location, and the multiple ingredients and expressions of its being.

The kind of person one is recognized as being, at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable (Gee, 2001). Being recognized as a certain kind of person, in a given context, is Gee's (2001) definition of identity. In this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their internal states but to their performances in society. This fluid construction does not conflict with the idea of an individual having a core identity. Rather, that identity is expressed differently depending on the context and moment-to-moment performances (Gee, 2001).

Erikson et al. (2011) view teacher identity as stemming from both being an educator and doing education resulting in the creation of a conceptual, holistic view of teacher identity that explores the tensions and subtleties inherent in the identities of both practicing teachers and teacher educators. Zembylas (2003) opines that teacher identity is dependent upon two factors. The first factor identified suggests that identity is rooted in power and formed by agency, and at its core is an affective construction. The second factor identified recognizes that emotion enriches identity and cannot be understood divorced from it. These two factors pursue a deeper construction of identity by placing it in the midst of societal tensions and visceral reaction, thus considering identity a form of greater dependency on context and time. Beijaard et al. (2004) see identity as the “kind of person one is being at the moment” (p. 1), a relational phenomenon dependent on many different factors.

These definitions are important and necessary, but they often fail to take into account the inner history of the individual. While they recognize that teacher identity is influenced by the past, that early influence is acknowledged only through reflection and general statements. This definition disregards that identity begins to form at those early ages and fails to recognize students’ experiences in their journey of becoming teachers.

For the purpose of this study, the definition of teacher identity stems from a combination of the definitions above, that is: Who a person conceives themselves as being within a context or role. As this study will explore children's conception of who they are or would be as teachers, this definition will allow the researcher great fluidity and clarity in determining what teacher identities may be present among young children who currently desire to be teachers.

When asking, “Who am I at this moment?” the next question becomes “How do I know?” Unsurprisingly, there are as many arguments for discovering teacher self as there are definitions.

Again, reflection is the primary tool for discovering one's identity, whether it be personally (Hansen, 1995) or through interviews. By reflecting on formative years, many teachers, including Hansen, found that it was in elementary, middle, and high school that their core identities and beliefs about teaching were constructed. Teachers characterize their years of schooling as the basis of their current perceptions of themselves as teachers, and those perceptions arise from personal narratives—the stories from their school years about admiring, or acting as, a teacher (Hansen, 1995).

Narratives are a common theme of discovering one's self as a teacher, though the narratives differ. Søreide (2006) proposes that identity is constructed through a narrative view when people tell themselves the stories of their lives in terms of their position and how they negotiate that position. Discourse is the primary method of discovery, and that discourse must be entered into with other people in order to find the teacher's identity in context. However, that exploration tends to focus on what they know now, rather than what they knew or perceived themselves to be as children.

Pinnegar (2005), agreeing with the arguments of Gee (2001), suggests that teacher identities develop through enacting and recognizing roles, or telling ourselves stories about roles teachers play and how those roles are performed. She notes that these “roles are not fixed but fluid, and... we negotiate the roles we assume” (p. 260). These roles, and the stories revolving around them, open an expansive playing field for the configurations of teacher identity and how that identity affects the teacher in multiple situations (Pinnegar, 2005).

Narratives may also arise in the form of metaphors, and these metaphors guide the formation of teacher identity (Bullough, 2005). Do teachers see themselves as heroes, as guides, as gardeners? If so, what do these metaphors mean for the teacher and students (Bullough,

2005)? Exploration in the narrative form is useful and has yielded an extensive field of interesting findings. Again, however, the studies mentioned here focus on teachers reflecting back imperfectly on their formative years and how that formation relates to their current practice, while the students who are actively forming those identities are not considered.

Bullough (2005) demonstrates and considers that teacher identity formation begins at a very young age, but all of the above studies have failed to consider what identities are being constructed at young ages, although all teacher identities are influenced by these formative years. Indeed, in my review of literature, I could not find any studies focused specifically on the way teacher identity forms in young children and its implications for future teacher identity formation and continuation.

### **Beliefs**

Teacher beliefs originate before a teacher ever enters a teacher education program (Joram & Gabriel, 1998). Just as a scientist is influenced by his or her experiences with the scientific process, a teacher is influenced by their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom setting. These pre-conceived beliefs about teaching and oneself as a teacher can form barriers to accessing and accepting new belief structures imposed or suggested by a teacher education program, particularly for those who have an awareness of and have seen what they perceive to be positive impacts of their teacher belief systems in interactions outside of the program (Calderhead, 1991; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Lonka et al., 1996; Wubbels, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1989).

Often the purpose of a teacher education program is to modify, change, or entirely rewrite these formative beliefs (Joram & Gabriel, 1998; Smit, 2012). Where, how, and why these beliefs originate or what they are and how they affect the individual before entering the teacher

education program has seemed to be considered by many as unimportant (Bullough, 2005). If considered, teacher educators and researchers seek to identify preconceived beliefs so that they might be changed to appropriate rather than problematic beliefs (Joram & Gabriele, 1998). In some cases, the change and remodeling of beliefs is necessary and appropriate (Lonka et al., 1996). Just as an incorrect understanding of the number system can lead to incorrect mathematical computation and reasoning, a firmly held belief about teaching or children that is inconsistent with appropriate care (i.e., extreme punishments for classroom misbehavior) needs redirection and clarifying so children and teachers can come to equitable solutions.

However, many of the beliefs preservice teachers retain are beneficially resistant to change as such beliefs not only form part of a core identity of the individual and are a workable solution for them and their students in the classroom and beyond (Karavas & Drossou, 2010), but also such beliefs may be discovered and become a foundation on which strong research-based practice can build. In fact, understanding and building on these tenacious beliefs can lead to mature, self-aware teachers who are prepared for the emotional, mental, and physical tolls of teaching (Karavas & Drossou, 2010; Nespor, 1987). Such beliefs can support teacher development and resilience.

Researchers have explored these beliefs through teacher reflection (Cota Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013), but have not yet considered asking young students who desire to become, and are imagining themselves as teachers, what beliefs they are forming and what those may be. The exploration of teacher belief is already “messy” (Pajares, 1992), and much research focuses on how to manipulate teacher beliefs to a desired state rather than understanding what those beliefs are (Joram & Gabriele, 1998).

However, more recent studies have demonstrated that while some practices in a teacher education program can change the beliefs of the teacher for a time, these changes rarely last long because they do not fit with the teachers' prior beliefs (Karavas & Drossou, 2010). The beliefs developed as a child, in the teacher education program, and as a practicing teacher are in a constant state of conflict and flux as teachers strive to reconcile developing beliefs with a complex belief history. "Teachers teach as they were taught" Karavas and Drossou (2010) note from their study on teachers' beliefs before and after practice, "despite the effects of training" (p. 263). In addition, as stated previously, Bullough (2005) asserts that who we are as teachers emerges from who we are as people. Research on student teachers has repeatedly found that preservice teachers hold deeply grounded beliefs that are rarely deeply affected by a teacher preparation program (Karavas & Drossou, 2010).

By the time they reach university, students have closely observed teachers and scrutinized their behavior for at least 12 to 13 years, having spent thousands of hours in what Lortie (1975) has termed the apprenticeship of observation, a term he coined after interviewing hundreds of school teachers and observing how they gained their knowledge. Throughout this observation period, they have developed a wealth of initial knowledge of teaching, a rich repertoire of images, and a plethora of models and practices about teaching. The process of belief formation includes watching other teachers and remembering their own school experience. Because experience plays a vital role in teacher identity, consideration of the actual early school experience of teachers should command the attention of education researchers. And yet, an examination of the current literature reveals a deficit of information related to the topic.

Students who become teachers have also developed a body of values, commitments, and beliefs about teaching. Calderhead (1991) argues, "The beliefs student teachers hold are implicit,

informal and embedded” (p. 262). They are part of teachers’ practical knowledge and are enacted through their teaching practice often without any awareness of what they are or where they come from. Research findings often fail to delineate the nature and definition of those beliefs, relying on their recognition, rather than their understanding, especially as those beliefs are being developed (Calderhead, 1991; Hill, 2000; Nettle, 1998). Several studies highlight the importance of recognizing and attending to teacher beliefs in a teacher education program (Doolittle et al., 1993; Karavas & Drossou, 2010; Sikula, 1996), although, again, the content of those beliefs is not addressed.

Research suggests that most elementary teachers, as young children, acted out in their play the role of teacher and that later they bring beliefs into their preservice teaching (Bullough, 2005; Hill, 2000; Pajares, 1992). However, as noted previously, Beijaard et al. (2004) highlight the fact that all of these studies took place when these teachers were already adults. Even Young and Erickson (2011) reflect on their practice from the perspective of adulthood, thus altering or blurring the development of younger students’ beliefs.

Pajares (1992)—whose work forms the basis of most, if not all, subsequent work on teacher beliefs—examined the exact components of belief and their role in teacher education. He noted that “beliefs ultimately will prove the most valuable psychological construct to teacher education,” (p. 3). He further credited beliefs as truly determining the underlying motivators for what people do and why, strongly linking the beginnings of those beliefs and teachers’ practice to childhood experiences in the classroom, saying:

Van Fleet (1979) wrote of visiting his brother’s home and finding his 8-year-old niece playing “teacher.” “She was in her room, surrounded by her dolls and poised by her very own blackboard, standing there with the chalk balanced perfectly in her fingers, and with



the right tone of voice and facial expression, she was teaching, urging her doll students to pay close attention during this important lesson. She had ‘teacher’ down pat.” (Pajares, 1992, p. 283)

This little girl was clearly developing a set of beliefs and practices related to being a teacher. Whatever sort of person she might grow up to be, for at least the next ten years she would hone those practices and strengthen her budding, if not already entrenched, beliefs. Research indicates beliefs about teaching become well established by the time students get to college (DeBerg & Wilson, 1990; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). As Lortie (1975) argued, educational beliefs develop during students’ observation apprenticeships that take place during the many years students spend at school. The beliefs include thoughts and ideas about what teaching is like, how to be a great teacher, and how students should and could behave. All of these thoughts are brought with the teacher into teacher preparation programs (Pajares, 1992).

The components that comprise beliefs, their role in teaching, and their source are debated, but research agrees that these beliefs begin early (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Young & Erickson, 2011; Pajares, 1992). Although the elements of childhood education are noted by researchers, elucidating those beliefs from the primary source—children—has not been a primary, or even secondary, concern of Pajares’ study.

For those studies that do focus on beliefs teachers hold, the researchers elaborate on current beliefs teachers bring to education and the implications for practice (Cota Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013; Doolittle et al., 1993; Gray et al., 2018; Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin, 2018; Nespor, 1987; Peker & Ulu, 2018; Sikula, 1996). Again, reflection serves as a valuable tool in reflecting on those educational beliefs formed at a young age, but no children’s experiences or voices appear in the material. While the memories of teachers and teaching moments students

experienced informed preservice teachers' identity and their beliefs about good practice and the kind of teachers they desired to become (Miller & Shifflet, 2016), these imagined selves often conflicted with the preservice coursework, again highlighting the crises students in a teacher education program experience as imagined selves collide with possible selves.

Definitions, positions, and research methods of beliefs—even when considering the import and depth of effect from childhood—ultimately reveal a dearth of research focused on the beliefs of children who want to become teachers. By addressing this gap, beliefs of children who want to become teachers can be a force for explicating teachers' beliefs across a lifetime, clarifying the research in this important field.

### **Teacher Education**

Teacher education research poorly accounts for the beliefs and identities teachers bring with them to a program, despite evidence of its importance. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) describe the purposes of teacher education as, “Ultimately the responsibility of teacher education programs is to create opportunities for the exploration of new and developing teacher identities” (p. 176). This identity development becomes especially important as many teachers feel “called to teach” (Hansen, 1995, p. 2) and that their purpose in life is to fulfill the status of teacher vocationally. Their identity as a teacher is solidly delineated as an important aspect of their internal make-up, and for that calling to be pressed aside causes uncertainties and doubts (Hansen, 1995). The social practice of teaching can actually bring these “inner feelings to life” (Hansen, 1995, p. 7), giving them substance and form that the developing teacher may hold and examine in relation to their inner landscape, providing a rich proving ground of the inner world meshing with the outer practices. Therefore, one of the great purposes of teacher education lies in assisting preservice teachers in recognizing their identities and strong beliefs. Because these

factors accompany students in the journey through teacher education, those identities and beliefs can only flourish if their inner desires receive validation.

Nevertheless, it is clear that despite literature confirming the importance of recognizing and promoting identity and belief, understanding and development, concrete action rarely occurs in an actual teacher preparation program (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). By reviewing multiple teacher education programs and the current literature, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) found that most programs and research strongly advocated for teacher identities and beliefs to be present and sanctioned, yet a paucity of actual programs and education delve into the complex processes of formulation and recognition.

Teacher education programs appear to be a prime genesis state for developing an understanding of identity and the shifts that identity will undergo throughout an education career. Anticipatory planning for this development is impossible without an understanding of the beliefs and identities with which prospective teachers approach the teacher education program, especially as those candidates are from an extreme range of contexts and communities that influence their development across their lifetime. These contexts and communities must become a central growth platform of the program, so that teachers are responsive to the needs and influences of those contexts in their teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Britzman (2012) echoed the importance of context and community on the construction of teacher identity and belief. Finding identity in a shifting, discursive sea of teaching selves takes up much of a teacher's time and energy, even when they are not aware of the work they are doing (Britzman, 2012). By illuminating this work and teaching teachers how to navigate, construct, and enact their identities in a range of contexts—both inside and outside the school—

teachers can develop a stronger sense of their own identity and how it relates to their practice and students (Britzman, 2012).

Conducting an analysis of 22 different studies, Beijaard et al. (2004) were guided by the following questions: “What features are essential for research on teachers’ professional identity? How can current research on teachers’ professional identity be characterized? What problems need to be addressed in research on teachers’ professional identity?” (p. 2). They found that, in relation to teacher education preparation, “Student teachers can be equally successful in their professional identity formation although they follow different developmental paths” (Antonek et al., 1997). This uniqueness of the process of identity formation is supported by the theoretical findings of Coldron and Smith (1999), who pointed to the need for teachers to be active in this process. Based on their theoretical analysis, they stated that teachers should participate in dialogue, be aware of the many approaches and ways of doing things, be engaged with a range of resources, and share ideas so that they can locate themselves in the shifting discourse of identity and belief. Striving for uniformity and conformity, then, would threaten the teacher’s active location in the process of professional identity formation. The self cannot be ignored when defining and acting out the conceptions of oneself as a teacher (Arnot & Dillabough, 1999).

In Hill’s (2000) study on an Australian teacher education program that used methods producing critical, highly-engaged teachers, she noticed the importance of attention to beliefs in teacher education. Teacher educators must have the opportunity to deeply and critically engage with content, with methods, with theory, and with self to really produce a well-rounded and competent teacher (Hill, 2000). These opportunities are rare, Hill reports, and yet the research argues for a need to develop programs that promote the cognitive reflection and rigor of teacher education programs, something that more traditional approaches tend to gloss over.

Changes in teacher education that dig deeply into beliefs and their formation has been promoted by researchers over the years (Hill, 2000; Wideen et al., 1998), but practices for doing so have not yet found a strong foothold in many current teacher education programs (Miller & Shifflet, 2016). Research does support the belief that teachers need programs that are responsive, appropriate, and attend to preservice teachers' beliefs and identities that have been gathered before their college experience.

Smit (2012), Biggs (1999), Garcia and Guerra (2004), Haggis (2006), Warren (2002), and Clandinin (2010) attend to the fact that teacher education programs in America often fail to recognize the importance of preconceived identities and beliefs, and that universities have a deficit view of these formed teacher-selves. Each author warns against such a view, instead supporting an inclusive environment of backgrounds. This perspective not only fosters teacher education programs that support teachers in developing and defining their teacher identities and beliefs in new ways and contexts, but also provide for a more diverse student body in the programs. The importance of teacher education programs acknowledging the beliefs and identities that students bring to the program stands as a priority.

### **Learning to Teach**

Lastly, a review of the literature focused on what Lortie (1975) termed as students' "apprenticeship of observation" (or learning to teach) must be included in the discussion. As demonstrated above, students' beliefs and identities form in the classroom setting during observation of teachers across their schooling experience. Carter (1990) recognizes that the term, "learning to teach," is poorly defined and many questions remain related to the concept. Learning to teach is a complex field of study, but definitions and conclusions can be drawn. Carter (1990) opines that all students go through some form of learning to teach by observing and critically

reflecting on the practices of others, and this process begins early on. Teachers' background knowledge for every aspect of teaching informs and organizes practice around central themes of experience, and learning to teach is more about translating the knowledge between what is known, what is wanted, and what is enacted (Carter, 1990).

In a classroom, students either consciously or unconsciously become apprentices to their teachers' methods, ideas, and theories (Lortie, 1975). Borg (2003) emphasizes that these hidden routes or "folkways of teaching" are like a recipe book of tried and true methods a teacher can draw upon in times of stress or struggle. These strategies have been gathered over the years and subconsciously stored for moments of overwhelm, when a new teacher is faced with a challenge for which they thought themselves unprepared, they draw upon this well. Therefore, that well must be understood and well-maintained so that when the bucket drops, it does not draw in muck, but rather something that can be useable and shareable.

Borg (2003), Carter (1990), and Lortie (1975) argue that learning takes place and continues to affect teaching over time—indeed, has a huge magnitude of influence—but none describe what is actually being learned in great detail or what that knowledge may reveal about the beliefs and identities of students who desire to be teachers. Borg (2003), Bullough (2005), Calderhead (1991), Calderhead and Robson (1991), Carter (1990), Freeman (2002), Hoban (2007), and Johnson (1994) all focus on this idea of teacher observation as a rationale for student teaching. Student teaching promotes a gaining of understanding regarding the content of student teachers' learning and the conflicts that learning has with previous conceptions through teacher education. While acknowledging that students are forming their perceptions long before their participation in student teaching or teacher education programs, the learning-to-teach concept is held as a standard for what teachers know as they know it in the profession, while little thought

is given to knowing how their identities and beliefs are forming before they approach the threshold of entrance into a teacher education program.

Other studies address pre-existing student knowledge and how their formative years informed their professional identity development. Young and Erickson (2011) performed a self-study centered on the development of their own professional teacher identities. They separated the research into three themes: (1) imagining themselves as teacher, (2) becoming a teacher, and (3) being a teacher. They write that “Both of us began to imagine ourselves as teachers from a very early age” (p. 3) and attribute that first development to guidance across their entire adult lives as teachers. Both Young and Erickson spent time playing at being a teacher as a child, delighted in using the tools of teaching such as chalk, and took responsibility for others—a necessary trait, they thought. They both also felt a desire for the deep connection between teacher and student, through positive experiences with teachers or through role enactments, such as tutoring. Both of these educators hesitated to enter the teaching field, and believed this decision affected their recognition of developing those qualities. They also acknowledge that throughout their extensive careers, that, “analysis of our narratives revealed that fundamental aspects of our teacher identity have remained constant as our careers have evolved” (p. 15), again reflecting that these identities and beliefs are developed in childhood.

In 2016, Miller and Shifflet asked sixty-two teachers to reflect on their memories of schooling and how it impacted their current practice. This study confirmed the findings of Young and Erickson (2011), that memories of teaching have a unique and lasting influence on teaching practice and originate from the earliest years of schooling. Memories of teaching from early educational experience influence the next generation, and if teacher education programs are not careful gatekeepers of recognizing and reflecting on those beliefs, beliefs will continue with the

individual throughout their lives and may limit or constrain a teacher's development (Miller & Shifflet, 2016).

Ultimately, the research does not address specific behaviors and attitudes that students are learning, only that they are learning, constantly, about teaching from teachers. This gap between what we know about the beliefs and identity formation of young students and those entering the teaching profession can provide researchers information about how students gain access to teacher knowledge, but fails to address the content of the knowledge or what it represents. Research is needed that aims to determine the exact nature of beliefs and identities students are forming from a young age in regards to teaching.



## CHAPTER 3

### Method

Because this study sought to gain an understanding of the nascent teacher identities and beliefs of children who reportedly plan to be teachers, qualitative methods were the most appropriate. Qualitative methods are well suited for studies that seek to gain a deep and rich understanding of the perspectives of a small group of individuals (Zeichner & Gore, 1989). Thus, it seemed an ideal starting point for uncovering the beliefs and identities of children who currently express a wish to become teachers. As this study is one of the first to seek understanding about teacher identity from children, instruments such as surveys had not yet been created. For this project, data was collected through focus groups and individual interviews. This kind of data coupled with qualitative analysis guided by Huberman and Miles (1994) enabled an initial, thoughtful and explicit exploration of the topic and allowed me, as the researcher, to gain an understanding of the teacher identity and beliefs of six fifth-grade participants.

The following sections outline the procedural aspects for the study. The context, data collection and procedures, and data analysis with attention to ethics and trustworthiness of analysis appear here. Because the study focused on the experiences and thinking of children, the researcher attended carefully to ethics and trustworthiness in the design, data collection and analysis used in this study and presented clear, ethical plans and procedures to ensure the safety of participants.

### Context

The setting for this study was a charter school in northern Utah with students in grades kindergarten through fifth. The school has a total of nearly 800 students, 156 of those being in fifth grade. Students in the school are typically from upper middle class homes (see Great

Schools, n.d.). However, the school population has enough students on free and reduced lunch to be partially labeled as a Title I school (Great Schools, n.d.). The study was conducted in the fourth quarter of the school year of 2020.

The participants in this study were six students aged 9 to 11 from the fifth grade who have identified a desire to become teachers. My purpose in this study was to uncover the beliefs and identity formation of children who have expressed a desire to be teachers. The study utilized a convenience sample from the fifth graders who attend a school where I am a teacher. This sampling method was selected because it best allowed me as the researcher to explore the question guiding the study. Additionally, the previously established relationships between the children and the researcher facilitated data collection. These children were more likely to freely express their ideas and thinking because they know me and are more likely to trust me (Jager et al., 2017). In fact, I first became interested in this question because students of this age who I knew talked to me about their desire to become teachers and expressed their opinions and ideas about teachers and teaching. Fifth grade participants were chosen because they are cognitively capable of thinking about their thinking and about possibilities, expressing abstract ideas, and examining multiple perspectives (Csapó, 1997). In addition, research has demonstrated that fifth graders are at the age where the career plans they express are more likely than in earlier grades to occur later in life (Howard & Walsh, 2010). As with all convenience samples, a potential for bias existed, especially as I have worked at the site for three years, and 26 of the possible participants have been in my class. However, the research sought to mitigate bias through the recruitment procedures explained below.

Parker (1984) argues that students in the 6–12 years of age group tend to withhold information from adults they do not know well; therefore, a personal relationship increases the

potential that the amount, depth, and authenticity of the data will be more likely. Thus, because of our relationship, participants may have been more willing to be forthright and comprehensive in their discussion of teaching, teachers, and their ideas about these topics. Our relationship and my knowledge of participants' thinking and expressive skills also supported me in formulating probes to deepen data during the data collection processes. However, some participants, because of the teacher-student relationship, may have withheld criticism in their comments. Mitigation of such dissimulation was addressed through clear instruction and communication that I was interested in their authentic responses and points of view. Additionally, my own bias as a person who has had past interaction with the students through teaching them or interacting in school experiences was acknowledged. In the selection of participants, all fifth graders who expressed a desire to be a teacher as one of their top career choices were considered for the study and another teacher at the school randomly selected six participants from this list. Once six participants had been randomly selected, I eliminated participants whose responses might have been clouded by my personal bias and my colleague drew additional names when more than two of my current students were selected. Because there were potentially 156 participants for the study at the school, there was a high potential that I could select six fifth-graders at my school and have a participant pool where I taught no more than two participants. While it was not needed, a plan was in place to address the possibility that I might not find six participants (at least four in classrooms other than my own). The plan was to identify another site and add additional participants until I had identified six fifth-graders who have expressed a desire to be a teacher. However, despite these contingencies, all of the participants were identified at the desired site. All demographic information and my descriptions of the participants are provided in Table 1

below. Participants chose their own monikers, evidenced in the eclectic name choices, indicative of what they view as important in the world at their young age.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Moniker	Age	Gender	Race	Description
Giraffe	10	Female	Caucasian	Excited, polite, aware
Lilly	10	Female	Latinx	Quiet, kind, friendly
Monkey	10	Female	Caucasian	Bubbly and friendly
Marvel	11	Female	Caucasian	Quiet, thoughtful, musically talented
Sue	10	Female	Caucasian	Kind, determined, creative
Unicorn	9	Female	Mixed Race	Bubbly, kind, determined

**My Orientation**

As a fourth-grade teacher at the school site where I have worked the last 2 years, I have taught 26 of the students who were currently in fifth-grade classes. I maintained regular, informal communication with these students, as they dropped by my classroom after the school day for a quick chat or to help me with classroom tasks, and I saw them in the hallways, at recesses, and at assemblies, but I was not currently teaching them. Further, my relationship with the majority of these students was positive and open. I also had more cursory relationships with fifth-grade students who came from the other fourth-grade classrooms, who had siblings, cousins, or friends in my class, or who visited my classroom for reteaching and recess. Further there were at least 26 students in the pool of potential participants that I had never taught.

Because of my relationship with these students either as their former teacher or in interaction with them in school, I viewed them in a highly positive light and wished for them to be in a happy, positive state when they were with me. In my mind, that relationship shifted during research interactions with these students to the mode of “researcher” rather than “teacher.” As the researcher, I hoped to gain a clear understanding of the students’ perceptions in their own terms, recognizing that despite my relationship with them, I might still have only a surface-level knowledge of their beliefs, desires, and dreams. I also recognized that I became esoteric as a novice researcher, and these first forays into the research field needed to be carefully constructed to make the experience positive and clear for any participants who were involved. As a researcher, I recognize research as a means of understanding a complex social, theoretical, religious, political world in need of thoughtful, interpretive listeners. Additionally, I am not fully aware of all bias in my perception, but attempted to note and record my own thoughts and impressions throughout the research process to promote the recognition and limitation of bias whenever possible.

### **Procedures**

Outlined below are the procedures for this study. Procedures regarding participant recruitment and selection, data qualifications and gathering, and treatment of data are expounded. Due to the study being conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, some procedures were changed or modified to meet the needs of public safety and protocol. These changes are explained, as well as their potential impact on the study.

### ***Participant Recruitment***

The six fifth-grade students for this study were selected with the help of the other fifth-grade teachers in the school. A copy of the procedures and protocol of the focus group and

interviews was given to the teachers in advance (see Appendices B, C, D). Each teacher distributed sticky notes to students and instructed them to write their name on the back, so that the front of the paper would be entirely free for them to write as large as they like. Sticky notes, in my experience, are both exciting and familiar to students and fostered the likelihood that students would participate and submit the paper. The assisting teachers then said: “Please write the top three things you want to be when you grow up.” The teachers then gathered the notes and gave them to me. Finally, I sorted the responses to discover a pool of possible participants according to the following criteria:

1. If “teacher,” “teaching,” or an equivalent was written on the sticky note, it was designated as coming from a possible participant. Any notes indicating different interests, none of them being “teacher,” were shredded and not considered for participation, as the study only focused on those who have a desire to become a teacher.
2. The responses were grouped into male and female. Teaching is a gendered field, particularly in elementary (Murray & Maguire, 2007). This study considered as participants any student who expressed a desire to be a teacher either at the elementary or secondary level—where the gender gap decreases, though not significantly (Murray & Maguire, 2007). Because of the gendered field, and because the scope of this study was small (only six participants) I gave preference to girls as participants. This choice acknowledged that gender plays a significant role in students’ willingness to be forthcoming as they age. Students may be more willing to share in a group containing only one gender (Morgan et al., 2002).

3. If there were fewer than six participants in the initial pool, I would seek access to other fifth-grade participants. To do this I would confer with colleagues who teach at other school sites close to my school. I would introduce the study and get informal and IRB approval from this site including and use the same identification and selection procedures at this new school site.
4. To decrease potential bias, the pool of responses that included all students who listed teacher or teaching on their sticky note received additional preparation. So that the colors or names could not be seen, all sticky notes were folded and put into one of the many ceramic mugs gifted to the researcher during teacher appreciation activities. One of the fifth-grade teachers randomly selected the sticky notes of six students. If in the initial random selection more than two of my former students were selected, the teacher drew additional student names until the participant pool was selected with no more than two selections being my former students.
5. The teachers were asked about the participants and if they believed the participant would have the time and willingness to participate and if there were any extenuating circumstances—such as medical conditions, reading or speaking difficulty, or time constraints—to know about the student before they were approached. If this reduced the number in the participant pool, a teacher other than me would randomly draw additional names and the procedure of vetting these additional students would be enacted. The plan called for continuation of this process until a pool of six participants was selected.

After selection, the Covid-19 pandemic social distancing protocols came into effect. Rather than meet in person, I sent a text to the parents to ask for permission to participate in the study and

meet the students through Zoom. Once I had parental permission, I then had a shared phone call with the students and their parents to describe the changes to the study, the new demands for participation, and to ask for the parent's consent and student's assent to participate in the study. The parental permission (Appendix E) and assent (Appendix F) forms were presented and signed by the parents and participants through an online service. Parents and participants were reminded that they could engage the researcher in a phone call if concerns arose and they could opt out if they became too uncomfortable. Some parents and students also had the opportunity to sign the forms at a later date if they chose, and some to do so. All meetings for the focus groups and individual interviews were set up by text messaging and took place over Zoom to maintain social distancing.

Each participant signed an assent form (Appendix F) and their parent signed a parental permission form (Appendix E) stating their willingness to participate in the study. These forms outlined the procedures and general nature of the study, the possible harm and benefits from participation in the study, and the incentive for participation. Before completion of this thesis, to assure accuracy of data and findings, the study was reviewed by the participants and their parents.

### ***Data Sources and Collection***

In this study I collected two types of data. The first set of data came from a focus group interview, which informed the second set of data, composed of an individual interview with each of the participants. The focus group interview used a scenario to guide discussion (Appendix A). The guide also provided the opportunity for the participants to become more familiar with the researcher, more willing to share, and more able to focus the topic of their discussion on a main idea that helps them make connections. The structure of this process is based on work by Morgan



et al. (2002). The individual interviews included deeper exploration of the focus group data, with specific questions to bring the individual beliefs and identities of children to the surface (Appendix C).

### ***Focus Group***

Morgan and colleagues (2002) suggest that a focus group of four to five participants is ideal, and a group of six quickly becomes unruly and difficult to understand, even for a skilled interviewer. For this reason, the participants were split into two groups containing three children each. Previous research also suggests that three participants can be more like an individual interview, unless the children are given a scenario which they can discuss (Morgan et al., 2002). Therefore, the children were given a scenario to discuss. The concrete focus of the scenario helped the children to focus their understanding and explain their inner feelings using something with which they were familiar, in this case, a story (Gibson, 2007; Morgan et al., 2002).

The focus group met online through Zoom, a service the children had used before during the time of social distance learning. The original choice was to meet at the participant's school, and a face-to-face meeting would be preferred in the future if it were possible. While being at a school can cause students to fall into the role of student or induce feelings of taking a test (Morgan et al., 2002), the school can also be a place of play, common ground, and comfort (Gibson, 2007). Additionally, artifacts around the school can help children focus their thoughts on being a teacher, and what teaching is like. They also have an abundance of tools and examples at their disposal that they can use to describe their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, particularly as most of those experiences have been built at the school (Lortie, 1975). Ultimately, the online format seemed to decrease the level of comfort and familiarity among the participants during the study, but they still were forthright in sharing their views. Each focus group session

lasted 30–40 minutes. At the beginning of the focus group, participants had an opportunity to talk for a few minutes to renew acquaintances or establish comfort with people they did not know well (Morgan et al., 2002). After the initial discussion, acting as an interviewer, I read a short statement welcoming everyone to the group and establishing expectations, as outlined in Appendix A, to help individual children feel welcome and comfortable with their role and expectations in the group. I then displayed the paper with the scenario (Appendix A) to the participants and read it aloud to them to help struggling readers participate fully in the group. Participants were then provided a 3–5 minute time period to make notes about their thoughts and ideas on the paper (Morgan et al., 2008). In response to the scenario, the participants responded to the questions posed regarding the scenario, each other's responses, and shared ideas from their notes, all of which were audio recorded. The focus group continued until the participants completed the task. I then thanked them for their participation and ended the session.

### ***Focus Group Scenario***

I created the focus group scenario to be one that would be most likely to elicit the beliefs of children by:

1. Focusing on a concrete idea, so that participants had a basis on which to react, agree, or disagree, and to contextualize the conversation (Morgan et al., 2002).
2. Providing a scenario of a teacher displaying mediocre skill (based on my own experiences in the teaching field) where students may reveal their beliefs and identities by explaining what the teacher in the scenario is doing well or poorly. Students could also go into greater depth by describing what they would have changed if they were in the role of teacher, providing insight into their identities and beliefs.

3. Helping children become comfortable thinking of and discussing themselves as a possible future teacher by giving them a story to begin their exploration, relying particularly on the idea that identity is constructed through narration, and providing a base narrative to give rise to further inner stories (Bullough, 2005; Hansen, 1995; Søreide, 2006). One concern is that participants will attach deeply to the story, and be unable to discuss their inner narrative because of preoccupation with the focus group scenario. Gibson (2007) suggests that with appropriate prompting and a repeated desire to hear about the participant's perspective, along with setting clear expectations, these effects for children can be minimized or entirely removed, and this seemed to be the case with these participants even though the interaction took place through Zoom.

### ***Individual Interviews***

After both focus group interviews were completed and the data had received its first stage of analysis (see data analysis below) students participated in a semi-structured interview as outlined by McIntosh (2009). The semi-structured interview was helpful in identifying children's beliefs and identity as teachers because it provides a fluid discussion time between the researcher and participant, and uses probes to elicit information, promoting clarification and understanding of statements from the children (Gibson, 2007; Morgan et al., 2002).

The semi-structured interview used an interview guide, and the guide was constructed from the objective results of the focus group. Sample questions are outlined in Appendix B, but were adjusted in some cases based on the results of the focus group in order to gain more information around themes that emerged in the focus group that were not necessarily explicitly covered in the original protocol (these adjustments are inserted in brackets in the appendices).

The semi-structured interview was chosen because of its unique flexibility for participants to respond to questions and because, as the researcher, I was able to seek deeper understanding through a variety of probes to those questions (McIntosh, 2009). The structure helps children feel safe, while still being free to discuss. All participants were asked the same open-ended questions, though the probes varied in elucidating the meaning of the statement so that the questions could be compared across each interview and provide a rich range of response. The individual interviews again occurred over the online video platform Zoom. After a few moments of discussion on unrelated topics such as how the participant's day has been so far, to increase an environment of comfort, I again read the statement on expectations and the plan for the day. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes (again, in respect for the participant's time), and—even if the other questions were not covered—ended with the question, “What else would you like to add?” so that children could express their individual thoughts and feelings that may not have been captured by the questions but which may be helpful in understanding each individual's identities and beliefs. After the interviews were completed, each participant was provided with a favorite candy bar and a \$10 gift card to Target to acknowledge appreciation for their participation.

### **Data Storage and Treatment**

Both sessions with the participants were video recorded using Zoom. The files were uploaded to my hard drive and immediately transferred to an encrypted flash drive and erased from all participating hardware and software. The data was transcribed by an online program and I checked the transcripts for accuracy. The names of all participants were removed and replaced with a participant selected moniker. A second flash drive was also used for a backup. Both

encrypted flash drives were placed in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed after five years.

### **Data Analysis**

The elements that constitute the data for this study and the data analysis procedure are discussed below. This presentation is followed by a discussion of the trustworthiness of the study.

### ***Data Bounding***

The data analyzed included the focus group transcripts and their memos as well as the individual interviews and their memos. The memos were converted into written narrative allowing the organization of the general notes into a descriptive, clear, long-hand method appropriate for analysis. This task was accomplished by reading through the memos and typing a brief discussion of the main ideas, thoughts, and concerns in the memos in complete sentences using a word processing document (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Data for analysis included all data relevant to the question including memos or notes taken during data collection and comments relevant to the project even if they occurred during the game or break time. Data such as opening comments or comments unrelated to the participant's identities and beliefs as teachers (e.g., "I like cheese," "Raise your hand if you like yelling," "What time is it?") were not included as they did not help answer the research question.

### ***Analysis***

In order to acquire rich data, there were multiple steps in the analysis of the data, as shown in Table 2 and further explained in the text below.

**Table 2***Steps of Analysis*

Step	Description
Step 1	Identified repeated phrases in each of the focus group transcripts and compared the common phrases across the focus groups
Step 2	Grouped the common phrases into similar ideas and developed initial themes and subthemes that emerged from the focus group data
Step 3	Used the concepts revealed in the focus groups to adjusted protocol for the individual interviews
Step 4	Used the codes created from the focus group interviews to a priori code the first three individual interviews
Step 5	Coded the same initial three interviews seeking emerging codes to discover any new repeated phrases that needed to be added to the coding list and added them as further initial codes and definitions
Step 6	Coded the last three individual interviews with a priori codes from the focus groups and codes that emerged from the second coding of the individual interviews
Step 7	Repeated coding of the last three individual interviews to identify any remaining emergent codes
Step 8	Returned to an additional analysis of all transcripts using the completed coding list
Step 9	Collected memos written during the process and sought commonalities among codes and definitions writing new memos in light of the collapsed themes and the meanings gathered from the participants and data
Step 10	Reconsidered the codes in light of the data to check the new themes and to group and collapse further where possible
Step 11	Revisited the data with the final coding list to account for all of the data
Step 12	Shared findings with participants and experienced researchers to determine the accuracy and credibility of the analysis and attended to issues of trustworthiness and credibility across data analysis by continually seeking disconfirming evidence

As expressed in Table 2, the first step in analysis was coding the focus group transcript data. Using a variety of colored highlighters, I looked for phrases that were used repeatedly by the participants (in vivo codes; Huberman & Miles, 1994). Each of these phrases was highlighted

in a different color. After highlighting frequent phrases from both focus groups, the transcripts were compared to discover common phrases shared between the two groups. These discoveries were coded using a dot of that same color added in the margins of the transcript. These in vivo codes were grouped thematically using words or phrases that seemed to go together or were similar. These themes were then used to inform the individual interview questions.

Before conducting the second stage of data analysis, I created a coding list based on the initial analysis. I listed the codes and a beginning definition of them. Using these codes that emerged from the focus group, the individual interviews were coded. I identified and highlighted using the same colors for the phrases that represent the codes (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The first three interviews conducted were coded using these codes and I identified any additional codes that emerged. I added these new ideas to my coding list with definitions. To identify emerging codes from the earlier analysis, I read the transcripts several times, highlighting different thoughts, ideas, or concepts that related to the research question in a variety of different colored highlighters. Once I stopped finding new thoughts or ideas in each, I examined them together and grouped the colors and themes together by extracting the text with scissors and physically grouping them (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

The other three interviews were a priori coded with both the themes from the focus group interviews and the individual interviews, using the same method as above. The last three transcripts were read again, looking for any new data or themes that may not have emerged in the other three interviews (Huberman & Miles, 1994). When discovered, I highlighted them in a new color and reread the other three transcripts to identify these codes from the first two analyses (the focus group transcripts and the first three interviews analyzed). I identified any of these themes if they occurred in the earlier data (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

After all coding was completed, the last three transcripts were extracted with scissors and placed in categories with the other transcripts. These data findings received an additional reading and grouped together into general themes. Each general theme was written on a colored 3x5 card and set above that group of data. I read each group, creating memos about the themes and what they reveal about the identities and beliefs of young children who currently desire to become teachers (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

### **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggests four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each criterion was considered.

1. **Credibility.** This criteria is met in this study as the methods and analysis are grounded in researched practices: I knew the site by having worked there for multiple years; used random sampling; strived to help the participants be honest and vulnerable by sharing a repeated desire to hear their thoughts and having outlined procedures to ensure their comfort; planned to regularly reflect on my own thoughts, biases, and needs of participants; shared personal background information; maintained transparency about practices; and ensured the findings and data reflect the participants' thoughts by having them read or explained to them in reasonable terms. Finally, participants were encouraged to share their beliefs and opinions regarding the appropriateness and accuracy of the data and findings.
2. **Transferability.** While the results of a small, qualitative study may not be transferable to other sites and peoples, this study is clear in its terms, findings, and methods so that those who read it may be able to draw on relevant information for their circumstance.



3. Dependability. This study seeks to be clear in every stage and sequence of its proposal and implementation, so that others could easily re-create the study.
4. Confirmability. The data trail for this study is detailed above, and will be explicated in the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis. Data will be kept, stored appropriately, and destroyed as outlined above.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

Teacher identities and beliefs about teaching emerge at an early age in many prospective teachers (Bullough, 2005) and may inform that teacher's practice for their his/her career (Young & Erickson, 2011). Most of the research that explores the relationship between childhood beliefs about teaching and later teaching practices, like the Young and Erickson (2011) study, are based on reflections of experiences that occurred when participants were children. In contrast, this study sought to uncover the teacher identities and beliefs about teaching that fifth-grade students who have declared they want to be teachers are currently developing. Analysis of interviews with six fifth-grade students revealed three major themes: Ways of Living a Teacher Life, Ways of Finding a Vocation, and Ways of Doing School. This chapter reports each theme and its connected subthemes that give meaning and depth to the themes uncovered. In this chapter, I will systematically explore the meaning of each theme and connected subtheme and the evidence of them in the voice of the children. A summary will follow the explanation of each theme.

#### Ways of Living a Teacher Life

Ways of Living a Teacher Life, or simply Living, is defined as *the identity work of teachers*. It refers to the characteristics that these young students who have committed to be teachers discuss when they talk about the characteristics and orientation that teachers have to enact in their life. The ideas expressed in the subthemes identify what they see as the most powerful of these characteristics. The subthemes that define the parameters of living include Being and Becoming Kind, Enacting Control, and Taking Responsibility. These subthemes represent the characteristics of being a teacher that these participants articulated as central in a teacher's life. In this section I will begin by articulating the substance and nuance of the theme,

and then I will turn to an explanation of the subthemes and how they explicate the theme of Ways of Living a Teacher Life.

As participant Monkey said, "...this time in a young life is an opportunity to be experimenting with the different kinds of teachers that we are." This quote from Monkey captures the meaning of this theme. Monkey describes that even at this young age, teaching is an essential part of the life of a teacher. Monkey is also asserting that she is already a teacher, and that she is already experimenting how she will live that teacher life. The phrase, "young life" suggests that Monkey views teaching as a life-long endeavor. Other participants made comments similar to Monkey's, indicating they already thought of themselves in some way as living a teacher life. Participants often used statements such as, "When I'm a teacher," "I would do," and "I like" or "am like," layering their current identity as students within a possible future identity of themselves as a teacher.

During participant interviews, the participant's possible identities as teachers materialized as they articulated the characteristics they believe a teacher needs and what teaching means to them. Unicorn explained,

I think it's really important for students to learn. When I was younger, I wasn't too fond of school, but I think now that I look at it as the teachers are working so hard to make sure that you learn, that you get things.

This statement by Unicorn characterizes the participant's view of how this work is the essence of living a teacher life. In a similar way, Marvel explains this view further capturing an image of herself within that life. She suggests that in addition to teaching, teachers seek to create safe learning environments and improve students' recognition of their individual capacity for good when she says,

That, like, things that I noticed in the past, and just things that I would do is make sure everyone is being nice to other people. And—and just making sure everyone is happy with everything, and just if somebody's, like, saying negative things about themselves, just help them to realize what a great student they are.

As Marvel indicates, a teacher's life involves working with students to help them recognize information about themselves and the world.

Teachers' work centralizes on students, since teachers enact many roles and have many identities. "I think that's fun, and I know this—there's like different types of teaching," Marvel explained, implying that teachers may embody different aspects of their teacher identity throughout the day, depending on the subject and time. Students act almost as notes in a concerto, and the teacher conducts themselves and their students in time with the appropriate selection and changes of the day. By grounding their teacher identity in the ever-evolving facets of students' inner lives, teachers can act and respond appropriately to changes, embodying different aspects of their teacher identity through the characteristics of kindness, control, and responsibility.

These characteristics of the participant's possible teacher selves revealed a rich, complex, and occasionally discursive identity of participants as teachers. The participants paint a colorful exploration of not only what they believe they might be like, but also the characteristics from their current apprenticeship of teaching they may later choose to apply from the classroom teachers they observe. Having decided to start a teacher life, participants felt the identity elements of being a teacher include kindness, control, and responsibility.

### ***Being and Becoming Kind***

The subtheme of Being and Becoming Kind is considered a foundation of the definition of Ways of Living a Teacher Life as it encompasses the identity work of a teacher and relates to the participant's expectations of teacher and student behavior. Kindness, also called niceness by some participants, is *the empathetic ability to take on and react appropriately to the perspective of others to foster understanding and inclusion*. Every participant felt that kindness was an important aspect of good teachers, of good students, of a positive classroom, that kindness contributed to the quality of instruction, and that teachers need to exhibit that behavior in their lives.

Participants first discussed the importance of being kind. Through the lens of the participants, great teachers are kind teachers. Participants repeatedly described themselves as being kind, suggesting that this aspect of the teacher identity was already being incorporated into their daily work of being. Lilly said, "I feel like some teachers are mean because their students treat them mean . . . I'll treat them nicely; [even when] they treat me bad." Lilly's quote suggests that she expects that despite any circumstance or behavior, teachers are to exhibit a high level of self-control, tolerance, and understanding—the foundations of perceived kindness. She also reports that she responds to teachers the way she would like students to respond to her when she becomes a teacher. Far from a robotic affect of forced levity, participants report this positioning allows teachers to "build a good relationship," "be good for others," and "look at (the students') point of view."

As with all aspects of living as a teacher, the students in the classroom are the central focus of kind acts by the teacher. Part of the purpose of those acts is to teach students to be kind.

Participant Sue felt that teaching students to be kind was the most important thing she as a teacher could accomplish, saying,

I would teach my students to just be kind to everyone, and that everyone's a person. And you can't ever assume anything about anyone 'cause you never know what they're going through. Don't push yourself too hard to be someone you like. You just kind of have to relax and be yourself. And be, like, positive and don't say negative things about yourself, because then that affects how you learn... and sometimes it can affect how you treat people.

Kindness informs Sue's potential practice. Serving as a bedrock for her relationship with students, it also drives her policies regarding behavior. Sue's core beliefs about each individual as important and worthy of love for who they are, and trying to understand the person's personal history and motivation, allow her to connect on a deep level with other people. Sue has seen this already in her relationships with children, who she says, "I just love," and she wants to help those children see the good in themselves. Sue's kindness translates to future classroom management strategies, as she described systems in place that reflect the daily needs of the people in the classroom, thereby creating a culture of respect and understanding, not only for the children, but also for herself. In Sue's perspective, respect and kindness go hand in hand, "I think it builds a good relationship by not only them being respectful to me, but I be respectful to them, and being kind." This reciprocal respect and kindness between teachers and students goes beyond a form of general expectation, and actually becomes a necessary aspect of a teacher's life. From Sue's perspective this is needful in the functioning of individuals and groups and is worth the effort it takes to create a sustainable classroom environment for learning.

Not only does becoming kind influence classroom behavior, but it also informs the ability of the student to learn. Sue believes that when students are mean to themselves, it diminishes their ability to learn. Another participant, Unicorn, described how some students struggle to learn, and how a teacher's kindness can change that for them.

You think... "I can't believe they can't get it." They think if they look at their point of view, then I can say, "Oh, I understand why it's hard for them." Some students do have a struggle learning and, like, maybe they just don't see or they just don't realize that they need to do this [thing to help them].

By adopting the perspective of students who are struggling to learn, teachers can release their own frustration about their perceived understanding of the student's ability, and be able to recognize the underlying issues that face the learner. Unicorn recognized that struggle may stem from a learning disability, or it may come from a difficulty with the material. Unicorn's comment advocates adopting the perspective of a student to lessen friction between the raw understandings of two individuals who may have different strategies, outcomes, expectations, struggles, or purposes for the educational goals of the day.

Being and Becoming Kind is found in tolerance, mutual respect, and perspective. In applying these principles, participants felt they were starting to act in the role of a teacher, and beginning a journey of a teacher life. Kindness levels the foundation of great teaching, by focusing on a reciprocal relationship between teacher and learner, and allows the teacher to respond in multiple ways to student needs. Participants recognized being and becoming kind as a necessary aspect of a successful teacher life, and one in which they would like to take part—an aspect of living as a teacher in which they felt they already participated.

### ***Enacting Control***

Participants often mentioned enacting control as not only a desirable aspect of being a teacher, but also a necessary characteristic of successfully Living a Teacher Life. Analysis of participant responses revealed the definition of Enacting Control as: *The agency of teachers to structure and manage an environment for the care of those within that environment.* For example, participant Marvel explained, “[You have to] make sure everything’s under control and you’re not like, not, taking care of your students.” In the quote, control is implicitly related to classroom organization, teaching choices, and being in charge of student outcomes.

As expressed in Marvel’s quote above, she relates enacting control with care. This idea is echoed by other students across the globe, notably in Moran’s (2008) study where the participants explained the difference between a nice teacher and a caring teacher. Moran explained, “The distinction students made is that caring teachers are less concerned about the students liking them and more concerned with ensuring that the long-term goals are reached. If that requires them to use discipline in the classroom then that is what needs to happen” (p. 254). Caring teachers were more concerned with growth than popularity, and the participants in this study reflect the traits and philosophies of a caring teacher in the way they discuss elements of control and how they relate to the classroom. The opposite of control is chaos, a space wherein students and teachers cannot work effectively. Marvel expects teachers to act as the systematic locus of control in the classroom, which allows effective instruction of and care for all students. Much like driving with traffic laws rather than without, the control from a knowledgeable other makes everyday routines, experiences, and enjoyment possible.

An element of enacting environmental control for the participants was classroom organization, and decoration was mentioned by each participant as an enjoyable and necessary



aspect of teaching. From detailing specific themes they may employ— “A jungle theme” (Lilly), “I’d change it with the seasons” (Sue)—to organizational structures they would model from teachers, or in opposition to poor organizational tactics they had seen, each participant had methods of organization that stemmed from a desire to enact control over the environment, behaviors, and even thinking of their students.

Already these young learners are cataloging behaviors and practices they want to use in their potential future life as a teacher. Unicorn explained a system her current teacher had in use: “When we need the bathroom, [or want to] go to the library, we click a button. If it’s red you can’t go yet. So, I really like that.” This system informs students about what choices they can make and when, such as if they can go to the library, and at what time. This control allows the teacher to regulate flow, adjust planning, and enforce school rules, an organizational aspect of enacting control Unicorn appreciates in her classroom and expressed that she would implement a similar system and apply a similar approach in much of her other classroom organization.

This organization also allows students to enact control. Monkey and Sue expressed their desire to organize their classroom in ways that supplies were easily and readily accessible to students, so “they don’t have to ask, they can just go get it” (Monkey). Their comments suggest that these potential future teachers already understand the need to design appropriate environments which will naturally and easily shift students so that the teacher has control and the students have the ability to practice self-management and regulation.

These participants indicate that teachers would provide control through an organized and ordered environment, and yet would allow students to feel they had control. Monkey expressed that one of the things she most liked about playing teacher was that, “I feel like I’m in charge,” and Marvel echoed, “[I want to] have my own classroom and plan things.” Participants felt that

teachers had autonomy in curriculum and teaching decisions. Giraffe said, “They can kind of... the teachers can kinda do their own thing with the kids and teach them in their own ways.” Sue agreed, saying, “Most of them have their own way of teaching and making the lessons fun and creative.” This autonomy of self-direction in classroom organization and teaching decisions was viewed as positive, and a reason to enjoy teaching. Because these young future teachers believed that teachers could be in control and organize their teaching the way they wanted, they were encouraged to recognize creative solutions and engaging work in the classroom setting, selecting pieces of their teachers’ ideas and identities to implement in their own potential classroom.

One aspect of teachers’ work includes choosing a behavior management plan.

Participants felt that they would be the ones in charge of student behavior and managing those behaviors, not necessarily coercing the students. Unicorn described a card flipping system used by her teacher in first grade, where cards were flipped between red, yellow, and green on the student’s desk to express if they were doing well. Sue mentioned the use of fines and making decisions for the students, saying, “I would give him a warning and ask him to stop. But if he keeps on doing it, if we had fines in our classroom, I’d probably give him a fine. Or—or move him away where he can’t talk to anybody else.” Lilly felt she would decide on a set of rules, explain them to the students, and then use moments of off-task behavior as rule-teaching moments. Lilly explained, “I will go over the rules with him, and one of the rules will say ‘No talking while the teacher’s talking.’” This focus on controlling student behaviors was expressed in various ways by each participant, each explaining a system of punishments and rewards they could use to control student behavior. However, when applied to a scenario, participants often fell out of these regimented systems, a concept explored later in the document.

All of the participants commented on enacting both organizational and behavioral control strategies. These were ultimately framed as the participant's methods for caring for the students on a large scale. These participants articulated the idea that without the control of teachers, the environment cannot support effective long-term teaching. Monkey described her experience when teachers did not take responsibility for control saying,

I've had a problem with that where my teacher was all fun and games... I was one of the kids where I could, like, get the math and I got everything pretty well. But then sometimes I get confused and she wouldn't help me because she was too busy helping with people that usually needed help.

Monkey's statements imply that she felt the teacher did not sufficiently control the classroom environment so that everyone could be helped as needed, heralding back to the ideas of Moran (2008). Developing a classroom environment where both teacher and student are in control was a central feature in these students' conversations about the characteristics of a teacher life. As we can see here from Monkey's quote, the chaos detracted from her ability to learn, and the teacher's organizational structure allowed her to focus attention on only a handful of students who consistently needed extra support. This lack of control not only affected academic learning, but behavioral improvement as well. Sue remarked, "I think [discipline from the teacher] helps them be better at being more respectful to the teacher and their classmates." Sue's expectation is that teachers will have systems in place that allow students to practice respect, an essential element of both control and kindness. Without the systems and expectations of behavior in place, students lose the opportunity for both academic and behavioral supports in the classroom.

Enacting Control is a characteristic of teacher life that liberates rather than confines both teachers and students to an appropriate structure that encourages learning and risks. Chaotic

environments invite entropy of teacher effectiveness, while well-controlled classroom environments pursue equitable instruction, opportunities to practice self-management, and a release of teacher creativity to confront and solve systemic issues. A decidedly desirable aspect of living as a teacher, control embodies the will of the teacher to help and provide for students.

### ***Taking Responsibility***

Taking Responsibility was central to Ways of Living a Teacher Life, and characterized the teacher's ultimate expectations both individually and globally. The teacher's responsibilities were not limited to their schedule, meetings, or grading (though these were included) but broadened to a global imperative to be the kind of person that others could strive to emulate. The definition for Taking Responsibility became: *the teacher's moral, ethical, and professional imperative to be their best self for those who may mirror their life, and to teach necessary skills and knowledge*. This desire to be their best self was expressed by multiple participants, and they felt that endeavor was already an important aspect of their life. As Sue expressed, "Teachers—the more—most important part is that they try to be the best they can."

As expressed in Sue's quote, "being the best they can be" is one of the most important things teachers can do. Lilly added a reason for why this striving may be labeled "most important," saying, "It just made me think, like, all these teachers are so nice here... and I maybe want to—when I grow up, I want to be like them." As evidenced in Sue and Lilly's quotes, students model the traits of their teachers, so teachers must strive to provide a good example for their students. This imperative goes beyond circumstance, as Sue pointed out, "I think there will be [hard] things, but also I'll try my best to do it." Lilly again echoed this idea when she explained that no matter how her students acted, she would be kind to them. This was how she expected to take on her responsibility as a teacher and she was committed to be the kind of

person the students could emulate. Lilly recognized that her example could have global consequence. This global consequence is explored by Giraffe, as demonstrated in the following exchange,

Interviewer: So why teaching, and not another job like an artist or engineer?

Giraffe: I don't know, because I feel like teaching helps the world a lot more than like artists.

Interviewer: How does teaching help the world?

Giraffe: 'Cause it's helping people learn. And it could like invent more stuff, cause a kid like learning—that they like it, then can invite—invent—new stuff.

Implicit in this quote is the idea that teachers have a global consequence in what they teach, but also in who they are. As reported by Freire (1993),

This capacity to always begin anew, to make, to reconstruct, and to not spoil, to refuse to bureaucratize the mind, to understand and to live as a process—live to become—is something that always accompanied me throughout life. This is an indispensable quality of a good teacher (p. 98).

It is not just the knowledge of teaching that teachers are responsible for, but their very being, their self, that characterizes their responsibilities in the present-moment, four-walled classroom, but also in the future-flung, global community in which through their students they will have part. “I feel like some other things is like if the teacher is being a good example, then the kids would want to be like their teacher when they get older,” Monkey asserted, further suggesting that a teacher's influence on their students is exceptional, and that teachers can provide a bedrock of appropriate, ethical behavior in society. This expectation places taking responsibility for

oneself and others at the heart of teacher life as participants expressed it as one of the prime developers of a teacher identity.

This emulation extends to teaching practices. When asked about teacher responsibilities, Marvel expressed that she did not really know what they were outside of the obvious teaching and grading. “I don’t see all of the other stuff,” she explained, though she followed up her statement by saying, “I think the teachers just teach as much as they can.” Teaching as much as they can was a common idea held by the participants, and seen as the biggest aspect of their responsibility. This responsibility outweighed other concerns, such as lunch or recess breaks, as Unicorn explained,

I think a lot of teachers, at least most of my teachers, when they have lunchtime to say that’s their break. I feel like a lot of the time they’re preparing the next lesson or they’re getting ready or they’re like seeing—just say a student’s [sic] isn’t understanding and sometimes stays inside from recess. I feel like teachers don’t really get a break because they’re helping the students.

Helping the student was the number one priority of the participants, and a trait they felt they had developed. As described below, helping is one of the subthemes that emerged from participant data, and participants often expressed that they saw themselves as helpful. This responsibility, then, is a trait they are already developing, and one they believe to be a supreme aspect of the teacher identity. This thought is evidenced in Young and Erickson’s (2011) study, where they highlighted taking responsibility to be an important formative trait of future teachers, and one these participants strongly identify with and encourage. Monkey mentioned that this responsibility for helping the students extended to every person in the classroom, and again brought up the importance of control to fulfill that responsibility, saying,

I feel like a good teacher is strict, but not too strict. So not mean, but then nice. So, like, they have to have a little strictness that's around because... Yeah, I've had a problem where my teacher was just fun and games. There was no help then. She gave her attention... to the kids who usually need help. I would try to help everyone equally.

Equal opportunity for the teacher's attention and putting aside personal considerations to help the students was not the extent of a teacher's responsibilities. Other responsibilities were included, namely planning, grading, and addressing the social and emotional needs of the students.

Marvel said, "Planning, making sure that everything is done at the exact time they needed to be. Because, you know, it's hard to, like, get everything done that you have to do as a teacher." Planning, scheduling, and time-management are featured by Marvel as responsibilities of a teacher. Planning was especially featured in the participants comments about the responsibilities of a teacher as both a difficulty and joy of teaching. Lilly expressed, "Trying to teach a lesson that, like, I don't even know that well, so, I have to study" as one of the difficult aspects of teaching, while also alluding to a secondary responsibility of planning and teaching, which is to know the material well enough to teach it. This understanding is necessary for students so they can "make sense of the world" (Sue) and prepare the students for future endeavors. Lilly explains,

Because when you get older you—you might have a job that includes a lot of math, so if you didn't have school, and that teacher wouldn't teach you that. Then you can't have that job that you really wanted.

Planning and teaching are a prime directive of the teacher not just for students to pass a test, but for their future well-being.

A final responsibility addressed by the participants was the current well-being of the students. Sue said her teachers were “nice and respectful and they take care of me when I’m hurt, when I’m upset.” This care is the responsibility of the teacher as well, to recognize the emotional and social needs of students and help them develop resiliency and perseverance. Unicorn corroborated this idea when she said,

I think the most important thing I could teach my students is perseverance. Maybe because if they’re doing something hard, and they don’t have perseverance they may give up. Whereas if they have perseverance they can keep going and believe in themselves. Teaching students to believe in themselves and continue in hard situations, prepare them for the future, navigate daily necessities, help students understand, and be a good person for the global technological and moral advances of society were enumerated by the participants as the great responsibilities of a teacher.

Participants felt they were already engaging in taking these responsibilities, evidenced by their use of “I” statements, and their examples of personal stories and budding identities. Responsibility for a teacher’s identity, for the student’s well-being, and for the sundries of schooling encompass an enormous, and possibly unobtainable, measure of teachers as both individuals and as a profession. Yet participants didn’t seem intimidated but enlivened by the idea that a teacher could have global importance through the influence over their students, and that it was an unavoidable and exciting aspect of living as a teacher.

Ways of Living a Teacher Life—the malleable identities and work of a teacher—is denoted by themes of Being and Becoming Kind, Enacting Control, and Taking Responsibility. Participants recognized a blend of these traits as essential to the life and work of a teacher. In their interviews, they examined how they might be taking on or enacting these traits. By



emulating teachers and portraying these traits in their everyday life, participants formed a fledgling identity of themselves as a teacher, revealed by how they observed and thought about the work of teachers they had encountered and imagined. These identities are formed as participants considered what they wanted from life; an idea explored in the next section.

### **Ways of Finding a Vocation**

The theme Ways of Finding a Vocation is defined as, *the desire to teach through helping and connection*. It is further expressed in the two subthemes of Being Helpful and Building Connections. In this section I explore the nature of the theme, and then its attendant subthemes, followed by a summary.

Every participant expressed they had considered teaching for most of their young lives. They expressed motivations and experiences that led them to ponder teaching as a career, and expressed why they felt drawn to the field. Even though participants did not use the word vocation, their statements reflect the feelings, ideas, and insistence which Hansen (1995) argued constituted a vocational pull. He said,

The Latin root of vocation, *vocare*, means “to call” ... Others have felt the need to serve not for divine purposes, but for human ones. They have felt called to human society with its manifold needs and possibilities... teachers have felt the kind of magnetic pull toward a life of service exemplified in the idea of vocation. (pg. 2)

Participants expressed these desires and feelings; this draw to engage helpfully in the arena of the human condition. Monkey expressed, “I just feel like I’ve been wanting to [become a teacher] for so long and I just feel like I’ve been thinking about it, and I love talking and teaching.” Monkey expresses deep feelings about her plans to become a teacher, and also said she felt she already had great strengths in these areas of teaching and communication, as she

often played school with her cousins in her grandmother's playroom. She also expressed that she worked with other students in her classroom to help them understand assignments, an aspect of teaching she enjoyed, and already practiced. Giraffe agreed with Monkey, saying, "I, like, really like little kids, as I told you. And they just make me happy. When I meet them and talk to them...and I just always thought of being a teacher." This consistent draw to teaching outlined by these participants suggests a commitment of time, thought, and energy to the field of teaching that they could implement in the future.

Like Monkey, the participants consistently expressed that they are already engaging in the role of a teacher in their young lives. For example, Unicorn helps students in the classroom who struggle to understand material she had grasped, even asking her teacher if she could help when she had extra time. Unicorn said, "Whenever I get the chance, like during math time if I can, I take the chance to go and help people. I just love to go and explain things." She added, "[I want] kids to go home and say, 'Look what I learned at school!' You know, I did this at school and just having a fun time with it." Unicorn's desire to teach stemmed from a joy of helping students understand material and see the fun side of learning. She also feels like this is already a strength she employs on a daily basis at school, at home with her family, and with others.

Giraffe explained this draw to teaching and how she was already engaging in the role of a teacher in her neighborhood, saying, "My neighbor has a little brother, and I like help him learn words and stuff. It just makes me wanna teach little kids." Giraffe explained how she used an educational app on the child's device to help him through the words, and that she felt fulfilled and happy with the experiences. This practice suggests that like Monkey, both Giraffe and Unicorn feel a desire to benefit others through teaching, a powerful draw to a field rich with emotional and cognitive interest.

Every participant expressed their love of young children, and that they would prefer to teach a lower grade. As Sue remarked, “I think I like kids. ...And I love taking care of them... and I feel like I’d be good at teaching kids.” Sue’s statement about teaching children not only takes into account her love for them, but her expression that she feels competent in her current and potential child-caring and teaching skills. Monkey echoed this sentiment, saying,

I just love kids. So, I feel like if I was teaching them, then that would be easier for me because—and I really love—I really love teaching is, like, one of my main things. It’s just fun for me and I really want to teach.

Monkey expresses her love for children, and the joy she finds in teaching, both now and in the future, suggesting she views teaching as a vocation, rather than a simple job.

Additionally, participants discussed the necessity and importance of teaching children as contributing to this sense of vocation. Monkey said,

You need math to do things. ...to put carpet in your house... and you want to do like science. You have to have some stuff... [you have] to know about science to get in by life, if there’s any questions [then you can answer them].

Monkey directly addresses the need for education to prepare an individual to participate in the world, and suggests that this importance of knowledge in the lives of others is one of the main reasons she wants to teach. She continued, “Well, [teachers] teach students about subjects and they help them learn. So later in life they can have those knowledge [sic] the teachers have taught them. So, then they can—acknowledge that and be a better person when they’re older.” Heralding back to the theme of Responsibility, Monkey acknowledges a connection between teaching and the influence for good that may have on students. This need to help people prepare for the world was noted by other participants. Marvel adds,

[I would teach] Like, skill-based, like, things that can help you in your life or in the future. Because I think that's really helpful, like certain things in math that could help you in your future. ... Make sure you're ready for the next grade or something.

Readiness for life as a key necessity for both students and teachers are a direct tug toward the field of teaching as a life-long endeavor for Marvel. She recognizes this readiness as important and imagines how she could play a role in its unfolding. Lilly agreed, saying, "I will probably teach my students some life skills, like when they grow up, how we had to take out the trash, for example." Lilly's quote carries Marvel's ideal of readiness further, extending it into the mundane items of living. Giraffe agreed with the other participants, again suggesting readiness as a draw to the field of teaching, though she adds life lessons to her list, saying, "Like, life isn't fair. They have to learn that for the world."

Feeling a vocation, a pull, to teaching is common amongst many teachers. For these aspiring teachers in this study, their pull to teaching emerged in two subthemes: Being Helpful and Building Connection. By exploring these themes and their intersections, a clear picture of this sense of vocation emerges.

### ***Being Helpful***

Being Helpful was heralded by the participants as one of the primary aspects of Ways of Finding a Vocation and was a task they felt they regularly executed in the classroom and in their lives. Being Helpful's definition is *the moral responsibility of good teachers to be available and proactive for the academic, social, and emotional needs of others*. This belief in their own ability to help others learn greatly contributed to their consideration of the teaching field. Unicorn captured this idea when she said, "I just like being able to help people. It just makes me feel really good. ...I love helping people and having them be happy because I got to help them today."

Unicorn’s love of teaching stems directly from the happiness she feels when helping others, and the joy that others feel as they are helped. This excitement is apparent in each participant, as they discussed what being helpful meant to them in terms of addressing academic, behavioral, and emotional needs both in and outside of the classroom.

Giraffe described the need for academic support, and how she could provide that help as a teacher saying, “[If someone didn’t understand I would] probably pull them back to like my table, or my desk, and help them with it.” In this quote Giraffe suggests she would focus on and address individual needs, spending time with those who expressed a lack of understanding or frustration. Marvel concurred, “I would, like, try to help them and just make sure they get it. And just say things and try to help them as best as I can to understand it.” Marvel would focus on individuals as well, but also mine multiple methods to help that student understand, rather than presenting the same information in a stale mold. By exploring the student’s needs and avenues of understanding, teachers could be of benefit to students, a trait that participants felt exemplified good teaching. Unicorn noted when discussing a teaching scenario, “I think it was good teaching ‘cause she was helping the students.” Unicorn wanted to be a good teacher—a helping teacher—implying this desire to teach wasn’t simply for a paycheck, but for the good of others in the world.

Participants also claimed that academic knowledge needed to be supported by emotional awareness. Sue reported, “I would give that student a recap of long division and say that she can do it and she’s smart. That she—and even if she’s not that good at it, she’ll get a good grade for trying.” In this quote it reveals that Sue already recognizes the value of rewarding student effort—not just their end product—and building their self-esteem contributes to the efficacy of schooling and is a way that teachers help students.

Like Sue, Giraffe proposes that supporting students in improving their self-concept as a form of being helpful and will support student's academic achievements. As Giraffe said,

I would help him through it, like I would read books with him... So, I'm, like, I could help him through it and kind of let him learn a little bit more. So, he would get used to reading and get better at it. And I wouldn't have him be, like, go down, like, put himself down. I would like to congratulate him and do stuff like that so that he's not thinking bad about himself.

Latent in this quote is the belief that when students "think bad about themselves" their ability to successfully navigate new concepts decreases, whereas if they feel capable of growth and possibility, they can forge new solutions and understand past insight. Unicorn suggested methods to help students reach this positive self-concept, saying,

[If someone didn't understand] I would maybe take them out in the hall and say—talk with them, and ask if they need a moment to calm down, like, maybe sit in the corner and just read or... and if they didn't, then I would immediately help them and say, okay. And then I'd talk through the problem with them.

Unicorn suggests that bulldozing a student into a problem isn't helpful. Instead a helpful teacher would give the student time to reflect, to communicate, and to re-evaluate their position. Interestingly, Unicorn's method places the responsibility on the student, while the teacher acts as a support for their needs.

Helping could be divorced from academics, focusing solely on the emotional needs of the students. Marvel mentions, "I really like helping people with their problems. And just making sure everyone's happy. And try to help them with friends and through their life." Rather than a focus on academic support, Marvel indicates a shift to a wholistic approach of assistance where

the student's life, relationships, and needs are seen and appreciated. Marvel's quote also returns to that sense of vocation, where she openly describes helping others as a delight and motivation to teach in her life.

However, participants suggest being helpful is a trait of good teachers that is primed in the apprenticeship of learning, and can be emphasized by teachers in the classroom as a method of instruction and growth. Unicorn says that during teaching and throughout the day, “[Students] could go around and help other students.” Participants often took on the role of helping themselves in the classroom, and wanted that practice to be extended and enlivened in the classroom setting as an organic expectation. This apprenticeship of learning to be helpful did not only support the future of teachers, but of every field, and the students as people in their relationships; as Giraffe said, “teaching helps the world.” Teaching, while centered on individual outcome, is carried out in relational cooperation and helping.

### ***Building Connection***

Building Connection was the second element of Ways of Finding a Vocation. In this study, connection is defined as *bonds of intimacy and vulnerability formed through communication and a reciprocal appreciation of self and other*. While discussing their classroom environment, behavior management strategies, and expectations for their future classroom, participants revealed a deep desire for connection in their lives—connection to people, to ideas, and to a global community—led them to consider teaching as a vocation. Connection appeared in positives and negatives, and deeply impacted each participant based on their past relationships and the perspective of their forming identities.

Sue expressed her feelings about building connection and vocation when she said, “Just helping the kids, and being kind and respectful to the kids, and having fun with the kids.”

Helping, kindness, respect, and fun were foundational to her understanding of connection, of building relationships with others, which for these participants inhabits a teacher identity. Sue believed that building connections with others would make her happy, and that she could find that happiness in teaching. Marvel concurred, saying, “Relationships are important to me because I think everyone should be able to have a friend or, like, just, like, everyone should be nice to each other. Because you never know what could happen.” Marvel expresses here a desire for a unified, peaceful existence with others, suggesting that these connections and relationships may stave negative consequences, or help people conquer difficulties. It is in relationships, these participants believe, that happiness and peace are possible, and that it is through teaching that these relationships can be built.

However, they also recognized building and maintaining relationships required effort, and while it could be a primary motivation for them to teach, those relationships could also be the most difficult part of teaching. Sue said, “[The hardest part would] probably be when students get angry because they don’t get it or they don’t believe in themselves because they’re so frustrated.” Seeing students in a state of anger, hurt, or confusion would be challenging, Sue thought, because it pressed relationships into areas of contention, and without the joy of those relationships the desire to teach is thrown into jeopardy and may impact student learning. This participant makes an important distinction since earlier Sue articulated that helping people learn was so important to her.

Many practicing teachers have expressed the same sentiment, indicating that as the demands of practice tests and content get in the way of their relationships with the students, their desire to seek connection elsewhere increases (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Giraffe explicated this idea, saying,



I'd make sure they all get to know me good, and they all get to know each other good...I'd want them to think of me as a good teacher, because they probably won't be, like, be rude to me and say, like, rude stuff.

“Think of me as a good teacher,” for Giraffe, meant having a connection with others that promoted a positive self-concept for both teacher and students. In this reciprocal environment of love and respect, all people in the classroom could desire to return daily and reinstate precious connective opportunities with peers and others. Giraffe felt that the deeper connections became, the greater the attitudes of tolerance, respect, and kindness could surface and thrive in the classroom settings.

Creating this environment where students felt connected and safe was important to the participants. Marvel said, “[My students] would be able to talk to each other because—they should be able to talk.” Marvel expresses the belief that students should be encouraged to communicate with each other and their teacher. To facilitate communication, every participant mentioned that their classroom organization would be in table groups to facilitate discussion with their peers, though discussions would be monitored by teachers for appropriate topics and language. Feeling these discussions could help students gain social skills and navigate difficult relationships, Sue opined,

Because they probably will have some times in life where people aren't nice to them and they just have to, like, get through it and say, “Oh, I have other friends they—and I can talk to them if I need it.”

By cultivating a significant base of close relationships, students could navigate potentially harmful scenarios with the knowledge of the support they had from others.

Participants drew from personal life experiences to make the decisions to prioritize building connections. Describing herself as having been rather lonely, Marvel explained she was slowly building relationships and making friends. Based on these experiences, she said, “I would try to help them make things that I tried from myself being stressed out and probably just try to, like—let them take a break and then deal with it.” Marvel understood that stress could negatively impact relationships, and felt a deep desire to help students engineer tactics to effectively manage that stress and increase the efficacy of connection so everyone “could be happy.”

Monkey corroborated this idea, expressing the deeply personal sentiment:

When I was in, like, second or third, my parents got divorced. So, I didn’t tell anybody that. So, I would keep it to myself and then want attention. So [then] I would do stuff that is not like [what] you want to do in school... so, I would talk to [misbehaving students] because sometimes you can be, like, kind of getting attention because something’s going on.

Monkey describes that her parents’ divorce caused her to act out, increasing her empathy for students who may enact similar behaviors. Rather than simply outlining procedures, Monkey expresses a desire to use communication and relationships as a tool to understand what the students are going through, and help them to make better decisions. Marvel attested that she would implement similar practices, saying, “I would maybe talk to him and, like, ‘What are you?’—ask him maybe why he’s doing it.” By questioning the students’ behaviors and desiring to know their motivations, Marvel wishes to increase the connection between herself and her potential future students, allowing space for individual and community growth through open communication.

Lilly summarized these ideals by expressing that forging connections while teaching is in itself a learning experience for the teacher, saying, “[I would be] learning how to make the students happy and stuff.” The process of building connections with others is a continuous learning experience for all involved, but in the participants’ eyes reaps rich benefits of understanding, peace, and a continual renewal of the desire to teach.

The participants in this study felt a strong desire to teach due to their beliefs in Being Helpful and Building Connections to others to provide for a better world. By exploring avenues of wholistic approaches to teaching as a human endeavor, participants expressed why they felt drawn to the field of teaching, and how that draw would influence their career as teachers. This sense of vocation drives participants to build a teacher identity during their tenure as students, and helps them develop beliefs about teaching that could strengthen their commitment to the field over their lifetime.

### **Ways of Doing School**

Participants described the theme of Ways of Doing School as *the teacher’s ability to comprehend and understand the needs of learners through multiple methods of teaching that included respect and engagement*. It is further explained in the subthemes of Commanding Respect and Engaging Students. In this section I will explain the competing and complementary nuances of this theme and its subthemes, followed by a summary. In her comments Sue captured the meaning of Doing School, saying, “The—most [teachers] have their own way of teaching and making the lessons fun and creative, and some of them more of a teaching where they try to make it less complicated for the kids.” Here Sue describes teaching as an act of independent thinking, creativity, and understanding, where teachers use multiple methods to help students comprehend new and powerful ideas. This teaching is designed to help students become

independent thinkers, creative problem solvers, and comprehensible communicators across a range of academic, social, and emotional fields.

To gain this understanding, participants expressed a strong belief that students needed to understand the academic material and their personal strengths and weaknesses. Marvel expressed this importance of understanding concepts when she said, "...if the students don't understand, what's the point of even teaching the lesson if they don't get a thing? I think the most important thing is making sure that students understand and they're getting it." Marvel explains that if students don't understand material, there's "no point" in teaching the students. "So, they know, and then they can," Monkey explained, implying that it is by learning that students do not just recall knowledge, but they are able to apply their understanding to new situations and problems.

This understanding stems from approaching the learner from multiple avenues of instruction. As Monkey said, "If that [teaching method is] not helping them, they have another option to learn... there's games, there's questions, and there's talking." Monkey outlines a few of the methods she might implement to help students achieve understanding, rather than just grasping the surface knowledge of a topic. She also adds that these methods are presented as choices, so students can choose an avenue that will best help them comprehend the material. Unicorn adds to this idea, saying, "I would have them [in] partners working on an activity, working on a choice. I would be doing groups. If I weren't, I would be walking around helping students." Unicorn again emphasizes the importance of choice and helping students, but additionally expresses that multimodal learning is not only independent, but collaborative. By working with others in the classroom students can engage in conversations that express opposing viewpoints, alternative methods, and work out incorrect solutions. Ultimately, participants expressed that the teacher was responsible to know and implement different ways of teaching to

meet the needs of learners. Giraffe explained, “And you have to know more than one way to teach them cause some kids know it in different ways. Or like some ways might be easier for them.” Students knowing material “in different ways” means that the teacher must be attuned to a variety of methods and be willing to make creative instructional changes. Sue concurs, saying, “Making sure everybody understands because... you’re going to have to think of unique ways to make sure everybody knows it.” These unique ways may not be scripted, but require a flexible and thoughtful approach by the teacher that meets the needs of individual students in their current mental, emotional, and social state. Part of the participant’s identity as a teacher is helping students truly comprehend material, and providing the skills students need.

Indeed, participants expressed that communication could lead them to know what methods would be best for the students to help them understand. Unicorn opines,

And if [the student] needs help, [I’d have them] come to me or I’d pull groups to make sure they understand it. I would ask, “What part aren’t you understanding or do you just not get the whole thing or do you understand this?” That’s what I would do.

Unicorn engages with this potential future student in conversation, asking specific questions to try to enlarge her personal understanding of what her future students know and what they need to learn. Giraffe agrees questioning the students is important, and building those questions into whole class instruction is imperative. She said,

Making sure they get it. Like, get what you’re trying to teach them. And have them ask questions, so you know that they get it or don’t get it. ...They could ask questions and the teacher could ask after, like, if they get it [or have] more “about” [the topic] questions—like a group discussion. ...Yeah, because if more than one person asks that question...

Like most of the class, I really try to teach them that, like that main question.

In this quote, Giraffe explains that the questioning process is really a discussion that guides instruction. She also implies that teaching focuses on main questions, and that by creating a dialogue with the class the most effective instruction is achieved. This indicates there's already a basis in her teacher identity for a future teacher educator to develop important teaching practices, such as backward design.

Though some methods may indeed make it easier for some students to gain confidence in their skills, participants recognized that teaching only about the material or methods of instruction was not sufficient. For these participants, as their quotes indicate, an understanding of the students as individuals was imperative. Marvel describes, "I think the more you talk to someone just to understand why or why they're doing it... and maybe help them realize they need to stop." By striving to understand the students' needs and points of view, the teacher can use appropriate management strategies that respond to the student's concerns. Unicorn agreed, and wisely suggested communicating with the parents about their children from the very beginning.

So, I would ask if that child, like, if I had asked the parents at the beginning of the year if they have any learning disabilities to make it harder for them to learn, that they're not getting it. Then I understand...

Unicorn explains, expounding on the need to know about the child, and any additional obstacles to learning the child may experience. Unicorn indicated that such knowledge was vital for a teacher in making decisions about student learning. It also indicated that she would be thorough and empathetic in her questioning. She continues,

But if they still aren't getting it and they don't have any learning disabilities, I'll have to over with it, go over it with them, and maybe I can know they weren't paying attention or they just really don't get it.

Unicorn's quote suggests that she is already taking multiple perspectives on student performance on learning. Again, she describes the importance of knowing the students to participate in Ways of Doing School, and covering the material in a multitude of ways and at different times, repeating that instruction if needed. Like other participants, she understands methods that a teacher can use to help students understand and comprehend material. Participants expressed that this comprehension could be achieved through multiple learning avenues, which they have designated as respect and engagement.

Commanding Respect and Engaging Students are subthemes of Ways of Doing School and will be explained below. These subthemes explain participants' views on two ways of Doing School. Commanding Respect is the way of doing school students expect to use and describe it as the way school is done. The aspects of respect are often contradictory in nature to the other themes that have already been described. Participants described Engaging Students as the way they could actually see themselves running a classroom and how they would want to teach. By exploring these two subthemes as ways of doing school, an accurate depiction of students' beliefs about the realities and expectations for school is revealed.

### ***Commanding Respect***

According to the participants, Commanding Respect is a Way of Doing School for teachers to help students learn wherein teachers impose conventional teaching strategies and values. Participants defined Commanding Respect as *a teacher-centric conventional model of imparting knowledge in a quiet, assessment-rich, and highly-organized environment*. It should be noted that the meaning of the word respect in this subtheme is contradictory to how participants sometimes used the word respect in their interviews. Respect in their vocabulary sometimes meant a kind, reciprocal treatment of politeness and obedience. By collecting quotes that had to

do with the idea of teaching and other ways they used the word respect, Commanding Respect as a subtheme emerged as the definition seen above. This subtheme appears theoretically contradictory to the sentiments of student focus and student needs outlined above. Yet participants consistently indicated that in order to learn students needed to respect—or silently obey—the teacher in an orderly classroom environment. Participants’ comments suggest that commanding respect—or the conventional teaching methods of quiet students facing the board while the teacher is talking—is the way they expect school to be done.

Sue described what a commanding, respectful classroom may look like, saying, “[Students] would be listening to me talking and not interrupting the class. If they had questions, they’d be raising their hand.” In this quote Sue describes the tenets of a conventional classroom setting, where students sit quietly and listen to the teacher. Marvel agreed that this would be a way of schooling students she might implement expressing, “[Students would] probably be like sitting down and listening to the lesson.” Students are passive recorders in this environment, rule-oriented and obedient.

Participants described this method as an expectation they held for how school worked. Monkey explained that during play she tried out different teacher identities by playing with different ways of schooling, but that the conventional method was “normal” or “real” saying,

The teacher would do stuff like math and subjects and recess and everything, that would be kind of like normal school that we would be doing. But a tiny bit different because some of the teachers [would] be doing strict school, goofy school, and then real school. Real school for Monkey was defined as a kind—but regimented—rewards- and punishments-based system that focused on completion and testing. Lilly agreed with her definition of playing real or normal school saying,



I usually write the schedule and my name on top of the board and then—and then we have class points and teacher points like normal classes. ...I usually get them from another room, like we usually do in school and then I usually always start off with math. Lilly's repeated use of the word usually and normal implies that this follows the expectations she views in her current classes at school, and she feels a certain pressure to follow those guidelines when she is playing school and in her future classroom. Giraffe felt that when she played school, she typically fell into a passive role of observation whenever her pretend students were active. Giraffe explains, "I've got gymnastics [bar], but they usually go play on it for recess. And I just watch them." Giraffe expressed that the more she played school, the more she fell into this passive role. Monkey expressed the same thought, saying, "[When we played teacher in first grade] we would do fun games, but now it's like: subject, subject, subject." As the expectation in their schooling shifted to a focus on individual subjects and direct instruction, Giraffe and Monkey fell into the same patterns when playing school at their homes.

Good teaching became equated with good explanation. When reading the Mediocre Lesson Giraffe expressed, "Good teaching there... she's like telling them that's, like, not it. And then explaining it to them." By explaining the idea again to the students, Giraffe felt it would increase knowing. Sue agreed, "I think I would have a loud voice so everybody could hear me and probably, like, explaining stuff—like, sometimes moving my hands and, like, helping them, like, point to the board and stuff." Sue implies she would be standing at the board, and her assistance would be limited to repetition and gestures to help students understand what they needed to know.

To assess what students understood, participants suggested they complete a short answer or multiple-choice test. Sue continued, "I think maybe I would give an example. So, I'd probably

tell them what we're doing in an example after and then do the test and stuff. [I would test] because you can be sure they were paying attention." Rather than testing for content knowledge, this test would reveal how well students focused during instruction and whether that instruction was initially sufficient for the students. Participants felt that students should be well prepared for this test, as Lilly explained, "Maybe by a simple test. And—and that test would have that question that I taught in the lesson."

Participants' conventional educational expectations for commanding respect also fell into the realm of behavior in terms of rules, rewards and punishments, and warnings. "I want to be strict, [and] I will have some class rules," Lilly explained, implying that she would create and impose certain rules on the students. Students would be expected to obey these rules or be punished. As Monkey said, "I would give them another warning or, like, well, punish them. But I would like! I would, like, put them down again because, like, I told them and... that's disobeying." When students disobey, Monkey said she would punish them for that disobedience, in an effort to encourage them to follow the rules that have been set. When asked about the punishments, she suggested they would differ and would be based on the circumstance, listing possibilities such as a warning, timeout, loss of recess, and going to the principal's office. Some actions may have scripted consequences, while others would be based on the teacher's mood, preferences, and number of infractions.

Sue expressed this method would be her preferred method if she was feeling frustrated or didn't know what to do, as it was a reaction she'd seen in her teachers. She said, "Sometimes the kids can be loud and not too respectful, and I feel like that makes the teachers frustrated." This frustration (and possibly other factors such as school culture, over-abundant curriculum, and the residual beliefs from an apprenticeship of teaching that valued conventional methods) pressures

teachers who may have been apprenticed to conventional ideals of schooling throughout their life, to fall back on methods of punishments, rewards, and tests—or, as the participants called it, “real school.”

Participants have a clear sense that there needs to be order, and the way for that order to occur was through the conventional educational experiences they have had. In some ways, the things they have coded as commanding respect implies a far more conventional outlook than the other comments they made in their transcripts. Throughout the other themes, participants focused on students. Here, the focus shifts to self, and how they imagine themselves fulfilling the role of a teacher, based on the teachers they have observed and the practice play they have engaged in. Respect of the teacher demonstrated by appropriate behavior on the part of students is central to their idea of acting as a teacher.

### ***Engaging Students***

Participants described Ways of Doing School in terms of Engaging Students as *the skills to appropriately encourage students to take ownership for their learning through the development of soft skills and relinquishing teacher control*. Students associated the idea of engagement, soft skills, and student agency with teacher skill. Unicorn described, “Good teaching skill there, because a teacher let them kind of... kids, when it’s fun, when you’re learning and it’s fun, it gets the students more engaged and they feel like they can learn easier.” Unicorn views good teaching skills as associated with fun, engagement, and ease of learning. Creating this connection insinuates that engagement requires teacher skill and ability at a higher level than other forms of teaching.

Marvel described her desired approach to doing school helping students discover content through engagement, saying,

We just did a bunch of experiments, and just tried a bunch of different things, and we wrote down, like, what we observed and what we think would happen and what did happen. And I think it's a good way to teach because students are having fun trying the experiment. ...I would teach that way. Like having a little fun with learning.

Marvel describes using experiments, the scientific process—including observing and recording—as a method to engage students. She described her own experiences with this method, recounting that she enjoyed the time and learned a great deal. Her feelings of positive connection with this method inspired her to use a similar approach in her own possible teaching career.

Every participant suggested the use of games to encourage student understanding as a primary method for doing school. Sue expanded the idea, saying,

I'd start with a creative thing and have them guess what we're learning about for the term. Maybe a game and then ask them if they knew what we were learning about this week or this term, and I'd probably ask [the students] if they have any activities to do... kind of like activities we could incorporate into our learning.

Sue uses games to set the stage for learning and to encourage interest. After students have a thorough idea of what they'll be learning about, Sue plans to have them share activities from their own experience and ideas to learn about that subject or concept. By encouraging the students to take ownership of their learning, Sue may inspire a culture of collaborative, life-long learners that enjoy the process of learning. Each participant, drawing from experiences with her past teachers, also suggested games to draw students into the learning and access prior knowledge. Unicorn emphasized the importance of accessing prior knowledge when she said, "...shows the students what they're going to get to learn and they get an idea... they know what

they're gonna learn." By knowing what they're going to learn, students are prepared to contribute to the learning process, rather than remain as submissive *tabula rasas* (Petryszak, 1981).

This method of teaching was suggested by Monkey as a better way to learn. She said, "They still get the assignment... but they get it in a better way." Rather than staid, rote lesson plans, this method allows students to make progress in an interesting way. In engagement teaching, the focus is on the students. Marvel explained that she would be "Teaching by, like, seeing what they like." Incorporating student interests into the learning process opens up a variety of teaching avenues, and again provides students opportunity to take ownership for their learning. This interest may come on its own, or be teacher-led. Marvel further emphasized that she would incorporate exercise into the classroom, particularly when she sensed flagging enthusiasm, saying, "I would make them do like an exercise to kind of help them stay focused. Or just to kind of wake them up you know?" Unicorn thought teachers who incorporated humor can increase engagement, saying, "I like when teachers have this sense of humor because it just make[s] it a whole lot better when someone gets you to laugh. So, I like understanding teachers, teachers with humor." Unicorn indicated she would use humor in her own classroom not only to encourage laughter, but also for students to use it as a method of expression for their identities and their growing knowledge base.

Additionally, participants found one of the most important aspects of doing school through engagement to be student ownership and choice in the classroom. As described earlier, Sue planned to encourage students to share learning activities with the class, but she also felt students should have input on their environments. She expressed, "...decorate the class with them and make rules that apply and make our classroom better." Student input on classroom

decoration and rules directly affect the culture and appearance of the classroom, making it a shared space. Monkey described how she would set up her classroom so students could easily access all that they needed. “The kids would know where stuff is. They don’t ask where are the scissors? Where are the markers? So, it’s really organized and they would just know.” Monkey describes that knowing extends to classroom essentials, and that participating in the school process—including organization and taking care of items—would facilitate that process.

These ideas deeply coincide with the methods of doing school participants described, and yet seems in direct conflict with Commanding Respect. Participants expressed a desire to use both methods, and at first indicated the preference for the respect route, particularly when it came to behavior. However, when confronted with a scenario about behavior, every participant immediately capitulated, laying aside behavior plans such as money systems, clip charts, and regulated punishments in preference of communication, agency, and reciprocal empathy. Practicing teachers often report a disconnect between what they feel are more appropriate teaching methods and the emphasis of conventional approaches that includes rows of desks facing a blackboard while the teacher stands at the board monologuing (Bratt, 1973; Hiep, 2000; Serbessa, 2006). This conflict of ideologies can already be seen emerging in the young students of this study, as they partake of the apprenticeship of teaching and try to navigate the better methods to encourage knowing.

The different and varied Ways of Doing School is a life-long pursuit. The young future teachers in this study seem to already grasp that idea. They articulate teachers as the catalyst in the process of schooling, and in pursuing multiple pathways to make understanding accessible to students. Two of the pathways of doing school participants discussed were Commanding Respect

and Engaging Students, two seemingly theoretically contrary roads that participants expected they may use in their teaching at some future period.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Conclusions

This study set out to explore the teaching beliefs and identities of fifth-grade students who desire to become teachers. While there is a depth of research that focuses on the development of teacher beliefs and identity, these studies have focused on practicing teachers reflecting back on their lives or the development of their identity and beliefs during their teacher preparation or public-school teaching. Many of these studies (e.g., Young & Erickson, 2011) have suggested that beliefs about teaching and who the educator wants to be as a teacher have roots in their early experiences. In contrast, this study sought to uncover those beliefs and identities as they were forming in those who expressed a desire to become teachers when they grow up. Through group and individual interviews, six female participants expressed their views about teaching. This study revealed that fifth-grade students who desire to become teachers were already developing a teacher identity. They were navigating contradictory beliefs and formulating expectations about teaching and what they will be like as a teacher, and they were creating experiences where they enacted those identities and beliefs. The results also indicated that the future teachers in this study also engaged in teacher responsibilities in the classroom, such as helping other students and suggesting learning activities and organizational methods for the classroom.

Ways of Living a Teacher Life, Ways of Finding a Vocation, and Ways of Doing School were the three primary themes that emerged from the data. Ways of Living a Teacher Life described how participants already viewed themselves as a teacher, and what aspects of identity they felt they had already developed or needed to develop for one to be a teacher. Ways of Living a Teacher Life examined how participants inhabited different teacher identities or aspects



of those identities in their lives and how those identities related to the social, cognitive, and personal experiences of their lives. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) identified teacher identity as a complex process that required experimenting with identities in personal and social spaces, and that the identity of a teacher may be continuous or not. These concepts can be directly seen in how participants are forming their teacher identity in their youth in their experimentations at play and the ways they enact teacher roles in their lives.

The three most important characteristics of Ways of Living a Teacher Life were defined in the subthemes of Being and Becoming Kind, Enacting Control, and Taking Responsibility. Being and Becoming Kind explained the motivations and expressions of a teacher identity. As argued by Zembylas (2003) emotion creates space for transformation and understanding of a teacher's identity throughout their career. By identifying kindness as central to a teacher's life, participants are already recognizing and using emotion as a catalyst for their teacher identity and its continued evolution. Agency and control continue to be emphasized as important issues in teacher identity development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) and participants recognized Enacting Control in the role of a teacher as a defining example of their budding teacher identities. By recognizing what control teachers have or could have, participants engaged in an expectant examination of the influence they could impart. Finally, participants recognized Taking Responsibility as encompassing both personal and global expectations of the teacher to be their best self and to help others become their best self. Without this recognition of responsibility on the part of the teacher (or potential teacher) Alsup (2006) argues that a strong teacher identity cannot emerge. The responsibility of the teacher to know themselves well enough to be their best self is addressed by Alsup as she says, "The principle is that the imperative and responsibility of self-knowledge is an inclusive address that implicates everyone"

(pg. xii). Taking Responsibility was seen as a tandem project by the participants, that incorporated their identity as a key element of living as a teacher.

Ways of Finding a Vocation has been expressed and examined in the teaching field for years, though not as thoroughly as other aspects of teacher motivation (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012). Ways of Finding a Vocation was identified by the participants in their comments as the motivation and draw they experienced toward education. This study then suggests that this vocational pull is felt at a very early age by those who have identified a desire to become teachers. As expressed through studies on teacher reflection, this vocational pull may act as a continuous powerful draw to the field through the years (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012). The elements of Ways of Finding a Vocation were explained in Being Helpful and Building Connection. Being Helpful and Building Connection are described as “the soul of education” (Kessler, 2000) that not only inform practice, but are necessary concepts for students to learn. Participants expressed their desire to help students develop these skills in their own lives, already patterning their potential future instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners in an ever-mercurial world.

Meeting the needs of learners was highlighted in the last theme. Ways of Doing School encompassed multiple avenues of learning teachers utilized to help students gain understanding of concepts, including those not present in the curriculum, such as helping and connection. Participants identified and discussed research-based teaching skills, similar to those identified by Rosenshine (2012), who expounded multi-modal learning as one of the greatest indicators of teacher skill and knowledge. These skills were implied or openly discussed throughout the theme of Ways of Doing School and its attendant subthemes of Commanding Respect and Engaging Students. Some of these teaching skills include: accessing prior knowledge, encouraging

supported student practice, asking question, providing examples, checking for understanding, reviewing materials with students, and scaffolding difficult tasks. Rosenshine (2012) agrees that all of these skills are research-based strategies to increase student achievement and support the whole child, indicating the participants already possess a high-level of understanding regarding teaching skills.

Participants felt that strategies of respect and engagement would be used in their future classroom, and mentioned or implied each of the strategies outlined above in their comments. This suggests these young participants are already grasping the nuances of teacher practice and will come to the field of teaching with extensive latent knowledge about teaching practice and research-based strategies to help students learn effectively.

### **Significance**

The findings of this study suggest that individuals who desire to become teachers develop deeply rooted identities and beliefs about teaching before they enter a program of study. Prospective teachers who enter a teaching program are often not expected to know who they are as teachers. It may benefit prospective teachers and teacher education programs to take time to explore the nascent teacher beliefs and identities with which students enter the program and use that knowledge as a flexible basis for the program's goals and the needs of these future teachers. By making prospective teachers aware of their own apprenticeship of learning (Lortie, 1975), they can recognize their teacher knowledge (Clandinin, 2010) as an important and necessary element of their teacher practice and be better able to participate in sharing that teacher knowledge with others.

The results of this study provide a new avenue of research for teacher identities and beliefs. By focusing on children who want to become teachers, rather than relying on reflection

from practicing teachers, greater amounts of understanding can be attained about the process of teacher identity and belief formation. This study also contributes to the general knowledge of teacher identity and beliefs, and realizes that the teacher identities and beliefs of young people can be traced in current research on practicing teachers.

### **Implications**

Participants in this study expressed multiple important concepts related to their identity and belief formation as teachers that could improve the relationship between prospective teachers and their teacher education programs. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed that they practiced their teacher identity and beliefs through play. This implies that role-playing teaching in teacher education programs may be familiar to prospective teachers and help them discover the nascent beliefs and identities they bring with them to the program. Role-playing may also encourage prospective teachers to try out new beliefs and identities in a safe environment, an activity that has been suggested by multiple researchers (Gregory & Masters, 2012; Jones & Eimers, 1975).

Participants also revealed in this study that they tend to have idealistic, futurist tendencies that align with the paradigms of social justice. By discussing and revealing these tendencies, teacher education programs can help students ground their goals in reality. Additionally, participants revealed they are already developing crucial teaching strengths which can be further developed in a teacher education program. By having students ponder their strengths and align those strengths with theory and practice, teacher education programs can build on the abilities and knowledge prospective teachers bring with them to the program (Hammerness, 2007).

Finally, participants insinuate that they feel capable of teaching due to the strengths they have or are developing. Teacher education programs can capitalize on this confidence rather than

potentially undermine it (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Britzman, 2012; Bullough, 2005; Hammerness, 2007; Sachs, 2005), allowing prospective teachers to navigate entering the field with greater surety in their abilities and the skills to positively express their views to others, while being open to learning from veteran teachers.

### **Future Research**

Future research may involve conducting a longitudinal study of the participants in this or similar studies to learn if the participants became teachers and how their identities and beliefs about teaching have evolved. Other research may involve replicating this study in other contexts, such as lower-income schools, or within specific populations, such as children of practicing teachers, racial or ethnic groups, and different genders. Age groups should be another consideration for research, both older and younger. By conducting a similar study through a different lens, much could be learned about the different aspects of teachers' identity development in their youth. For example, researchers may explore identity through the lens of roles, or beliefs through the lens of power. Another potential avenue of research is exploring what happens to the teacher identities and beliefs of those who desire to become teachers but instead chose a different profession. There are many potential avenues and advantages to a deeper and more thorough exploration of the identities and beliefs children who desire to become teachers are developing.

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## APPENDIX A

**Mediocre Lesson Protocol**

[All bracketed words were added from analysis]

**Materials**

- One copy of the Mediocre Lesson Protocol
- Six copies of the lesson story
- A recording device
- Markers
- Pencils

**Procedures**

Before the interview, the interviewer will review with the participants their rights in the study. If a participant comes to them with a continued idea, the researcher will write it down word for word, but not audio record unless the comment is more than 50 words.

**Concept-Mapping Focus Group**

*Read: Thank you all for coming, I'm excited to hear your thoughts and ideas today. [Does everyone have some paper and a pencil?] I want to know how you would think or plan as a teacher. [Please take a minute and think: If you were a teacher, what would a lesson look like? What would be important? Please take a minute to write down or imagine some ideas.] I'm going to read to you the lesson on the table in front of you. That one is your copy. You can make notes on it or write down ideas as we go using the pencils and markers. I will read the whole thing through once. After that, I will read it again, and we will pause it anytime you like to discuss, and then end with a group discussion. Ready?*



Read: *Twenty-six first-grade students go to the carpet area for a lesson. The teacher stands up in front of the room and writes on the board what the students will be learning about that day: Forces. The teacher says, "Today we are learning about forces. Let's read the word together three times."*

*The students read it, looking bored.*

*The teacher asks, "Who know what forces are?"*

*One student raises their hand. "Like Star Wars? The force! Bzzshh!"*

*"Kind of like that," says the teacher. "A force is..." the teacher writes the definition on the board as he says it. "A force is a push or pull on an object. Okay, everyone, let's write the word force and the definition in our science notebooks!"*

*The teacher circles the room helping students write. Some of the students finish quickly and stare at the ground or the ceiling. Some start talking to each other. The teacher tells them to be quiet and wait until he's done.*

*Finally, everyone has a definition written. The teacher writes motion and its definition on the board and they all write it in their journals again. The teacher tells some rowdy students to be quiet again and sends one student to a time-out corner for talking out of turn.*

*The teacher says, "Today we will explore forces and motion through some experiments. Here is a bin of things like balls, dolls, and action figures. I will hold up a word on a card. Two students will choose an object and follow the directions on the card. For example, I could grab this ball. I look at the card. The card says "drop." I drop the ball. When I drop the ball, everyone who does not have an object will say the motion. In this case, "Drop!""*

*Two students practice. One student shows a bad example of what to do. Another student shows a good example while the class shouts the motion. Then the students play the game. They*

*play for ten minutes, until everyone has a turn. Then students are sent to their desks, where a paper waits for them. The paper has two columns, one labeled “force” and the other labeled “motion.” At the bottom are words for them to cut out and glue in the right columns. The teacher explains what to do, and pairs up students to work on it together. The teacher has already picked out partners based on high and low reading ability. The teacher does not tell who has the high and low reading ability.*

*The students are to work on the paper in whisper voices with their partner for twenty minutes. If the paper is not done in twenty minutes, students will turn it in anyway and the teacher will grade it for completion and if the words are in the right spot.*

*Read: I will now read the story a second time. Feel free to just jump in anytime you like with ideas or thoughts.*

Interviewer reads the same story again, pausing for student’s ideas or thoughts.

*Ask: What do you think this teacher did well?*

*Ask: What do you think the teacher did poorly?*

*Ask: What would you do instead?*

*Ask: Are there totally different ways you would teach about forces and motion?*

*[Ask: What have great teachers done that you liked and what would you do that is like that teacher? What is the most important thing you can teach you students?]*

Interviewer thanks everyone for coming and reminds them to come back if they have any further thoughts or ideas.

\*Italicized text should be read aloud.

## APPENDIX B

**Classroom Difficulty Protocol**

[All bracketed words were added from analysis]

**Materials**

- One copy of the Classroom Difficulty Protocol
- A recording device
- Markers
- Pencils
- Dry erase markers
- Paper or white boards for six children

**Procedures**

Before the interview, the interviewer will review with the participants their rights in the study. If a participant comes to them with a continued idea, the researcher will write it down word for word, but not audio record unless the comment is more than 50 words.

**Concept-Mapping Focus Group**

*Read: Thank you all for coming, I'm excited to hear your thoughts and ideas today. I'm going to read a short paragraph that describes a problem in a classroom. I'd like to hear what you'd do about this problem. Ready?*

*Read: You are teaching a lesson on long division. It's the second time you've taught the method for long division, and some of the students are doing it by themselves. Halfway through your lesson a student yells, "I'm so stupid, I can't do this!" and throws her pencil across the room.*

*Ask: What do you do? [What other ways would you handle it? Why would that be the best way?]*

After the discussion, thank the participants and remind them that if they have additional thoughts or ideas, they are welcome to come back anytime they wish.

*\*Italicized text should be read aloud.*

## APPENDIX C

**Individual Interview Protocol**

[All bracketed words were added from analysis]

**Materials**

- Individual Interview Protocol Sheet
- Paper and Pencil for Notes
- Audio Recording Device

**Procedures**

Before the interview, the interviewer will review with the participants their rights in the study. If a participant comes to them with a continued idea, the researcher will write it down word for word, but not audio record unless the comment is more than 50 words.

**Individual Interview**

Read: *Thank you for coming, I'm excited to hear from you today. Today we are going to talk about teachers and teaching. I welcome all of your comments and questions. Any questions before we begin? [Okay, I want you to take a minute and imagine yourself as a teacher. Think about what's important to you, what your room looks like, what your students are doing, how you feel. Write down your thoughts as you like. (Pause). Tell me a minute about what you imagine?]*

[Ask: *Have you ever played teacher? What was that like?*]

Ask: *Why are you thinking about becoming a teacher?*

- a. *How long have you been thinking about becoming a teacher?*
- b. *Are there any specific things that have happened in your life that make you want to teach?*

Ask: *What do you think you'll be like as a teacher?*

- a. *How would you help someone who misbehaved?*
- b. *How would you help someone who had a difficult time learning?*
- c. *[How would you figure out what students know?]*
- d. *How would you organize your classroom?*
- e. *[How would you build relationships with students?]*

Ask: *What are good teachers like?*

- a. *How do you know someone is going to be a good teacher?*

Ask: *What are bad teachers like?*

- a. Ask: *How do you know you're not going to like working with a teacher?*

Ask: *What do teachers do? [What are a teacher's responsibilities?]*

- a. Ask: *What are the most important things teachers do?*

Ask: *What will be the best part of being a teacher? The worst part? The hardest part?*

Ask: *Why teaching and not another job, like an artist or engineer?*

Ask: *Is there a specific grade you want to teach? Why?*

*[Ask: Would you have a class meeting? What would it be like?]*

Ask: *What does a teacher do to help you learn?*

Ask: *Are there any kids you think can't learn?*

*[Ask: What qualities do you have that will make you a great teacher?]*

Ask: *What would you like to add? (Repeat this question until they indicate that's all.)*

Read: *Thank you for sharing, that was wonderful. Please let me know if you think of anything else, my door is always open.*

\*Italicized text should be read aloud.

## APPENDIX D

**Parental Permission for a Minor****The Emergence of Teacher Self in the Elementary Classroom  
Consent to be a Research Subject**

Parental Permission for a Minor

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**Introduction**

My name is Chelsea Cole. I am a graduate student from Brigham Young University. I am conducting a research study about what identities and beliefs fifth-grade students have of themselves as a teacher. I am inviting your child to take part in the research because (he/she) is in the fifth grade, and said they wanted to be a teacher when they grow up.

**Procedures**

If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- Your child will respond to a teaching story in a group with two other participants for approximately one (1) hour.
- Your child will respond to a classroom difficulty with two other participants for approximately thirty (30) minutes.
- Your child will be interviewed individually for approximately thirty (30) minutes about teaching.
- Sessions will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your child's statements.
- The group and interview will take place at the school at a time convenient for you or it will take place at a time and location convenient for you.
- The researcher may contact you and your child later to clarify their interview answers for approximately fifteen (15) minutes.
- Total time commitment will be 130 minutes.

**Risks**

There is a risk of loss of privacy, which the researcher will reduce by not using any real names or other identifiers in the written report. The researcher will also keep all data in a locked file



cabinet in a secure location. Only the researcher will have access to the data. At the end of the study, data will be stored for five years and then destroyed.

There may be some discomfort caused by being asked some of the questions. Your child may answer only those questions that your child wants to, or your child may stop the entire process at any time without affecting his/her standing in school or grades in class.

### **Confidentiality**

The research data will be kept in a secure location (or password protected and encrypted) and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept in a locked cabinet or office for five years, and then destroyed.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits for your child's participation in this project. They may form deeper friendships and learn more about themselves, but no guaranteed benefits are available.

### **Compensation**

Participants will receive \$10 for participating and a candy bar of their choice.

### **Questions about the Research**

Please direct any further questions about the study to Chelsea Cole at 801-875-6166 or through email at ccoleasm@gmail.com. You may also contact Stefinee Pinnegar at stefinee.byu.edu.

Questions about your child's rights as a study participant or to submit comment or complaints about the study should be directed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602. Call (801) 422-1461 or send emails to irb@byu.edu.

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to decline to have your child participate in this research study. You may withdraw you child's participation at any point without affecting your child's grade/standing in school, treatment, or benefits.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

**Assent Form****The Emergence of Teacher Self in the Elementary Classroom  
Consent to be a Research Subject****Assent Form**

My name is Chelsea Cole, and I'm a student at BYU. I want to tell you about a research study I am doing. A research study is a special way to find the answers to questions. We are trying to learn more about what fifth-grade students know about being a teacher. You are being asked to join the study because you said you want to be a teacher when you grow up.

If you decide you want to be in this study, this is what will happen.

1. You will read a story and talk about your thoughts in an interview at the school. This will take about 30 minutes to an (1) hour.
2. You will meet again with your group and talk about how you would help a student in a classroom who was doing the wrong thing. This will take about 20 to 30 minutes.
3. You will meet with me and I'll ask you some questions about how you think you might be as a teacher. That will last 30 minutes.
4. I'll review what I learned from you and make sure it is what you meant. This will take about 10 minutes.

The total time you will spend in this study is 2 hours and 10 minutes.

**Can anything bad happen to me?**

It's possible you could feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when you're talking. You may also have less time to do other things.

**Can anything good happen to me?**

I don't know if being in this study will help you. You could possibly form deeper friendships or learn something about yourself. I hope to learn something that will help other people some day.

**Do I have other choices?**

You can choose not to be in this study.

**Will anyone know I am in the study?**

I won't tell anyone you took part in this study. When I am done with the study, I will write a report about what we learned. I won't use your name in the report.

**What happens if I get hurt?**

If you are hurt for any reason, your parent will know exactly how to help you. You can also meet with the school counselor.

**What if I do not want to do this?**

You don't have to be in this study. It's up to you. If you say yes now, but change your mind later, that's okay too. All you have to do is tell me. You can tell me anytime that you don't want to do it anymore. If you decide later not to be in the study, no one will be upset, and it won't change any of your scores in school. If you choose not to finish the study, you will not be able to get the gift card and candy bar.

You will receive a \$10 gift card to Target and a candy bar of your choice for doing all the steps of the research study. Before you say yes to be in this study, be sure to ask Chelsea Cole to tell you more about anything that you don't understand.

If you want to be in this study, please sign and print your name.

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F

## IRB Approval Letter

**Memorandum**

To: Stefinee Pinnegar  
 Department: BYU - EDUC - Teacher Education  
 From: Sandee Aina, MPA, HRPP Manager  
       Wayne Larsen, MAcc, IRB Administrator  
       Bob Ridge, PhD, IRB Chair  
 Date: April 20, 2020  
 IRB#: IRB2020-066  
 Title: The Emergence of Teacher Self in the Elementary Classroom

Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as expedited level, categories 6 and 7.

The approval period is from 04/20/2020 to 04/19/2021 . Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB. Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. A copy of the approved informed consent statement and associated recruiting documents (if applicable) can be accessed in iRIS. No other consent statement should be used. Each research subject must be provided with a copy or a way to access the consent statement.
2. Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.
3. All recruiting tools must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to use.
4. In addition, serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately, with a written report by the PI within 24 hours of the PI's becoming aware of the event. Serious adverse events are (1) death of a research participant; or (2) serious injury to a research participant.
5. All other non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB.
6. A few months before the expiration date, you will receive a prompt from iRIS to renew this protocol. There will be two reminders. Please complete the form in a timely manner to ensure that there is no lapse in the study approval. Please refer to the [IRB website](#) for more information.

Instructions to access approved documents, submit modifications, report complaints and adverse events can be found on the IRB website under iRIS guidance: [http://orca.byu.edu/irb/iRIS/story\\_html5.html](http://orca.byu.edu/irb/iRIS/story_html5.html).