Borderlands of Possibility:

An Interpretive Case Study Exploring the Construction of Professional Identity with Intern Teachers

by

Sharon L. Allan

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Department of Elementary Education

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Abstract

Students enrolled in Bachelor of Education degree programs engage in academic study and field experiences that both validate and challenge their existing understandings of who they are and who they are becoming: their professional identity. This interpretive case study explored the ways in which four intern teachers constructed professional understandings during the 15 weeks of their culminating field experience: a borderland space. Ecologically defined as an *ecotone*, this time in-between - of being a student and becoming a teacher - is a zone of transition, a crossroads of being and becoming. Using a series of conversational interviews where, together, the researcher and the participants explored the experience of living on the borderland, this study revealed the challenges of constructing a professional identity as well as the ways in which these intern teachers gradually, over time and in response to circumstances and professional opportunities, assumed the subject position: teacher. Four essential aspects of this borderland experience have been distilled from the findings of this inquiry and arranged into a conceptual framework to assist teacher educators as they craft curriculum capable of engaging student teachers, intentionally and purposefully, in the consideration of who they are becoming as teachers. Specific recommendations emerging from this inquiry are threefold: first, teacher educators need to explore the ways in which academic coursework prepares student teachers for the relational expectations of the classroom. Second, student teachers should be encouraged to become integrally involved in the life of the school and, more broadly, their educational community; and third, field experience supervisors need to purposefully invite and support conversations with mentor teachers about their critical role as the more capable colleague. This inquiry suggests two points of departure for further research. First, there is need to look more closely at the stories student teachers tell during their final field experience, especially narratives of difficulty, and the ways in which they work to integrate these experiences into the overarching

narrative of their lives. Second, while this inquiry focused on student teachers during their final practicum, an essential aspect of their experience was the relationship between the novice and a more capable colleague. In order to deepen and extend our understanding of this in-between time of transition, a crossroads of being and becoming, more needs to be known about the nature of this crucial relationship on these borderlands of possibility.

key words: professional identity
borderland space
intern teachers
field experience
interpretive case study

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Sharon L. Allan. No part of this thesis has been previously published. The research project, Understandings of a Professional Self: Exploring the Construction of Identity in Pre-Service Teachers, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (No. Pro00043098, 7 November 2013), as well as from the University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education, Ethical Review of Human Subject Research Committee (19 November 2013).

Human being is becoming – striving to be what it is not (yet).
Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 234

This inquiry extended many invitations to explore who I am (becoming) as a learner, as a researcher, and as a teacher educator. Growing up in a family in which education was highly valued, my understanding of who I am was nurtured and refined from childhood. These deep roots provided the confidence and determination needed to engage what is possible: for this I am grateful.

Two gifts have been bestowed on me over these past four years: the gift of time and the gift of wise counsel. In order to complete the coursework required to support this inquiry, two individuals at Medicine Hat College facilitated my journeys to Edmonton over those many months: thank you Linda and Len. And, of course, the demands of thinking and writing, of re-writing and re-thinking have been supported on a daily basis, in a thousand ways, over the past decades. James: you are loved.

Wise counsel sustained me through the challenges presented by this inquiry. Over these past four years - of study, of inquiry, and of writing - Dr. Jill McClay, Dr. Leah Fowler, and Dr. Anna Kirova have offered guidance, support, encouragement, and meticulous attention to detail. I am so very grateful to each of you for traveling these borderlands with me.

Finally, I am affirmed in my belief that teaching is a profession of courage. The willingness of each intern involved in this study to reflect deeply on his or her professional journey through the borderlands of possibility and to share those understandings with me invited a rare, and often poignant, glimpse into who we are (becoming) as teachers of children. Thank you for entrusting those parts of your selves with me.

Table of Contents

FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

Glimpsing Borderlands

> Borderlands are ambiguous and often-unstable realms where boundaries are also crossroads, peripheries are also central places, homelands are also passing-through places, and the end points of empire are also forks in the road. Borderlands are places where stories take unpredictable turns and rarely end as expected.[1]
>
> (Hamalainen & Truett, 2011, p. 338)

For some time now I have been intrigued by the notion of borderlands, of in-between spaces that invite uncertainty and promise possibility. My attention was drawn to the existence of these spaces geographically early in my doctoral studies as I made a weekly journey from the southeastern corner of our province toward Edmonton over roads thinly travelled. Oftentimes, I found myself the solitary vehicle on these southern narrow-shouldered highways and there seemed little upon which to remark - except perhaps the wind and the loneliness of the setting - although occasionally herds of pronghorn antelope could be glimpsed, well camouflaged against their prairie backdrop. Yet, as I paid more attention to the environment around me I began to notice subtle variations, shifting the landscape slightly as I drove northward.

I was not entirely unacquainted with the geography of our province: for many years I taught grade four and the activity that began our exploration of Alberta was the identification of the environmental regions and their location on our maps. Together we divided up the territory, carefully delineating the regions with thick black lines and coloring each - beginning with the grasslands, our home - always bright yellow. Five distinct regions make up our province and

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[1] As I explored the idea of borderlands as a unifying concept in other academic areas it seemed logical to find it used in the discipline of history. However, I discovered that in addition to the more obvious connection to the political borders between nation states, quite literally the border-lands, the field of borderlands history challenges established centrist histories by paying attention to people and spaces at the margins. Hamalainen and Truett (2011) maintain that borderlands history "shares with other new histories postmodern, poststructuralist disenchantment with master narratives and draws its inspiration from the cultural turn, which attuned historians to the micro-workings of power, the ways people create meaning, and the open-endedness of social relationships" (p. 340).

when looking at our maps it was as if, in a blink of an eye, the grasslands are replaced by the parkland with its aspen trees and marshy areas which, in turn, becomes the boreal forest stretching all the way to the Northwest Territories. However, this was not what I observed as I made my way toward the top of the province every week.

Instead, I saw landscapes that are neither *here* nor *there*, neither grassland nor parkland, where foliage of all kinds exists alongside each other. At no one point do the grasslands definitively give themselves over to the parkland; in fact, it is a struggle. The regions of Alberta survive in tension in these spaces with one never quite overtaking the other, where both exist side by side, or perhaps one on top of the other. And as the land gradually becomes more hilly and cultivated, yellow grasses and scrub reappear, only a few kilometers down the highway to be replaced by cows grazing on pastureland alongside marshy sloughs. I became captivated by the notion of these borderlands: rich, shifting spaces of tension that invite ambiguity and struggle. And the more I considered the nature of their existence, the more convinced I became that within these in-between spaces lay a thriving quality of being.

From an ecological point of view these liminal spaces are called *ecotones*.[2] Defined as a transitional zone between two different ecosystems, an *ecotone* is "the border area where two patches meet that have different ecological composition [and that] contain elements of both bordering communities as well as organisms which are characteristic and restricted to the ecotone" (Graves, 2011). And because they are not characterized by sharply delineated borders, Banks-Leite and Ewers (2009) maintain the job of locating and describing these boundaries is a complex one given ever-changing environmental factors affecting the width and composition of

[2] I am grateful to my colleague and friend, Gary McFarlane, who not only taught high school biology for his career in Medicine Hat but is also a life-long inquirer. By first naming this space I described to him metaphorically, he then directed me to numerous resources explaining the ecological significance of *ecotones*. This information validated the tentative understandings I had of these in-between spaces and shaped the metaphor that guides this inquiry.

these dynamic transitional areas, these liminal spaces. As I explored the ecological notion of *ecotones* two characteristics came to inform and support my thinking as I began to consider the construction of teacher identity.

First, these zones of transition emerge from within a particular set of circumstances. They can begin abruptly or unfold gradually; they can also vary greatly in width. Boundaries take on different forms depending on how they are created. The two main causes for the existence of *ecotones* are naturally occurring environmental change and anthropogenic modification to natural habitats (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009). My observations of the shifting landscape on those weekly journeys are finally explained: "As habitats are converted from natural to human land uses, anthropogenic boundaries have been created in almost all natural ecosystems. Common examples of anthropogenic boundaries are those between natural grasslands and croplands, croplands and forests" (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009, p. 2). While these in-between spaces develop naturally over time, what I glimpsed and named borderland spaces were primarily the result of intentional human interaction with the environment.

The second characteristic of ecological borderlands informing this inquiry relates to how neighboring ecosystems experience the flow of organisms, materials, and energy across the shared boundary allowing, typically, one ecosystem to make a significant contribution to the development and maintenance of the other. *Ecotones* often have a greater number of species as well as larger population densities than the communities on either side due to the interaction of one neighboring area on the other. This tendency for biodiversity within the *ecotone* is defined as the "edge effect" (Graves, 2011, p. 5). And occasionally, the flow of resources goes both ways, thereby presenting environmental conditions able to support "edge species" (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009, p. 6). Unable to thrive in either of the two bordering communities, these edge species are uniquely suited for this in-between habitat. Not only does this zone of transition

support the existence of abundant plant and animal life from the bordering ecosystems, it also nurtures unique forms of life within its borderland space. The *ecotone* is, then, a crossroads: a borderland rich with possibility, thriving with being.

From a metaphorical point of view, now named and examined more closely, these ecological in-between spaces glimpsed along my journeys northward offer support for this inquiry: exploring the construction of teacher identity with intern teachers. First of all, these in-between spaces are not uniform: some begin abruptly, others unfold gradually, and the width and depth of each *ecotone* depends upon the ecological context in which it develops. Shaped by both naturally occurring circumstances as well as by intentional human intervention, what exists in the borderlands is directly influenced by the particular context from which it emerges. And so it is with pre-service teachers during their internship: each brings his or her own past experiences of being a student, of being a student teacher in previous practica, to a classroom environment that is singular. It is a zone of transition shaped by past experience and current context.

Second, as with an *ecotone*, what lives in the borderlands is in a state of *becoming*. As organisms, materials, and energy flow reciprocally from one ecosystem to another this rich, shifting space of tension invites ambiguity and struggle, new life and unique prospects. And so it is with pre-service teachers during their internship: they are neither fully a student nor yet a teacher. They are at a crossroads, within a borderland. They are becoming. Taken together, these understandings, provoked by my early observations of the landscape slipping by on my weekly journeys northward and informed later by the ecological concept of an *ecotone*, offer a metaphorical framework for this inquiry into the construction of teacher identity during the weeks of internship that invite uncertainty and promise possibility.

Emerging from My Borderland Experience

> To survive the Borderlands
> you must live *sin fronteras*[3]
> be a crossroads. (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 195)

Once I began to think metaphorically about the notion of borderlands as the transition from one way of being to another, a crossroads of uncertainty and becoming, I recognized numerous experiences over the past three decades of my professional life characterized by tension and ambiguity. Rarely, however, had I viewed them as places of possibility; mostly I saw them as times of struggle; occasionally I had been overwhelmed and made still by their circumstances. Over time I grew to believe these times of uncertainty and transition were best avoided and if not possibly evaded, then endured. Anzaldua (1987) suggests these in-between spaces, *los intersticios*, are a constant state of transition (p. 3) and in order to thrive in the borderlands an individual must *be* a crossroads willing to develop a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity (p. 79). This notion challenges my well-worn view and I am prompted to think in ways other as I struggle to make sense of the experiences that constitute my life.

Carr (1986) argues we are composing and constantly revising the story of our lives. From the vantage point of this moment we look both to the past and to the future as we engage in the constant task of constructing and re-constructing a life that hangs together, that makes sense. And from within this struggle to bring unity and coherence emerge categories of meaning that are central for understanding the course of a life because they encompass and order the things we value and the purposes we pursue (p. 77). For me, at this moment, the notion of borderland spaces assists my struggle to bring unity and coherence to the story of my life and, in particular, to making sense of the significance, value and meaning of my own student teaching experience some three decades ago.

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[3] *sin fronteras*, Spanish "without borders"

So powerful was this experience that even today as I think back on the circumstances of those final months of my teacher education program I am overcome by emotions of all kinds: excitement, regret, sadness, and embarrassment. With a renewed understanding of what it means to be in a time of transition, to struggle in an uncertain in-between space, I recognize, at least in part, the significance of this experience in directing my professional life as a teacher educator and provoking my interest in the construction of professional identity for pre-service teachers: this study has been essentially shaped by my personal experience as a student teacher.

Borderlands

The skies hang low, grey, and wet. The gnarled, black branches of the trees lining our street by the river are bare and the fallen leaves cling to one another in a sodden mass underfoot, so matted together the sharp wind is unable to lift them up. Increasingly the days grow shorter and while it is only early October, the air already carries a promise of winter that, in this prairie climate, may well last for months. Yet, as I think of the weeks ahead and this culmination of my pre-service program, I am hopeful: I am going to *be* a teacher.

Having spent the past months as an after-degree student exploring pedagogy, examining curriculum, and considering instructional methods I believe myself prepared for what is ahead. Studies come naturally to me and together with my successful involvement in two focused field experiences where first, I observed classroom learning and then taught discrete lessons, I feel ready to take on the challenges of a longer, more intensive practicum designed as the final stage in the university's teacher education program. And to be working with children . . . after five years of university studies . . . I can hardly contain my excitement at the idea!

The first few days of the practicum are hectic as I try to take in the circumstances of this grade two classroom in a large open-area shared space. Four separate groups of children have been brought together, each with its own teacher, with the expectation there will be on-going interaction between the groups through the school day and collaboration between all four grade two teachers. Upon first glance I see that each has, however, carved out her own space by using bookshelves and room dividers to act as margins, as fences carefully delineating territory. Bulletin boards and windows border the far side of our grade two area; the thin light filtering in barely casts a shadow.

Janice[4], my mentor teacher, is young and efficient. There are tubs for workbooks - those

[4] Pseudonym used.

just handed in and those already marked ready for distribution and correction - and clear routines for managing children: going to the bathroom, walking in the hallways to the gym and music room, eating lunch at your desk. Desks are arranged in rows facing the front and together with small orange plastic chairs everything is ordered to give the impression of a contained space even though the next group of children is very close by. At the end of every school day, students turn their chairs upside down on their desktops and place their shoes in the hollow, safe and ready for tomorrow. I am allocated a small round table off to the side for my books. As the novelty of the first few days diminishes I find myself assuming well-established routines that, strangely, leave me unsettled and uncertain. And then, bit by bit, the unraveling begins.

My responsibilities in the classroom are clear: every evening I carry tubs of workbooks home for marking so that the next day the children can make their corrections before moving on to the next page. Large red circles identify areas for attention and before school starts in the morning I carefully amend the list kept on the whiteboard of pages still in need of attention. And while I recognize Janice's established routines maintain a well-ordered classroom, I am anxious to plan lessons, to work with small groups, to read aloud with the children. I gather my courage and near the middle of the second week, during a conversation after school, I ask Janice if I will start teaching lessons soon? She suggests I take care of the art activity on Friday afternoon and as she removes two sheets of paper from a large binder behind her desk, she explains how this activity is part of her grade two art unit related to colour; all I will need for Friday is outlined on this lesson plan. She hands it to me. My heart sinks.

As the next week unfolds Janice's growing dissatisfaction with me is palpable. I feel it draping over me like a heavy, wet cloak. Now, in the morning, she is busy in the staffroom right up until the bell rings. She spends her lunch hour away from the school. She is terse and unfriendly. This goes on and after days of not really speaking about my classroom involvement, I am presented with a list of areas in need of improvement: I have not followed up on the corrections. I leave my books on the round table the children need for group work. The art pictures from my lesson last week were supposed to be hung on the bulletin boards some time ago. Other teachers comment in the staffroom on how the children talk too loudly in the hallway when I take them to the gym. She is efficient in her manner and detailed in her descriptions of how I am not measuring up. I am crushed.

Overwhelmed by emotion and ashamed of being considered so very inadequate, I carefully staple the offending pictures on the bulletin board one by one, trying desperately to keep the tears inside, while waiting for the time when I will be picked up. Janice has left the school, but the manner in which she spoke about her list of concerns leads me to understand she is not interested in working with me. She simply wants me to leave. I cannot believe that what started with such excitement and promise is now, some three weeks later, broken. It hardly

seems possible I can continue in this classroom given these circumstances but I feel powerless, without direction, alone. As I run out of the school I feel my chest tightening and my throat closing up; it takes all my effort to maintain some measure of composure until the car door closes and the ragged sobs, unleashed, fill the enclosed space.

I try to contact my university supervisor by telephone in his office. I leave a message and call back a few minutes later in the hope he is now available. No answer. I phone the program supervisor in her office. No answer. It is late in the day and everyone is gone. I am, by this time, almost frantic with worry as questions crowd in: What will happen now? How can I finish this practicum? Who should I talk to? But the most insidious questions emerge later: Why has this happened? What have I done to precipitate this response from Janice? What should I have *done* differently? How should I have *been* different? In this precarious place of self-doubt, close to desperation, I do not know how to make right what seems to have gone so terribly wrong.

These questions plague me in the days that follow, eating away at my confidence and undermining my determination to be a teacher. As the questions swirl around in my head, I grow increasingly ashamed of my poor showing and deeply embarrassed that this has happened. I feel responsible and recognize, too late, that I should have attended more carefully to Janice's directions: I should have put up the art pictures more promptly, I should have tidied up my table, I should have required the children to be quieter in the hallway. I have failed and struggle to make sense of this experience alongside my success as a student. And what is going to happen now?

Some days later I am asked to attend a meeting with Janice and the program supervisor. Sitting at the staffroom table I am so filled with worry and apprehension my hands shake as I place in front of me my list of what Janice outlined as my shortcomings with a short explanation beside each. This is my attempt to offer some sort of rationale for my actions however, when I share them, they sound defensive, like feeble excuses offered for a poor showing, by someone who should have known better. I see from Janice's face that these explanations are not sufficient to bridge the gulf between us; in fact, they appear to be validating her belief that I am not suited for this placement and perhaps even for teaching. As she presents her observations from the past weeks, my heart grows heavy with the criticisms. I feel powerless and wonder how this has happened when I was so very sure of my purpose and direction. At the conclusion of the meeting the program supervisor suggests an alternate placement in a different school, in another grade. I feel bruised, weak, and vulnerable. It is a sad and unsatisfactory end to what had begun, just a few weeks ago, with excitement and promise.

The remnants of this experience have lingered in me over the three decades since. As a capable

student entering her final field experience I knew a great deal about the nature of children, pedagogy, and curriculum; my knowing, however, was not sufficient to support the successful completion of this practicum and at the centre of the turmoil lay thoughts that insidiously undermined who I understood myself to be. While clinging to the notion of knowing *about* teaching, I questioned deeply whether I would *be* a teacher.

The recollection of being so very alone and in such a fragile place shaped my own work as a mentor teacher during the years I welcomed student teachers to my classroom. More recently, as a teacher educator and program coordinator in a community college in southeastern Alberta, I have had opportunity to come alongside student teachers in circumstances similar to my own. In those moments their uncertainty and turmoil have the power to transcend the decades and remind me of what it is like to be in this tenuous place. It is always an emotional experience as we talk about the challenges and decisions ahead, in large part because these student teachers view their current struggles, much as I did three decades ago, as failure: the failure to be a teacher.

And yet, that time in-between offers opportunities rich with possibility; or, at least, it could if understood intentionally as a borderland space, an *ecotone*, as *los intersticios* inviting ambiguity, tension, and complexity (Anzaldua, 1987). Regardless of whether the field experience is riddled with difficulty or characterized by productive interaction, I am increasingly convinced that this final practicum is a unique time in the professional development of a pre-service teacher. Alsup (2006) writes:

> Pre-service teachers find themselves living at the intersection of multiple worlds and multiple ways of knowing. Ideally, their goal is not to minimize or erase these borderlands, but instead to learn to occupy the space between them. The borderland is no longer defined as a gap or absence of identity, but rather as a space in which to experience

a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other. (p. 15)

This inquiry, emerging from deep within my own experience, explores these borderlands with four intern teachers - David, Grace, Laura, and Mark[5] - completing their final field experience in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge.

Professional Semester III (PS III) is considered unique in the province of Alberta. Designed to build upon instructional skills developed during two previous intensive practica (Professional Semester I and II), it offers pre-service teachers the opportunity to engage in a full term internship comprised of half-time teaching, professional study, and significant involvement in the life of the school. In addition to acting as the professional bridge between the more formal aspects of their academic coursework and the official beginning of their teaching careers, the PS III Internship exists as a borderland space. As the culminating experience in their teacher education program, these 15 weeks are more than simply a time of transition, from being a student to now being a teacher; rather, they are a rich time in-between, a liminal space, that invites consideration of diverse ways of being.

During our conversations over their internship, we worked together to construct understandings of what it means to be a teacher. Their voices were at times anxious, troubled, joyous, and confident. And throughout those weeks, I was reminded that I, too, inhabit a crossroads of uncertainty and becoming as I explore what it means to be a teacher educator. Truly, we never fully arrive: professional identity is a life-long construction. My journey, beginning all those years ago, has unfolded in a variety of contexts, with all manner of struggles, challenges, and triumphs. And so, my voice joins those of the four interns in this study on the borderlands of possibility.

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[5] Participants are identified by pseudonyms.

Statement of Problem

> Consciously we teach what we know; unconsciously we teach who we are.
> (Hamachek, 1999, p. 209)

Students enrolled in Bachelor of Education degree programs engage in course work and field experiences that may both validate and challenge their existing understandings of who they are and who they are becoming. Moreover, in my experience, they are often unaware of how important these self-understandings are and the essential role they assume in shaping classroom learning. This may be due, in large part, to the fact that a great deal of coursework in teacher education programs is focused on first understanding the official programs of study as outlined by provincial requirements and then creating engaging learning experiences to meet these expectations. There is no question that examining how children learn, being knowledgeable about curricula, and recognizing appropriate teaching strategies is necessary preparation for pre-service teachers, yet Hamachek (1999) states that "teachers teach not only a curriculum of study, they also become part of it" (p. 208).

Aoki (2005b) provokes a deeper appreciation for the relationship between teachers and the official curriculum by suggesting we find ourselves "living in tensionality – a tensionality that emerges, in part, from indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience" (p. 159). This struggle between what a teacher ought to *do*, as defined by the curriculum, tugs and pulls against who the teacher *is* as he or she lives within the classroom prompting us to "see and hear who we *are* as teachers" (Aoki, 2005a, p. 197, italics in original). Ultimately, according to Aoki, "what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers' 'doings' flow from who they are, their beings. Teaching is fundamentally a mode of being" (2005b, p. 160).

Both Hamachek (1999) and Aoki (2005a, 2005b) maintain that the content of the

curriculum as outlined by official documents and carefully articulated expectations for student learning cannot be viewed apart from who a teacher *is* within the context of the classroom. And while Hamachek (1999) identifies the existence of this relationship, Aoki (2005b) augments this understanding by suggesting "to be alive is to live in tension; that, in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise" (p. 162). The struggle between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience becomes, then, a dwelling place that invites us to think deeply about who we are knowing that it is "not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it" (p. 163).

These understandings have prompted me to look carefully at how, as teacher educators, we engage pre-service teachers in the consideration of who they are and who they are becoming. As teachers and students establish relationships emerging from and embedded within learning experiences in the classroom, the essential connection between what we know and who we are is made manifest. Yet teacher education students, often fully occupied with lesson and unit planning to meet coursework expectations and then later taken up with curricular organization and classroom management during field experiences, may not fully appreciate that who we are is an essential aspect of the curriculum that shapes learning. In other words, while both the knowledge and the skills acquired during academic coursework is necessary preparation for the classroom it is not entirely sufficient. As teacher educators we are compelled to engage our students in consideration of who they are becoming as teachers: their mode of being (Aoki, 2005b, p. 160).

Purpose and Research Questions

> We are surrounded by layers of voices. Let us beckon these voices to speak to us, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense of teaching that stirs within each of us. (Aoki, 2005a, p. 188)

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which pre-service

teachers construct understandings of who they are becoming as teachers during the borderlands of their final field experience. While teacher education programs are typically designed to include coursework focused on curriculum implementation and field experiences to offer opportunity for apprenticeship with the overall goal of preparing student teachers for their professional responsibilities, Hamachek (1999) and Aoki (2005b) suggest who we are as teachers - our mode of being - more essentially shapes learning for children in classrooms. With this in mind, four questions related to the construction and development of professional identity in pre-service teachers directed this inquiry:

- In what ways do pre-service teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?
- What is the nature of the relationship between expertise acquired during formal teacher education coursework and who pre-service teachers are becoming as teachers?
- How do the stories pre-service teachers tell shape the construction of their professional identity?
- What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of pre-service teachers?

These questions shaped the prompts offered to participants in the Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A), informed the compilation of interview questions (Appendix B), and guided my preparation for additional dialogue with David, Grace, Laura, and Mark during the weeks of their internship in an elementary classroom during the winter of 2014.

Significance of this Inquiry

I am what I am not yet. (Greene, 2001)

The cultural institution of schooling plays a vital role in the transformation of an individual. Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) maintain school is the site for the production of persons. While acknowledging the early years of school attendance as a critical time of transition between the family and the larger institutions of work and public life, they state that

"involvement [in school] doesn't just generate knowledge and skill, it leads to what we call *ontological work*: the transformation of the human person" (p. 135, italics in original). This transformation is accomplished as the child adopts the subject position of student, forms a relationship with the teacher, and through classroom discourse constructs a new way of being. However, this new way of being - a student - does not replace or supplant that of being a child. Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) explain:

> And in school the child is no longer simply child-in-family, but now becomes also student-in-classroom. The new subject position does not replace or supplant the former – after all, the children return to their families at the end of each school day. But nor does it simply supplement it. As the child becomes able to adopt the new subject position and manage the appropriate transitions between the two, a *split* is introduced: the child as person assumes different positions of subjectivity in the two incommensurate contexts. The new subject position changes the way the child lives the old – he or she can never go home again in quite the same way. (p. 148, italics in original)

In addition, cultural mediators, such as the new symbolic media of reading, writing, and arithmetic, open up new vistas and further transform the child's participation in the world and confirm the new subject position of student (p. 149). This transformation is not, however, ever fully accomplished: "As school takes over from the family, the social and historical production of the person the child will become continues" (p. 150).

With this understanding - that the transformation of the person is an ongoing, dynamic process facilitated by the institution of schooling - I suggest pre-service teacher education is the site for the production of teachers. And by this I do not mean only the accumulation of knowledge about learning theory, curriculum, lesson and unit planning, and classroom management. These are, of course, the acquired skills and background understandings necessary

for assuming responsibility for children and their learning. Rather, teacher education is the site of the production of teachers ontologically: who we are and who we are becoming. Just as a child arrives at school and is, over time, transformed through discourse, cultural mediation, and within crucial relationships, a student entering her first year of a teacher education program must begin to construct a new subject position: the teacher. While never complete, this transformation culminates in teacher education programs during the final field experience: that borderland space characterized by both uncertainty and possibility. School, Packer (2001) argues, ”involves ontological change, change in the kind of person a child becomes” (p. 131); I suggest these borderlands have the power to invite ontological change: change in the kind of teacher a student becomes.

This inquiry contributes to our growing understanding of the ways in which pre-service teachers view themselves as emerging professionals. In addition, it offers insight into the programmatic structures that exist within teacher education to invite consideration of who we are becoming as well as the incidental or unintentional experiences that shape the construction of a professional identity. Certainly, the journey to *be* a teacher begins well before a post-secondary student enters a Faculty of Education and continues through the academic coursework organized to prepare pre-service teachers for their classroom responsibilities. Yet, student teachers often find themselves ill equipped for the realities of the classroom during field experiences (Britzman, 1986; 2003). This recognition of student teacher difficulty has led to a growing appreciation of the critical role of education coursework to shape who a teacher is becoming (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, 2010; Korthagan, 2004; Sachs, 2005) through what Danielewicz (2001) has labeled a “pedagogy for identity development” (p. 131). Ultimately, if who we are as teachers - our professional self - has the power to influence the quality of learning opportunities for children and youth in classrooms (Hamachek, 1999; Aoki, 2005b) then the experience of constructing a

teacher identity during the culminating field experience of a teacher education program is an ontological *ecotone* worthy of exploration.

CHAPTER TWO

Knowing and Being on the Borderlands

Constructivist Paradigm

> All research is interpretive: guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13)

A paradigm, as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994), "may be viewed as a set of *basic beliefs* that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world,' the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (p. 107, italics in original). Whether this set of essential beliefs is described as a "philosophical orientation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 3), a "theoretical orientation or perspective" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 33) or as a "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13), it is clear that each paradigm is "a way of looking at the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 33) that "makes particular demands on the researcher, including questions that are asked and the interpretations that are brought to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 13).

This inquiry emerges from a constructivist paradigm. I believe each person actively constructs meaning based on interaction with his or her surroundings and often together with others in community. In direct contrast to the view that there is a fundamental separation between the individual and an independent world to be discovered, a constructivist epistemology holds that what individuals understand of their experience and of their world is actively fashioned within a social and cultural context. Crotty (1998) describes the socially constructed nature of meaning-making as follows:

> All meaningful reality, precisely as meaningful reality, is socially constructed . . . [for] whether we would describe the object of the interaction as natural or social, the basic

> generation of meaning is always social, for the meanings with which we are endowed arise in and out of interactive human community. (p. 55)

But what of who we are: our ontology?

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) maintain that while the constructivist paradigm is most often articulated exclusively in terms of its epistemological claims and the manner in which knowledge is constructed, a hidden non-dualist ontology is at work within the sociocultural perspective such that learning must be thought of, ultimately, as ontological transformation: "What constructivists call learning is only part of a larger process of human change and transformation. Acquiring knowledge and expertise always entails participation in relationship and community and transformation both of the person and the social world" (p. 239). From a socioculturalist perspective, then, what I know is in the service of who I am becoming. This non-dualist ontology places me in the midst as I actively seek and construct meaning based on interaction with my surroundings and with others in community. And in this process I am transformed.

Embedded within these essential ideas related to epistemology and ontology, this inquiry has been more specifically shaped by two sets of theoretical understandings that, taken together, offer a comprehensive framework for exploring the borderland between being a student and becoming a teacher. I have come to see these understandings, visually, as two strands, drawn together and entwined. First, we make sense of our lives in and through the stories we tell. Who we are - our ontological being - is constituted in these narratives told and retold of experience interpreted and reinterpreted (Bruner, 2004). This section will briefly examine the work of Crites (1971), Bruner (1986, 2004), Carr (1985, 1986), Polkinghorne (1988, 1991), and Kerby (1991) in order to explore the notion of narrative ways of knowing and the manner in which "the stories we tell are part and parcel of our becoming" (Kerby, 1991, p. 54).

Second, these stories of our lives - who we are and who we are becoming - are nurtured within the socio-cultural historical context in which we live. So deeply a part of our understanding of experience, these tales come to guide the self-telling of life narratives while at the same time altering the very world in which we live. In order to draw together these strands - the cultural context in which we live with the constituting stories of our lived experience - aspects of socio-cultural historical theory, as outlined by Vygotsky (1978; Vygotsky & Luria, 1993) and taken up more recently by other scholars (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 2002, 2003; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Packer & Tappan, 2001; Packer & Goicochea, 2000) will be examined with particular attention to the manner in which a person is constructed: "People transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities, which in turn contribute to changes in their cultural communities across generations" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 37). Ultimately, these two sets of understandings, emerging from a constructivist paradigm, offered a compelling theoretical framework to guide this inquiry as I explored the construction of professional identity with pre-service teachers during the rich, shifting borderland space created by the 15 weeks of their internship in an elementary school classroom.

Narrative Ways of Knowing and Being

> We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly - in ourselves. (Okri, 1997, p. 46)

This section highlights five authors whose work has influenced my thinking about how narratives shape our meaning-making and constitute our lives: Crites (1971), Bruner (1986, 2004), Carr (1985, 1986), Polkinghorne (1988, 1991), and Kerby (1991). I recognize this is, at best, a broad overview and that there are others who could contribute to a narrative framework; however, these five authors offer clear justification for viewing the stories of our lives as both a way of knowing and the manner in which our selves are constructed over time. These

understandings shaped the manner in which I invited and considered the narratives told by pre-service teachers in their final field experience as rich opportunities to "open up insight" (L. C. Fowler, personal communication, July 8, 2013) about the experience of becoming a teacher.

Crites (1971) argues that, "the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative" (p. 291): our lives are shaped and defined by both sacred and mundane stories. He distinguishes these two types of stories by suggesting mundane stories are those directly seen or heard, "set within a world of consciousness [and] are also among the most important means by which people articulate and clarify their sense of that world" (p. 296). These mundane stories shift as the world changes and are subject to continual reinterpretation and negotiation. On the other hand, sacred stories, and the symbolic worlds they project, "are not like monuments that men behold, but like dwelling places. People live in them" (p. 295) and while unutterable, these stories are known best of all. Together, sacred and mundane stories offer qualitative substance to our experience:

> Life also imitates art. The stories people hear and tell, the dramas they see performed, not to speak of the sacred stories that are absorbed without being directly heard or seen, shape in the most profound way the inner story of experience. We imbibe a sense of the meaning of our own baffling dramas from these stories, and this sense of its meaning in turn affects the form of a man's experience and the style of his actions. (p. 304)

Crites observes, then, that not only do we live by our narratives, we also live in them: we are shaped and defined by the sacred and mundane stories of our lives.

Bruner (1986) outlines two modes of thought - paradigmatic and narrative - each providing distinct ways of ordering experience and of constructing reality; while complementary, each has its own set of operating principles and criteria of well-formedness: "a good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds" (p. 11). Developed over the millennia to assist

us in the work of logic, mathematics, and sciences by employing "categorization or conceptualization and the operations by which categories are established, instantiated, idealized, and related one to the other to form a system" (p. 12), the paradigmatic mode leads to "good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis" (p. 13). He suggests we know a very great deal about this mode of thinking that has come to shape Western thought, convincing us of the truth of an argument through rigorous logic, principled hypotheses, and empirical proof. And yet, our lives are filled with stories built upon concern for the human condition that persuade us, not of truth, but of their verisimilitude, their lifelikeness.

The second mode of thinking, a narrative understanding of the world, deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions and leads, Bruner (1986) suggests, to good stories, gripping drama, and believable - but not necessarily "true" - historical accounts. Claiming "we seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative" (Bruner, 2004, p. 692), this second way of knowing is caught up in understanding the details of experience as located in time and place:

> The narrative mode deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place. Joyce thought of the particularities of the story as epiphanies of the ordinary. (Bruner, 1986, p. 13)

Narrative understandings communicate the manner in which life is lived by identifying "epiphanies of the ordinary" (Bruner, 1986) and in doing so, allow for the construction of worlds very different from those created through paradigmatic thinking. Ultimately, Bruner maintains, the mind's principal function is the creation of the world in which we live.

Believing there is no indigenous reality against which we compare our constructed world in order to establish a form of real world correspondence, he argues for a constructivist view stating that "we cannot know an aboriginal reality; that there is none" (Bruner, 1986, p. 158). Our life narratives are both a reflection of who we are as well as a constituting agent in our becoming; he outlines this position clearly:

> I believe that the ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but for directing it into the future. I have argued that a life as led is inseparable from a life as told - bluntly, a life is not "how it was" but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold. (Bruner, 2004, p. 708)

More than simply shaping the way in which we view or understand the world (out there), narrative ways of knowing actually construct the reality in which we live. Bruner offers a critical foundation for understanding ontology, the consideration of being, and epistemology, the consideration of knowing, through narrative structures that both make sense of experience past, present and future while at the same time constituting the very world in which we live.

Carr (1985) maintains that narrative is our primary way of organizing and giving coherence to our experience and that "far from being a distortion of, denial of, or escape from 'reality,' is in fact an extension and confirmation of its primary features" (p. 111). In a sweeping statement he writes: "life that is not some kind of story is unthinkable - or more precisely, unlivable" (p. 120) and addresses arguments put forth by others that suggest narrative tales exist independently of our experience and serve as mere ornamentation or clothing for our experience: "narrative form is not a dress which covers something else but the structure inherent in the human experience and action" (p. 65). Carr clearly establishes the primacy and the inherent quality of

narrative ways of structuring experience.

In addition, Carr (1986) writes that from the vantage point of "the Now" (p. 95) we survey both the past, with all its familiarity, and the future, with all its possibility, and seek narrative coherence in the everyday activities and experiences of our lives as well as in its overarching story. Imposed upon us, whether we seek it or not, "what is at stake on the plane of 'life' is my own coherence as a self, the unity and integrity of my personal identity" (p. 96). Described as a constant task, sometimes a struggle and when it succeeds as an achievement, we seek a narrative that unifies our experiences and our selves:

> Things need to make sense. We feel the lack of sense when it goes missing. The unity of the self, not as an underlying identity but as a life that hangs together, is not a pregiven condition but an achievement. Some of us succeed, it seems, better than others. None of us succeed totally. We keep at it. What we are doing is telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are. (p. 97)

For Carr, the coherence of the everyday stories of our lives as well as the narrative that makes sense of our time from birth to death is an essential aspect of being human.

Polkinghorne (1988) reiterates Bruner's perspective suggesting that narrative structures are the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful. By cognitively drawing together and organizing human actions, then configuring the parts into a whole, meaning is fashioned. Crafted over time and from the events and experiences of our lives, narratives provide a structure that give form to our understanding of purpose and to our human existence: "It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful" (p. 11). And in the process of making sense of the events of my life, my self is constructed.

In contrast to notions of the self as a substance or a thing, Polkinghorne (1991) suggests that the concept of the self must be understood as "becoming" (p. 144). As I attend to events and

personal plots, always seeking a unified and integrated narrative, I am actually constructing my self: “The story that serves to configure a person’s life into a self and to provide personal identity is the self-narrative” (p. 145). Rather than a substance possessing a list of properties and attributes, who we are, maintains Polkinghorne (1991), is both constructed and the result of interpretation (p. 151). Specifically, he addresses the role of narrative configuration in the development of self:

> We achieve our personal identities and self concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (1988, p. 150)

In the midst of an unfolding story my life is rendered meaningful and my self is constructed with consideration of past events and future anticipations.

Finally, Kerby (1991) specifically addresses the question of how the self is created and suggests “the stories we tell are part and parcel of our becoming” (p. 54). Indigenous to human experience, narrative structures act as the “primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves” (p. 3). Inspired by the work of Ricoeur, Kerby draws together the various roles that language and narration play in what he describes as the “life of the mind” and extends his explanations to focus on the self: “that mysterious ‘entity’ so central to the notion of mind” (p. 1). Contrary to the notion that the self exists autonomously, his text, *Narrative and the Self* (1991), argues that the self is constructed in the narratives that shape our lives:

> The self is given content, is delineated and embodied, primarily in narrative constructions or stories. The development of selves (and thereby of persons) in our narratives is one of the most characteristically human acts that justifiably remain of central importance to both our personal and communal existence. (p. 1)

Who we are becoming, the construction of our self, is an essentially human act served by and constituted through language.

Suggesting that language can no longer be considered a neutral tool used for communicating or mirroring back what we otherwise discover in our external reality, Kerby (1991) asserts that language is itself an "important formative part of that reality, part of its very texture" (p. 2). He credits Gadamer and Ricoeur for drawing our attention away from language as a mere reflection or articulation of an existing external reality to understanding it as a constitutive force in its construction (p. 2); the way in which language does this, argues Kerby, is through the formulation of narrative emplotment:

> It has become increasingly evident to numerous influential theorists and practitioners that narratives are a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately, of ourselves. Narrative emplotment appears to yield a form of understanding of human experience, both individual and collective, that is not directly amenable to other forms of exposition or analysis. (p. 3)

Understanding our experience over time is made possible by the ability of narrative emplotment to draw together episodes and sequences of events into meaningful networks of significance.

Through the process of embedding seemingly isolated acts and sequences of events of our lives within a framing context or history, we establish networks of significance and "temporal expanses are given *meaning*" (Kerby, 1991, p. 3, italics in original). Offering the notion of the hermeneutic circle and the relationship between the parts and the whole as an example, Kerby

explains that the solitary events of a life are given meaning as they are understood to be part of the whole they comprise; the whole is only given meaning through its relationship to the parts that make it up. This aspect of narrative construction unifies the isolated experiences of a life stretched across time into the overall story of my life. And in this process meaning is ascribed:

> Narrative is precisely the privileged medium for understanding human experience, an experience that is paradigmatically a temporal and hence historical reality. Stated another way, it is in and through various forms of narrative emplotment that our lives - and thereby our very selves - attain meaning. (p. 4).

The ongoing fashioning of my life story is not only descriptive of the self, but must also be viewed, more importantly Kerby suggests, as "fundamental to the emergence and reality of that subject" (p. 4). Language has, then, a constitutive role in self-formation and self-understanding: we come to know who we are and who we are becoming as we construct the narratives of our lives within our temporal, cultural, and historical context.

Our Sociocultural Historical Context

> Culture and environment remake a person not just by giving him certain knowledge, but by transforming the very structure of his psychological processes, by developing in him certain techniques for using his own abilities. (Vygotsky & Luria, 1993, p. 230)

The work of Vygotsky, referred to interchangeably as the sociocultural, sociohistorical, or cultural-historical theory of human development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 2003), recognizes the essential role of culture in the construction of the individual. In contrast to the view describing human development with a botanical metaphor, he maintains it is absolutely impossible to reduce child development to mere growth and maturation of innate qualities as in the case of a plant; instead Vygotsky identifies the social and cultural origins of the most complex, unique forms of human behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978). Together with Luria, his student and colleague, he writes:

> Examining man as a creature who remained entirely with the same essential qualities that he acquired from nature - even if they are multiplied - means making an enormous mistake. Man is a social creature, and social cultural conditions profoundly change him, developing a whole series of new forms and techniques in his behavior. (1993, p. 213)

These new forms and techniques, nurtured by both culture and environment, construct a person not merely by providing the individual with particular kinds of knowledge but in a much more essential manner by transforming the very structure of his or her psychological processes. Vygotsky clearly maintains that individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its context; if a person is constructed - given being - within this cultural, social and historical milieu in which we live then a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of culture is essential.

What is culture? Packer and Tappan (2001) suggest culture is a dwelling place that makes it possible for a human being to become a person; yet, it is so pervasive we rarely notice its existence. They write:

> Culture is for humans what water is for fish – without it we would cease to exist, or certainly we would not have become what we are. The difficulty is that, just as fish would presumably give no thought to water were they able to give thought to anything, culture is so much part of our lives, so much part of who and what we are, that it is hard to get it clearly enough into our sights to ascertain just what kind of thing it is. Indeed it's really no kind of thing at all – culture is what makes it possible for something to be a thing, and for a human being to be a person. (p. 4)

Akin to water for fish, culture is often metaphorically described as the very "air we breathe" which, until challenged through interaction with someone from another part of the world or an experience of living in a different context, is not shown for what it is: the particular cultural

artifacts that mediate who I am within my environment. If culture is understood to be made up of the arbitrating artifacts of an intentionally constructed world, Packer and Tappan (2001) suggest "it follows that development is a matter of becoming adept at handling the cultural tools and signs that mediate human action" (p. 7). We are, then, constantly in the process of becoming skilled at taking up the "tool kit of concepts and ideas and theories" (Bruner, 1986, p. 73) a culture provides oftentimes with little or no conscious recognition of what we are employing and to what end. So pervasive and quiet is culture that we almost always take our own community's ways of doing things for granted until, like the fish removed from the water, we are confronted with other ways of functioning in the world. This does not imply, however, that culture is an unchanging entity. On the contrary, Cole and Gaidamaschko (2007) assert that "culture is not a random array of artifacts, but rather a heterogeneously, dynamically changing set of practices and resources that require constant active engagement for their continued existence" (p. 208).

The dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes. Building upon the work of Vygotsky, Rogoff (1990) posits an embedded relationship between person and culture. She offers the example of the 'forest and the trees' to illustrate how individual and cultural processes are mutually embedded within the other. While possible to examine a single tree or to assess the forest as a larger entity, it is not sufficient to think of their relationship as discrete elements influencing the other: "they represent different angles of analysis of an integrated process" (p. 26). And so it is with human actions and the cultural context: "I regard context as inseparable from human actions in cognitive events or activities. I regard all human activity as embedded in context; there are neither context-free situations nor de-contextualized skills" (p. 27).

Vygotsky and Luria (1993) suggest the construction of an individual assumes a dynamic character when we live in contact with the social environment: "These psychological formations

are the product of social influence on the human beings; they are the representation and fruit of the external cultural surroundings in the life of the organism" (p. 231). And Cole (1985) summarizes the sociocultural position on the relationship between cognitive development and culture by stating that "the individual and the social were conceived of as mutually constitutive elements of a single, interacting system; cognitive development was treated as a process of acquiring culture" (p. 148). Rogoff (2003) augments this notion by describing human development as "a process in which people transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities, which in turn contribute to changes in their cultural communities across generations" (p. 37). Thus, individual and cultural processes are mutually constituting as people of each generation share, make use of, and extend the cultural tools and practices inherited from previous generations while simultaneously contributing to their transformation. And all of this accomplished with little overt thought given to the very air we breathe - our cultural context.

Mediating function of signs and tools and social sources of development. The nature of this dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes can be clarified by first, briefly exploring the mediating function of tools and signs and second, by examining the social sources of development. For Vygotsky, individual intellectual development must be understood as embedded within and emerging from a milieu that offers social support through interaction with others. In addition, by rejecting the dichotomy between the internal and the external, he outlines how cultural signs and tools draw together the social context and the individual through mediation and are considered essential aspects of meaning making. Both of these sets of understandings inform this inquiry conceptually as well as practically.

Cultural signs and tools. Bruner (2004) observes that "man uses nature and the toolkit of culture to gain control of the world and of himself . . . [and] through using tools, man changes himself and his culture" (p. 10, 11). Explained by Vygotsky (1978) as "mutually linked yet

separate in a child's cultural development" (p. 54) both signs and tools carry out a mediating function in the development of an individual. He suggests their distinction lies in the different ways they orient human behavior. Tools serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity and are, therefore, externally oriented (p. 55). They aim at mastering and triumphing over nature and include various systems of counting, mnemonic devices, algebraic symbol systems, works of art, diagrams, maps, and mechanical drawings. More recently, socioculturalists have augmented this list to recognize computers, calendars, and other symbol systems as cultural tools (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 193). Signs, on the other hand, are internally oriented and focus on mastering oneself (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55). But how does this occur? What role does mediation play in drawing together the external and the internal, the social and the individual?

Contrary to learning theory in which a stimulus is seen to directly cause a response, an individual actively modifies the stimulus situation during the process of mediation as a part of the process of responding to it (Cole & Scribner, 1987, p. 14). Vygotsky (1978) writes:

> Every elementary form of behavior presupposes a direct reaction to the task set before the organism. But the structure of sign operations requires an intermediate link between the stimulus and the response. This intermediate link is a second order stimulus (sign) that is drawn into the operation where it fulfills a special function; it creates a new relation between S and R. . . . In this new process the direct impulse to react is inhibited, and an auxiliary stimulus that facilitates the completion of the operation by indirect means is incorporated. (p. 39, 40)

And because the intermediate link is viewed as something "drawn into" a particular function, the individual must be actively engaged in establishing this mediated connection (p. 39). For Vygotsky, culture does not act directly (or indiscriminately) on individuals; rather, individuals, through the mediated use of signs and tools, actively construct understandings that become ever-

more internalized: “The internalization of cultural forms of behavior involves the reconstruction of psychological activity on the basis of sign operations” (p. 57). And while there are numerous cultural tools and signs that enable the internalization of that which is external, he identifies the primacy of speech and language by asserting that children “solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 26).

Narratives as mediating cultural tools. Stetsenko (2004) argues that cultural tools represent humankind’s greatest invention by forming the basis of a specifically human way of life, creating everything that is human in humans:

> Cultural tools allow people to embody their collective experiences (e.g. skills, knowledge, beliefs) in external forms such as material objects (e.g. words, pictures, books, houses), patterns of behavior organized in space and time (e.g. rituals), and modes of acting, thinking, and communicating in everyday life. (p. 505)

Moreover, because these complex tools hold experiences and skills of previous generations, when internalized through the process of mediation, a dimension of social history and culture is brought into each individual’s development (p. 505).

Bruner (2004) suggests that culture must be viewed “first, as a set of connected ways of acting, perceiving, and talking and then finally as a generative system of taking conscious thought, using instruments of reflection that the culture “stores” as theories, scenarios, plots, prototypes, [and] maxims” (p. 28, 29). This internalization of what is externally manifest within our culture takes place principally he argues, in verbal exchanges which are themselves products of the broader cultural-historical system (Bruner, 1997, p. 68). Ultimately, cultural meaning, embodied in our narratives and mediated through language, comes to guide our lives: “Stories are a culture’s coin and currency” (Bruner, 2002, p. 15). As signs and tools of culture, narratives play a powerful mediating role.

This inquiry explored cultural narratives of teaching and the manner in which they are made meaningful. For pre-service teachers, narratives of learning to teach, of the role of the teacher, and of the value of working with children as a life's work, are of particular interest because through the process of mediation, these tools and signs of culture are made personally significant as they are taken up and internalized. In this manner the individual is transformed. I was also interested in the personal tales that have come to constitute who the student teacher is because the stories we tell ourselves, written over time and in concert with narratives existing within our culture, construct our very selves. Bruner (2002) explains:

> Narrative acts of self-making are usually guided by unspoken, implicit cultural models of what selfhood should be, might be - and of course, shouldn't be. Not that we are slaves to culture. Rather there are many possible, ambiguous models of selfhood even in simple or ritualized cultures. Yet all cultures provide presuppositions and perspective about selfhood, rather like plot summaries or homilies for telling oneself or others about oneself. (p. 65, 66)

This study has been directly informed by Vygotsky's understanding of mediation and the manner in which individuals are constituted and transformed by cultural narratives. There are, however, two additional points emerging from this brief overview worthy of repeating and being made more apparent. First, the individual is actively involved in establishing the mediated link between what exists externally and ultimately, the new understandings that are internalized. Mediation is an instrumental act: an act of agency. We are not controlled by what is external but play an active role in the construction of knowledge and the transformation of our selves. Second, Vygotsky's framework is hope-full. As we internalize that which is external, culture itself is altered. Change is not only possible but inevitable. Both of these qualities of Vygotsky's work indirectly supported this inquiry.

Social sources of development. Vygotsky (1978) also recognized the essential role of others in human development. Children learn to use the signs and tools for thinking provided by a culture through their interaction with more skilled partners in the zone of proximal development. Through the guidance and imitation of others within the social context, the person is transformed:

> We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates a zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90)

This is the process of internalization wherein every function appears twice: first on the social level and later on the individual level: "first, *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)" (p. 57, italics in original).

Bruner (1985) suggests Vygotsky's basic belief is that social transaction is the fundamental vehicle of education. Learning involves entry into a culture via induction by more skilled members: "Aspirant members of a culture learn from their tutors, the vicars of their culture, how to understand the world . . . [and] there is no way, none, in which a human being could possibly master that world without the aid and assistance of others for, in fact, that world *is* others" (p. 32, italics in original). Expanding this notion, Rogoff (1990) uses the word "apprenticeship" to describe how mature members of a culture introduce novices to both the overt aspects of a skill as well as to the more hidden inner processes of thought which may not be consciously apparent to the mentor (p. 40). These understandings, emerging from the work of Vygotsky articulating how others within the social context support and provoke growth, have particular value when considering the role of mentor teachers and colleagues during field experiences and will be explored in more depth shortly.

In summary, Vygotsky (1978) argues "the development of the most complex, unique forms of human behavior is characterized by complicated, qualitative transformations of one form of behavior into another" (p. 19) within the cultural and social context that shapes, and is shaped, by the individual. This dynamic process is central to our development and the newly acquired forms and techniques construct a person not merely by providing each of us with particular kinds of knowledge but in a much more essential manner by transforming the very structure of our psychological processes. This takes place first, through the mediation of signs and cultural tools, of which language is perhaps the most obvious and second, through interaction with more skilled members of the culture who model, guide and support the acquisition of both specific skills and the accompanying complex thinking that ultimately transforms the novice. As a cultural institution with the opportunity to shape individuals in the manner outlined by Vygotsky (and explicated in more detail by Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1997; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Packer & Tappan, 2001), this study was concerned with the role of schooling, and teacher education programs specifically, in the dynamic construction and transformation of a student into a teacher.

School as the site for the production of persons. For children, apart from their home environment, there would seem to be no place more culturally instrumental than school. And while there is general agreement that elementary school first of all, provides a transition between the family and the larger institutions of work and public life and second, introduces the important cultural mediators of text and number, this is not all that schooling accomplishes. In fact, schooling is involved in the ontological work of transforming the human person (Packer & Greco-Brooks, 1999, p. 135).

School is a context inviting not only changes in thinking or cognition - epistemological change - but on its most fundamental level schooling provokes change in being. Packer (2001)

argues:

> Schooling involves ontological change, change in the kind of person a child becomes. School is a social institution designed to transform children. Schools draw children from their families into new social contexts, new forms of social relationships, and situations in which new kinds of expertise are called for. The culture of the classroom is one in which children enter into relations that are abstract rather than personal, based not on personal characteristics but on role or position. "Student" and "teacher" are new, abstract positions. And the symbolic media of reading, writing, and arithmetic transform the child's attitude to objects and events that have hitherto been lived and grasped immediately. (p. 131)

If school is, indeed, a site for the production of persons, how does this transformation take place? In what manner is 'who we are' constructed within a learning environment?

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) contend that "acquiring knowledge and expertise always entails participation in relationship and community and transformation both of the person and the social world" (p. 239) and offer a framework for describing how a child, upon entering school, is shaped anew by this context. This view augments those focused exclusively on considerations of epistemology and the assembling of understanding by suggesting "that knowledge is not all that is constructed. The human individual is a construction too, as is the social world" (p. 235). Learning is, then, at its most fundamental, about who I am and who I am becoming in the context of our social world which itself shapes, and is shaped by, the transformed and transforming human individual; in effect, learning is about ontology, what it means for something - or somebody - to be. They reinforce this notion by maintaining "the work central to schooling is the effort to answer the question, 'Who am I?'" (p. 237). Just as a child arrives at school and is transformed through discourse, cultural mediation, and within crucial relationships, a student entering her first year of an Education program must construct a new way of being: teacher.

Drawing These Strands Together into the Framework Used to Explore the Borderland

> Human being is becoming – striving to be what it is not (yet).
> (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 234)

Emerging from a constructivist worldview, these two strands - drawn and entwined - offered a theoretical and conceptual framework to support and guide my inquiry exploring the ways in which pre-service teachers constructed a professional identity during their final internship. Though narrative ways of knowing and being are presented as the first strand, I do not afford them primacy; rather, who we are and who we are becoming - an ontology that asserts our being is created amidst unfolding narratives - is always nurtured from within the social, historical and cultural context in which we live. They are strands truly entwined; I cannot conceive it being any other way. Irrevocably tangled, they directed and supported my work in three specific ways.

First, as we talked about stories of teachers and teaching, lying quietly within their personal, social and historical context, participants were asked to consider the ways in which these narratives informed, or were connected to, their current borderland experience of being an intern teacher. Requiring at least 12 years of schooling, teacher preparation programs are unique in that they seek to educate individuals who already possess understandings and opinions of the school environment. It was important, then, to explore how their experience of being a student in the elementary and secondary grades, as well as during university coursework, had shaped who they were as intern teachers. Given the narrative aspect of my conceptual framework I believed this best accomplished by prompting each participant to share recollections of their most memorable experience as a student and of influential past teachers. Once told, we examined the ways in which these stories shaped both their journey to be a teacher and their emerging understandings of professional identity.

Second, our lives are lived with and amongst others. We are social creatures and

conditions profoundly change us by developing a whole series of new forms and techniques (Vygotsky & Luria, 1993, p. 213): in essence, new ways of being. Our social context plays an essential role in our transformation from someone separate and apart to someone who is an integral part of a community. Vygotsky (1978) outlines how the influence of a more-skilled peer or colleague, working with signs and cultural tools, directs and supports the process of internalization: the internal reconstruction of an external operation. He suggests that every function of an individual's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and then later within the individual. These ideas offered particular direction during this inquiry as we looked closely at the opportunity for interns to work alongside individuals considered more-skilled colleagues as well as the manner in which educational communities invited and supported full membership, not as a student as in past practica, but now as a teacher - an integral member of the established community. A number of questions were considered: In what manner does a relationship with a mentor teacher transform the student teacher both epistemologically - in what she knows - but also, and perhaps most importantly, in who she is becoming? If who we are as teachers is a developing story seeking unity and coherence, how do mentors support this emerging understanding? And in what ways does the school invite and support community membership?

Finally, the cultural institution of schooling plays a vital role in the transformation of who a student is and who she is becoming. While Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) maintain school is the site for the production of persons, I suggest that pre-service teacher education is the site for the production of teachers both epistemologically through the assembling of knowledge about learning theory, legislated curriculum, lesson and unit planning, and classroom management, and ontologically through the construction of a professional identity: who we are and who we are becoming. School, as Packer (2001) argues, "involves ontological change, change in the kind of

person a child becomes" (p. 131) and this is no less true for pre-service teachers as they craft the unfolding story of who they are becoming as teachers within their particular social, cultural, and historical context.

For the participants involved in this study, the contextual circumstances of their 15 week classroom internship created a liminal space, a borderland rife with both uncertainty and possibility. While neither fully a student nor yet a teacher, these interns worked to construct understandings of professional identity during the months we met together. It may be, then, that the work central to teacher education is the effort to answer the questions, "Who am I?" and "Who am I becoming?" Offering a rich and compelling theoretical framework emerging from a constructivist paradigm, these entwined strands - who we are and who we are becoming is constructed amidst unfolding narratives nurtured within the social, historical and cultural context in which we live - have supported and guided all aspects of this inquiry.

CHAPTER THREE

Mapping the Existing Landscape: Constructing Teacher Identity

The purpose of this overview is to explore a selection of literature focusing on the construction of professional identity as it relates, specifically, to students in pre-service teacher education programs. Over the past three decades there has been growing interest in the nature of professional identity and the manner in which who we are shapes our work as teachers; however, increasingly, questions have emerged more directly focused on the construction of identity in student teachers particularly during field experiences. Designed as an opportunity for pre-service teachers to put into practice the theory acquired during academic coursework, field experiences are actually so much more than that.

The literature selected for review in this chapter draws attention to this particular time during teacher education and the tensions and uncertainty that exist in the borderlands of field experiences; struggles not only with implementing curriculum, identifying appropriate instructional methods, and building relationships both with a mentor teacher and with students but also - and perhaps most importantly - with the constructing of professional identity. This area of inquiry is generating deeper scholarly interest into the nature of self-understanding in the professional life of the teacher and the critical role of field experiences as students find themselves in the midst of a borderland space that provokes consideration of who they are and who they are becoming.

First, I will briefly trace how the concept of teacher identity has emerged over the past decades; in essence, a broad historical overview. Second, I will examine research relating to pre-service teacher identity by focusing on three germane articles; the first of which offers an outline of research conducted prior to the year 2000 in order to identify a definition of the term, "professional identity." A more recent publication by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) follows;

these Canadians specifically highlight the value of exploring the construction of professional identity with pre-service teachers and argue teacher education programs offer "the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity" (p. 186). The final article suggests a dialogical approach to the notion of teacher identity maintaining that our understanding would be best served by moving away from a "theoretical discussion in terms of either/or towards thinking in terms of both/and" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 315). Their work acknowledges the multiple, situated, and social nature of identity while at the same time encouraging investigation of the ways in which teachers strive to maintain a coherent and consistent sense of self. Recognizing the inherent struggle of the borderland, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) offer a definition of teacher identity that identifies the points of tension and seeks to resolve the apparent contradictions.

Third, I will explore four themes related to this inquiry beginning with a review of identity construction over time. This section will focus on the years of teacher education, the transition from student to teacher, and the experience of being a beginning teacher. Given the nature of this inquiry and the participation of intern teachers all three of these experiential time periods inform this study. Next, much research has been completed related to the role of social context, reflection, and narratives in the fashioning of a professional identity; the research shared in this section informs and encourages consideration of their importance for my own inquiry.

Fourth, I provide an overview of three volumes that significantly influenced my understanding of pre-service teacher identity: the early work of Britzman (1986,1992, 2003) explores what it means to *be* a student teacher in a particular context struggling to construct professional understandings as well as two more recent texts. Danielewicz (2001) describes how pedagogy within teacher education coursework can be structured to engage students in fashioning

a professional identity; the research of Alsup (2006) involves six pre-service teacher participants and their involvement in borderland discourses characterizing teaching and teachers. All three scholars directed my thinking throughout this study.

While there is a growing body of work available for review, this chapter is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, its purpose is three-fold: to map the landscape of pre-service teacher identity construction broadly, to locate this inquiry within these established academic conversations, and finally, to identify ways in which this study contributes to on-going discussions related to the construction of teacher identity during the borderlands between being a student and becoming a teacher.

Focus on Professional Identity: Its Beginnings

> In research on teaching throughout the world, identity has become a fundamental aspect.
> (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 317)

Consideration of professional identity as an important aspect of a teacher's experience in the classroom is a relatively recent area of interest. Early in this century Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) suggested that previously little investigation had been done, specifically, on teachers' professional identity and, except for 'life-cycle' research, the way identity is developed. While acknowledging earlier attempts, these authors maintained "in most cases this research lacks a clear definition of a teacher's professional identity" (p. 750). Four years later, and building upon the view articulated by Erickson (1968) and Mead (1934) that locates identity not as something possessed but as something developed over the course of a life, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) focus their attention on relevant literature emerging from 1988-2000 explaining that "it was in this period that teachers' professional identity emerged as a research area" (p. 108). Korthagen (2004) supported this assertion maintaining that while an enormous amount of research has been carried out over the past century in a variety of disciplines regarding

the terms “identity” and “self”, only recently is attention being directed to a more comprehensive and substantial understanding of the term “teacher identity” (p. 82). It seems, then, that by the middle of the first decade of this century the notion of teacher identity emerged as a topic worthy of more focused examination and research; however, it is interesting to note that although the concept of teachers’ professional identities has attracted widespread attention and been extensively explored in numerous research fields, there continues to be on-going academic discussion of what constitutes teacher identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) with some calling for the formulation of a definition that not only makes intuitive sense, but also “informs our way of studying and describing teachers and their development” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 317).

In Search of a Definition of “Teacher Identity”

> In future research on teachers’ professional identity, more attention needs to be paid to the relationship between relevant concepts like ‘self’ and ‘identity’, the role of the context in professional identity formation, what counts for ‘professional’ in professional identity, and research perspectives other than the cognitive one that may also play a role in designing research on teachers’ professional identity.
>
> (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p. 107)

Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) explore relevant literature emerging between 1988 and 2000 in search of a definition for the term “teachers’ professional identity.” They justify their choice of time frame by stating, “it was in this period that teachers’ professional identity emerged as a research area” (p. 108). And while dated, this reconsideration systematically explores existing literature and identifies a number of shortcomings with recommendations for how this area of research could be more specifically focused. Of particular interest is their historical overview tracing the concept of identity and how our understandings have gradually shifted from the belief that identity is a fixed, unified attribute of a person to understandings that broadly suggest identity development is an “ongoing process, a process of interpreting oneself as a certain kind of person and being recognized as such in a given context” (p. 108).

Because teacher identity emerges from within more general understandings of identity development and according to the literature reviewed and reported upon, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) suggest the following four features are essential for understanding teachers' professional identity: first, professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences; second, both person and context are involved in the construction of identity; third, a teacher's professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize; and fourth, agency is an important element of professional identity and that teachers have to be active in this process (p. 122). Their review of literature offers an overview of how teacher identity developed as a worthy topic for investigation; specific interest in the construction of professional identity by pre-service teachers, both during formal teacher education programs and field experiences, emerged predominantly from within these broader conversations shaping the exploration of teacher identity.

Issues and Implications for Teacher Education

> Gaining a more complete understanding of identity generally and teacher identity in particular could enhance the ways in which teacher education programs are conceived.
> (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 176)

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) explore teacher identity and the issues and implications that emerge for teacher education. They offer a comprehensive overview of existing views on teacher identity construction including the role of emotion in this process, narrative and discourse aspects of identity, how reflection shapes teacher identity, the link between identity and agency, and the influence of contextual factors.

Of particular value for this study is their identification of teacher education programs as opportunities for identity construction that had been mostly overlooked. In their conclusion Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) specifically identify pre-service teacher education as an area worthy of attention. While lengthy, this excerpt presents their rationale for this direction:

> A teacher education programme seems to be the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity. In order to anticipate the reshaping of the professional identity that will come, we must continue to consider the situation of teachers in the early years of practice, where the influence of their surrounding context - the nature of the educational institution, teacher colleagues, school administrators, their own students and the wider school community - is strongly felt. We must then incorporate what we know about the contexts and communities and their influence on shaping teacher identities into our teacher education programmes to prepare new teachers for the challenges of developing strong professional identities in positive ways. (p. 186)

Much of the research conducted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2010, 2011; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007, 2011) explores the construction of teacher identity in pre-service teacher education programs and supports this inquiry by articulating the value of ongoing investigation into this time in-between: a borderland often characterized by feelings of being neither a student nor yet a teacher, alone yet embedded in a broader culture.

A Dialogical Approach to Teacher Identity

> We view identity as simultaneously unitary and multiple, continuous and discontinuous, and individual and social. (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 315)

Akkerman and Meijer (2011) explore existing understandings of teacher identity and offer an extensive summary of how our thinking about the person and his or her identity has shifted over time. Calling into question both the pre-modern belief in a single truth or greater cosmic whole, and the modern belief in the central position of the individual, postmodern thinking suggests the individual must be seen in the context of the social environment of which he or she is a part (p. 309). This shifting over time has resulted in the understanding that “identity is no

longer seen as an overarching and unified framework but, instead, as being fragmented along with the multiple social worlds that people engage in" (p. 309).

The authors challenge this prevailing postmodern view with a dialogical approach to conceptualizing teacher education. Arguing that the existing research on teacher identity echoes postmodern characterizations, they identify three recurring descriptors of teacher identity in literature over the past decade: the multiplicity of identity, the discontinuity of identity, and the social nature of identity. One by one they address each of these descriptors and outline a dialogical conceptualization that invites us to consider the construction of identity as both fixed and stable as well as shifting with time and context; both connected more broadly to past situations and circumstances as well as reflecting active participation in the moment; and both fashioned by an individual and emerging from within a social context. Their renewed definition of teacher identity is based on this dialogical model:

> We suggest defining 'teacher identity', and 'being someone who teaches', as *an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such as way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life.* (p. 315, italics in original)

This less dichotomous understanding of identity offers a means of appreciating how it is that "seemingly opposite characterizations can simultaneously be 'true'" (p. 315) and with specific reference to studying teacher identity, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) maintain that "a dialogical conceptualization is particularly useful as an analytical framework in studying the professional development of novice and experienced teachers" (p. 318).

As a researcher this framework guided my work first, by advising caution when characterizing teachers. It is not possible, nor desirable, to seek single terms to denote identity. Rather, it is important to acknowledge the multiple, situated and social nature of identity while at

the same time exploring the ways in which teachers strive to maintain a coherent and consistent sense of self. Second, this dialogical approach to understanding teacher identity requires an awareness of the effect of the researcher on how the participant may present him or herself within the context of interviews, conversations, and observations. Throughout our conversations during the 15 weeks of their internship, I became increasingly mindful of how my very presence, the nature of my provocations, and my contributions to our discussions had the power to elicit particular kinds of participant responses. However, the authors suggest that when conversations and interviews are viewed as "acts of dialogue" (p. 316) new methodological opportunities present themselves: participants can be invited to take part in the process of analysis and interpretation.

Finally, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) state that understanding a teacher's professional identity from a dialogical viewpoint invites a different appreciation of teacher development. When student teachers face anxiety, particularly within field experiences, the tensions are often related to conflicting views of self and their struggle may present opportunity for growth by means of "redefining existing or creating new I-positions in response to dialogical difficulties" (p. 317). The intense process of tugging and pulling, one way then the other, in a constant dialogue between what are viewed as contrasting positions more accurately represents what is experienced during times of struggle and provokes consideration of identity construction as a dynamic negotiation of who I am and who I am becoming by offering support for feelings of being one and being many at the same time (p. 318). Holding a dialogical view of identity was of particular value as I engaged pre-service teachers in conversation exploring who they were becoming during the weeks of their internship when they were neither a student nor a teacher, yet.

The next section of this review examines four themes related to essential aspects of this

inquiry. First, the construction of a professional identity is on-going and dynamic: it takes place over time and is never fully achieved. Second, social context contributes, in essential ways, to who we are becoming. Third, the construction of identity is enhanced through professional reflection and fourth, the sharing of narratives - specifically stories of learning and teaching - shapes who we are becoming as teachers.

Identity Construction Over Time

> The simple unidimensional image of the hollow student, compliantly waiting to be filled with professional knowledge and skills, has been replaced by a complex multifaceted person - people with a lifetime of personal and social experiences behind them, embedded in a present in which they are totally engaged as meaning makers, constructors of knowledge, and authors of the teachers they are becoming. (McLean, 1999, p. 86)

In teacher education. In addition to Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), numerous authors have identified the need for teacher education programs to acknowledge this as a critical time for identity construction both in the coursework undertaken as part of degree completion and in the field experiences designed to invite consideration of becoming. McLean (1999) suggests the development of new teacher education pedagogy reflecting our emerging understandings of self is on-going and explores the use of stories in education programs arguing that "it is not our concrete experiences that shape our sense of identity, but the stories we tell ourselves about those experiences" (p. 78). Korthagen (2004) poses two questions related to teacher education: What are the essential qualities of a good teacher and how can we help people to become good teachers? Together these questions focus attention on pre-service teacher identity and lead him to suggest a framework for reflection and development that could be incorporated in teacher education programs. Sachs (2005) observes that teacher education and teacher educators have a central role in the development of new kinds of teacher professionalism and a professional identity she identifies as the "activist teacher" (p. 20). Finally, Thomas and Beauchamp (2007) argue that "developing a strong sense of professional identity as a teacher may be crucial to the

well-being of new members of the profession" (p. 229) and report on research they conducted with twenty-one participants interviewed in the in-between time: after graduation but before beginning to teach. They observe that "while the participants were able to describe with accuracy the individual tasks and roles of a teacher, they appear to be unable to articulate a clear sense of what it is to be a teacher" (p. 240) and from this they draw a number of insights for teacher education programs.

In transition from student to teacher. Interested, specifically, "in the boundary space represented by the period between learning to be a teacher and reaching the end of several months of initial practice" (p. 6), Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) look more deeply into this time of transition from student to teacher. Identified as a "destabilizing time" (p. 12) beginning teachers recognized the need to belong within their new community. The authors suggest more research is needed to permit a more extensive consideration of identity shifts and agency development especially as beginning teachers become more experienced; that is, extending into their second and third years of teaching. Trent (2011), also interested in this time of transition, found that participants often held rigid views about teaching and how they saw themselves, and others, as teachers (p. 529). This prompts him to warn that as beginning teachers this rigidity may lead to "antagonistic relations" (p. 529) amongst colleagues in the schools in which they eventually teach. He suggests teacher education programs should assist students in deconstructing prevailing discourses and in thinking about how these same discourses that shape their identity development "might be resisted" (p. 542).

As a beginning teacher. In a longitudinal study that highlights the powerful interaction between personal histories and the contextual influences of the workplace, Flores and Day (2006) examine how beginning teachers move through the transition from student to teacher and establish themselves within a new context. The role of this context is identified by these

researchers as critical: “The influence of workplace (positive or negative - perceptions of school culture and leadership) played a key role in (re)shaping teachers’ understanding of teaching, facilitating or hindering their professional learning and development, and in (re)constructing their professional identities” (p. 230). Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) investigate the use of metaphors by new teachers as they struggle to develop a professional identity during their first year. Their research suggests that these beginning teachers make a shift from seeing themselves as ready for the challenge to adopting a “survival mode” (p. 762) and that the development of a professional identity, within the context of being a beginning teacher, is “gradual, complex and often problematic” (p. 762). Finally, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) looks at the stories told by two beginning teachers as they enter full-time teaching and engage in the process of constructing their professional identity. Comparing these narratives of experience, one painful and one an easy beginning, reveals the importance of attending to professional identity in pre-service programs as well as the manner in which teachers’ initial identities influence their transition to teaching.

The Role of Social Context in Identity Construction

> The architecture of teachers’ professional identities is not always stable, but at certain times or during certain life, career and organizational phases may be discontinuous, fragmented, and subject to turbulence and change in the continuing struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity. (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006, p. 613)

Coldron and Smith (1999) suggest that identity as a teacher is partly given and partly achieved by active location in social space which they define as the array of possible relations that one person can have to others; some of which are conferred by inherited social structures and some are chosen or created by individuals. Dependent upon the quality and availability of these factors, teachers develop understandings of who they are and must, the authors argue, be aware of the many potential positions they might assume. By locating the development of identity within a social context the authors identify the craft, scientific, moral, and artistic traditions as significant

influences on teachers (p. 711).

Miller March (2002) advocates for explicitly teaching prospective and practicing teachers how our positioning within particular discourses influences the way in which we relate to each other. Emerging from conversations between the author and a student she argues that "learning to examine the discourses through which we enact out teaching lives provides us with opportunities to select those discourses that allow for the creation of positive social and academic identities" (p. 453). Miller Marsh recognizes the importance of this process: "Helping teachers to make visible the power in the discourses they use and illustrating to them that they can make some choices about their own identities and social identities of the children in their care is one way to work toward transformation" (p. 467).

The final article draws together existing research exploring the nature of the relationships between social structures and individual agency; between notions of a socially constructed self and a self with dispositions, attitudes, and behavioural responses that are durable and relatively stable. Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2006) provide a detailed overview of how teacher identity has been conceived coupled with findings from a four year study examining variations in teachers' work and lives and their effect on students. They conclude that identities may be more, or less, stable and more or less fragmented at different times and in different ways according to a number of life, career and situational factors (p. 601). In other words, the context in which we find ourselves - both personally and professionally - has the power to influence who we are.

The Role of Reflection in Identity Construction

> We believe that prospective reflection offers a unique opportunity to engage in active and meaningful decision-making, problem definition, exploration and evaluation, and one that allows teachers to envision the future, and to imagine themselves in that future.
>
> (Urzua & Vasquez, 2008, p. 1945)

Walkington (2005) examines the relationship between mentoring teachers and their

students recognizing the complementary quality and importance of each context - the university and school classroom - to the development of teacher identity for those learning to teach. The author challenges teacher educators in the university to consider how pre-service teacher core beliefs and perceptions affect the dynamics of learning to teach and the establishment of a teacher identity (p. 53) and promotes reflection as an essential aspect of the relationship between the mentoring teacher and the student teacher: "Without opportunity to challenge personal philosophies and existing practices, pre-service teachers merely perpetuate the behaviour and beliefs of supervising teachers. The potential result is a teacher who knows how to 'fit in' to existing contexts, but lacks the skills and confidence to make decisions that will make a difference" (p. 63).

Freese (2006) suggests that when pre-service teachers systematically reflect upon their own practice and on the learning of their students they are drawn into the process of identity construction; that is, we discover our selves through reflection and inquiry. This study emerged from within the sometimes challenging relationship between the author, a teacher educator, and her student; she labels it a "story of discovery" (p. 100) as over the two year period the student provoked the author to reflect on her own practice. As a result, she, too, was changed through this dynamic and interactive process. Freese identifies a number of ways in which teacher educators can support student professional reflection citing Dewey's suggestions of dispositions essential for reflection: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (p. 117).

Identifying reflective teaching as one of the most significant trends in education in the past decade, Urzua and Vasquez (2008) echo the work of Walkington (2005) and call for teacher mentors to encourage student teachers to reflect upon their experiences and to specifically verbalize these reflections in terms of future-oriented discourse. Using Schon's reflective practitioner model and the distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-for-action the

authors examine the ways in which student teachers use reflection to construct identities and recommend that teacher mentoring meetings represent "discursive spaces in which novice teachers have an opportunity to verbalize plans, predict outcomes, consider possibilities, and reflect on their evolving pedagogical practices" (p. 1935).

Sutherland, Howard and Markauskaite (2010) introduce the construct of a "teacher's voice." While numerous outcomes emerge from pre-service teacher reflection, these authors focus, specifically, on the development of self-image as a teacher and maintain that a "teacher's voice" develops when pre-service teachers interpret and reinterpret their experiences through the processes of reflection. Acknowledging that reflection is often found difficult by student teachers the authors state "the majority of pre-service teachers moved towards a more professional stance in their contributions" (p. 455).

Finally, Beauchamp and Thomas (2010) focus on the interplay between the concepts of reflection, identity, and the ideal. This paper reports the findings of a pilot study engaging student teachers in reflecting upon an ideal identity for their future lives as teachers. They draw together the present and the future by stating that a view beyond the boundary of the present, while building on existing strengths, could stimulate pre-service teachers to think about who they are now and how they want to direct their development to reach desired goals. And reminding us of the important role of agency, Beauchamp and Thomas remind us this process may, in fact, "engender the important sense of agency that would help them move toward their goals, and link their reflections on the future to identity and an ideal teacher self" (p. 640).

The Role of Narratives in Identity Construction

> People construct narratives and narratives construct people, and our identities emerge through these processes. (Walker, 2006, p. 510)

Sfard and Prusak (2005) explore the ways in which the stories told of our lives are

products of a collective storytelling offering the following definition of identity: "We suggest identities may be defined as collections of stories about persons or, more specifically, as those narratives about individuals that are *reifying, endorsable, and significant*" (p. 16, italics in original). They offer a rationale for employing the stories we tell of ourselves and distinguish it as a means of exploring identity:

> Rather than treat the stories as windows to another entity that stays unchanged when "the stories themselves" evolve, the adherent of the narrative perspective is interested in the stories as such, accepting them for what they appear to be: words that are taken seriously and that shape one's actions. (p. 21)

They further claim that by holding to a narrative definition of identity, human agency and the dynamic nature of identity are brought to the fore and most of the disadvantages of more traditional approaches seem to fall away (p. 17).

Identity, when viewed as an ongoing and dynamic construction, leads Watson (2006) to suggest that this process can be seen as emerging in and through narratives of practice. Predicated on the understanding that "through analyzing stories, and the resources that individuals draw on to construct these stories, we can perhaps say something about the way in which teachers actively construct their identities as professionals in an ongoing, effortful and dynamic process that needs to be sustained" (p. 512). Watson concludes this research report of an experienced teacher named Dan by stating:

> Teachers' stories provide a means by which they are able to integrate knowledge, practice and context within prevailing educational discourses. Telling stories involves reflection on, selection of and arrangement of events in an artful manner which contains meaning for the teller and seeks to persuade the listener of their significance. Telling stories is, then, in an important sense 'doing' identity work. (p. 525)

In addition, she locates the stories told - these narratives of practice - within the community of practice adding a collaborative dimension to the development of professional identity.

Using the narratives of five Norwegian teachers, Soreide (2006) aims to illuminate how teacher identities can be narratively constructed and understood. In the narratives under investigation she identifies more than thirty subject positions in addition to four identity constructions: 'the caring and kind teacher'; 'the creative and innovative teacher'; 'the professional teacher'; and the 'typical teacher'. Soreide's research indicates that the negotiation between multiple identities is a necessary part of the construction of teacher identity (p. 545) and that by understanding identity in this manner teachers cannot be provided ready-made and universal identities into which they should fit (p. 544). Every teacher must fashion his or her own identity from within the cultural discourses.

Anspal, Eisenschmidt, and Lofstrom (2012) explore the professional identity development of thirty-eight students in a five-year integrated teacher education program. With specific focus on pre-service teachers, narratives were gathered in written form and then analyzed generating a variety of themes. In addition, one student's experience is presented as a case study to illustrate the gradual emergence of "certain patterns in becoming a teacher" (p. 214). They observe the need for teacher education programs to support identity construction through curriculum and to ensure that students have developed sufficient reflective tools to be able to cope with whatever situations the school reality offers them: "Through reflection, the student teachers become aware of their sense of self, their beliefs, emotions and strategies of coping with different challenges. These will be a key factor to success in their future professions as teachers" (p. 214).

These four themes - the construction of a professional identity takes place over time, from within a social and discursive context, is enhanced through professional reflection, and shaped by sharing stories of learning and teaching - guided my thinking throughout this inquiry. From early

doctoral studies, to more specific reading undertaken in preparation for candidacy, to planning for and carrying out this inquiry, these four themes contributed to the conceptual framework directing my work with intern teachers in the borderland space of being a student and becoming a teacher. As a time of transition, an ecological *ecotone*, the construction of identity is influenced by the context in which we find ourselves, both personally and professionally, and the discourses that shape our lives. Through professional reflection and sharing narratives of experience, student teachers are supported as they work to understand who they are becoming as teachers.

This time of transition - from student to teacher - was explored and reported by Britzman in her seminal text, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach* (2003). Considered a "classic in teacher education" (Segall, 2006, p. 181), her volume chronicles the journey of two pre-service teachers through their final practicum during the 1980s. While it was some time before pre-service teacher identity construction became the focus of more intensive scrutiny in its own right (see Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007, 2011) Britzman's early study offers a glimpse into the tensions that shape the transition from formal teacher education coursework into the final field experience from the intensely personal point of view of the students themselves. As a reader, I am drawn into their stories; as a teacher, I can hear my own experience echoed in their voices from the borderlands. As a teacher educator I am prompted to think about the struggles inherent in learning to teach.

Exploring Learning to Teach

> Learning to teach - like teaching itself - is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (Britzman, 2003, p. 31)

Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach (Britzman, 2003), an ethnographic inquiry conducted in the mid-1980s, began with a question inviting consideration of a different set of circumstances from a very different point of view. Acknowledging that at the

time of publication there were not many studies that focused on the "daily rhythms of learning to teach, nor were there many studies that happened to narrate the problem of uncertainty in teaching and learning" (Britzman, 2003, p. 23), Britzman's question was novel and likely considered provocative:

> What does learning to teach do and mean to student teachers and those involved in the practice of teaching?

As teaching had been investigated primarily as the way in which a teacher acts on his or her students with particular attention to the effects of these actions upon demonstrated student achievement and success, this question opened the "underside of teaching, the private struggles we engage as we construct not only our teaching practices and all the relationship this entails, but our teaching voices and identities" (Britzman, 2003, p. 25). In this way Britzman's study uncovered deeper and more fundamental understandings of the ways in which teachers, and student teachers in particular, exist in the classroom during this time of transition.

Specifically, and with a group of participants rarely attended to previously, Britzman set out to explore how our teaching selves are constituted in the context of learning to teach, and how the selves we produce constrain and open the possibilities for creative pedagogies. Believing that learning to teach must be "rendered problematic" (p. 26) in order to be better understood, she describes her purpose as "to raise thorny questions about the inherited discourses of student teaching and to theorize the contradictory realities that beckon and disturb those who live in the field" (p. 26). Through the identification of three cultural myths, Britzman asks difficult questions about what is taken for granted in order to make visible the systemic constraints that, often unbeknownst to us, shape our teaching lives and are lived as individual dilemmas.

Shrouded yet pervasive, these myths structure the lives of teachers and the process of learning to teach by offering a set of ideal images that "provide a semblance of order, control,

certainty in the face of the uncertainty and vulnerability of the teacher's world" (p. 222). Used by the two student teachers in her study to define experience and justify the choices they make, Britzman (1986; 2003) identifies these myths as first, everything depends on the teacher; second, the teacher is the expert; and finally, teachers are self-made. Comprehensively outlined in an article published in 1986, these three myths reinforce the dominant model of teacher education:

> The university provides the theories, methods and skills; schools provide the classroom, curriculum, and students; and the student teacher provides the individual effort; all of which combine to produce the finished product of professional teacher. This training model, however, ignores the role of the social and political context of teacher education while emphasizing the individual's effort. Here the social problem of becoming a teacher is reduced to an individual struggle. (Britzman, 1986, p. 442)

Britzman argues these cultural myths attempt to undermine, or dismiss, the critical understanding that there is something essential about *who* a teacher is or becomes.

Three decades after its original publication, her study continues to be a cautionary tale provoking consideration of what I, as a teacher educator, may take for granted - the pervasive and unexamined discourse that mystifies and shrouds neglected understandings - as well as an invitation to possibility prompting more nuanced ways of engaging students in thinking about who they are and who they are becoming. As a critical study of learning to teach, Britzman's text directed my thinking as I conducted this inquiry with pre-service teachers in their culminating field experience. It also raised questions regarding the role of the researcher positioned alongside her participants: can the researcher continue on the margins of an investigation when a participant is so clearly in distress?

What happens when student teachers find themselves in situations that compromise their essential understandings of self? In what ways could, or should, the researcher act to support and

guide during these times of uncertainty? Prior to conducting this inquiry Britzman's original study prompted me to consider these questions, theoretically; during this study her understandings influenced the practical ways in which I planned for conversations with my participants and structured prompts to invite thoughtful consideration of who they were becoming. Britzman (1992) suggests the role of teacher educators is to "provide spaces for student teachers to rethink how their constructions of the teacher make for lived experience . . . and come to understand knowing thyself as a construction and eventually, as a socially empowering occasion" (p. 44). Ultimately, my role as a researcher was that of an engaged listener: someone who provided opportunities and spaces for thinking and reflecting while keeping in mind the struggles characteristic of being on the borderlands. As a teacher educator responsible for program planning and curriculum I am interested in the ways coursework and field experiences might be structured to promote the construction of identity. In other words, how might teacher education pedagogy support the dynamic process of becoming?

Pedagogy of Becoming

> Identities themselves are always unfinished and in the making; identities develop through continuous processes. There is no one process by which identity comes about, but many. However, these pedagogical principles describe the most effective ways I have discovered as a teacher to enable my students' identities. (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 181)

Danielewicz (2001) writes that her text is "about becoming - the process of how a person becomes someone, particularly of how students become teachers" (p. 1). However, her focus is slightly different than that of Britzman in that she offers specific comment on the qualities that ought to characterize our teaching as teacher educators if the students we encounter are to become something other than students: "Education is about growth and transformation, not only of culture, but of persons too" (p. 1). It is, then, a volume concerned with pedagogy.

She poses two questions that frame her exploration and echo my own: first, how does

"becoming" happen? and second, how can it be encouraged? (p. 3). In offering a definition of teacher identity that reflects its constructed nature, Danielewicz maintains that the term "identity" refers to how individuals know and name themselves and how they are recognized and regarded by others. We are not, however, unified or fixed entities that exist permanently within ourselves; rather, as persons in the world, we are "continually engaged in becoming something or someone. Because identities are conditional, restless, unstable, ever-changing states of being, they can never be ultimately completed" (p. 3). And this is a good thing: our shifting, multiple, often-conflicting identities invite hope and possibility for teacher educators:

> As an educator, I find hope in this view of identity as malleable, subject to inventions, created by individuals and others, flexible and sensitive to social contexts. It means that I can affect how students become teachers by paying attention to pedagogy, to ways of structuring activities and environments that facilitate social interaction, the medium and milieu of identity construction. (p. 4)

Her goal throughout, emerging from work with six pre-service teachers, is not to offer critique or suggestions for the restructuring of programs but rather to describe an approach to teaching in the form of general principles that will promote identity construction within the confines of a fairly typical teacher education program (p. 4).

Danielewicz's work offers three clear points of contact with my own research: first, she uses stories of her own experiences and of her students to thread understandings together with theoretical underpinnings. She does so in a very skillful manner: I hardly realize where the story ends and the theory begins. Second, she has a captivating writing style that draws me into the narratives she is telling of her students and their struggles to construct a teacher identity. It is a significant achievement to be a compelling writer. Finally, she offers useful suggestions for structuring coursework specifically but also assumes a longer view by reviewing how these same

principles might inform teacher education programs more broadly. Five descriptors of "the ideal teacher education program" (p. 193) are offered and described for consideration: active; holistic and integrated; embedded in a discourse community; rich in relations; and morally engaged. These five pedagogical principles suggest programmatic direction to support pre-service teachers as they begin the dynamic process of constructing a professional identity beginning in the early years of their studies and culminating in their final field experience on the borderlands of becoming.

Understanding of Borderlands

> Pre-service teachers find themselves living at the intersection of multiple worlds and multiple ways of knowing. Ideally, their goal is not to minimize or erase these borderlands, but instead to learn to occupy the space between them. The borderland is no longer defined as a gap or absence of identity, but rather as a space in which to experience a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other. (Alsup, 2004, p. 15)

Alsup's work examines the struggle for identity within six pre-service teachers; rather than arranging the accounts as individual case studies she opts, instead, to assemble the stories shared around five discourses that shape teacher identity and draws the narratives of her participants together within these themes. It is an effective structure for making sense of the stories told; it also facilitates her discussion of ideas related to borderland discourse.

Described as a transformative type of teacher identity discourse, borderland discourse is considered by Alsup (2004) to "reflect a view of teacher identity that is holistic - inclusive of the intellectual, the corporeal, and the affective aspects of human selfhood" (p. 6). As a place - whether physical or metaphorical - borderlands invite the existence of more than one "thing", more than one discourse, more than one way of being. She clarifies:

> It was at the borderlands of discourse, and by association at the borderlands of various identity positions that the pre-service teachers in my study began to discover how to move from being students to being teachers. There they learned to respect personal beliefs and

> passions while learning to embody teacher identity. In its essence, it is a discourse that allows pre-service teachers to bring personal subjectivities or ideologies into the classroom and connect them to their developing professional selves. (p. 37)

Within these spaces, amidst established and conflicting discourses both personal and professional, pre-service teachers craft understandings of who they are becoming: it is a place of possibility in which different ways of understanding - both established and idiosyncratic - bump up against each other. And one of the ways in which this is accomplished is through engaging in narrative borderland discourse: "stories that allow participants to bring their personal and professional selves in contact" (p. 40). She does, however, offer a caution to teacher educators as they engage students in sharing narratives that encourage excursions into the borderlands: "Creating and expressing discourse with borderland characteristics can be a risk to pre-service teachers as they relinquish the security of long-held beliefs and narrative constructs" (p. 192, 193). Borderlands can be ambiguous spaces that invite uncertainty as well as the exploration of what is possible.

Alsup (2004) informs my work in two ways: first, her explication of the notion of borderland discourse deepens and expands upon ideas I have considered for some time. Her discussion of how various ways of being can be drawn together for consideration within this borderland space is both practical and provoking. Sometimes ideas exist in purely theoretical form - as good ideas in themselves - but how to make them actually part of our living is not always as clear. Alsup pays attention to the practical aspects of what this kind of engagement might look like in a teacher education program. Second, her selection of narratives arranged in themes offers a direct contrast to the manner in which Britzman (1991) shares the experiences of her two participants, Jamie Owl and Jack August. These different re-presentational formats offered clear models as I worked with data gathered from the intern teachers participating in this

inquiry and made decisions about how best to share their experience on the borderlands.

In summary, the literature selected and reviewed in this chapter informs and supports this inquiry, first of all, by acknowledging the value of exploring how pre-service teachers construct understandings of their emerging professional self specifically during field experiences. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) offer clear justification for the intentional consideration of professional identity during teacher education programs by stating it seems to be "the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity" (p. 186). In addition, four complementary themes were explored: the construction of a professional identity takes place over time, from within a social and discursive context, is enhanced through professional reflection, and shaped by sharing stories of learning and teaching. All four inform important aspects of this inquiry.

And while there is a large and growing body of research examining teacher identity, Britzman (2003) directs our attention to the experience of being a student teacher and the "underside of teaching, the private struggles we engage as we construct not only our teaching practices and all the relationship this entails, but our teaching voices and identities" (p. 25). Danielewicz (2001) highlights the qualities that ought to characterize our teaching as teacher educators if the students we encounter are to become something other than students: "Education is about growth and transformation, not only of culture, but of persons too" (p. 1). Alsup (2004) explores the borderlands and the ways in which pre-service teachers find themselves living at the intersection - *los intersticios* (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 3) - of multiple worlds and multiple ways of knowing. Rather than viewing this in-between time as a gap or absence of identity, she suggests it invites richer, full, and more complex understandings of self and other (p.15).

Together with Alsup (2004), the work of Akkerman and Meijer (2011) supports my

conceptualization of the culminating field experience as a liminal space, rife with both struggle and possibility: a borderland of becoming. By drawing together understandings previously thought of in opposition to one another, the authors argue for a theoretical perspective that assumes a "multiple, discontinuous and social nature of identity, while simultaneously explaining identity as being unitary, continuous and individual" (p. 310). In essence, they have described the borderland where living things exist side-by-side and on top of one another in the zone of transition known ecologically as an *ecotone*. These crossroads*, los intersticios,* invite ambiguity, tension, and complexity (Anzaldua, 1987) with the ultimate challenge "not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it" (Aoki, 2005b, p. 163). This inquiry is directed by established research and literature exploring the construction of teacher identity as it relates, specifically, to pre-service teachers during the borderlands of a final internship.

Contributing to the Landscape

> A literature review is a written summary of articles, books, and other documents that describes the past and current state of knowledge about a topic, organizes the literature into topics, and documents a need for a proposed study. (Cresswell, 2008, p. 116)

This literature review establishes academic interest in the construction of teacher identity. And emerging from this broader exploration are studies related, specifically, to students in pre-service teacher education programs and the ways in which they begin the dynamic, on-going process of constructing professional understandings of self. Involving four intern teachers in their culminating field experience, this inquiry is located within this academic conversation; however, the nature and focus of this case study will contribute to the established landscape of understandings in two ways. First, as a borderland space, this 15 week internship is a rare opportunity to glimpse the construction of identity at a distinct point in teacher development: as neither a student nor yet a teacher, or perhaps both as a student and a teacher. Truly in-between,

these interns are at a crossroads of being. Their reflections on the struggles and tensions, opportunities and possibilities of this experience offer a unique vantage point that will, in turn, inform teacher education programming. Second, by establishing a relationship of trust with each participant and engaging in provoking conversations throughout the course of the internship, this interpretive case study, described in detail in the next chapter, will afford an over-arching perspective of what it is like to construct understandings of a professional self during this final field experience: the borderlands of possibility.

CHAPTER FOUR

Exploring the Borderlands

Embedded Within a Personal Worldview

> The method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator in the first place. (van Manen, 1997, p. 2)

Curiosity and inquiry do not exist in isolation; rather, they are intimately connected to a researcher's assumptions, beliefs, and essential understandings of the world. Glesne (2006) suggests that the research methods with which I feel most comfortable say something about my views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and my perspective on the nature of reality. Schwandt (1989) maintains "we conduct inquiry via a particular paradigm because it embodies assumptions about the world that we believe and values that we hold, and because we hold those assumptions and values we conduct inquiry according to the precepts of that paradigm" (p. 399). So intertwined are my beliefs with the very curiosity they generate that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate one from the other.

This chapter will first, identify three assumptions related to qualitative inquiry that are most resonant with my worldview and therefore made interpretive research a suitable methodology for exploring the construction of teacher identity during this final field experience; second, offer a brief overview of the case study as a manner for selecting and focusing on what can be learned in these particular circumstances, with these specific participants. Third, I will outline the methods I relied on to gather data and construct deeper understandings of the liminal space between being a student and becoming a teacher; fourth, participants and their particular context will be described and justification offered for considering Professional Semester III as a borderland. Finally, I will describe the process by which the data gathered was analyzed and interpreted. Clearly, my personal worldview, my experience of being a student teacher, and my

current interest as a teacher educator have shaped this inquiry in the research questions posed, in the methods I selected to assuage my curiosity, and in the ways I worked to construct understandings through the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered through conversational interviews.

Methodological Assumptions Emerging from a Constructivist Paradigm

> Inquiry paradigms define for inquirers what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

This inquiry is guided by three assumptions emerging from the constructivist paradigm that guide data gathering, the construction of knowledge, and the role of the interpretive researcher. First, researchers explore human experience in its natural setting believing that the particular context is the "direct source of data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 29, 30) and that "to divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is, for the qualitative researcher, to lose sight of its significance" (p. 30). Second, by attending to how parts of an experience come together to form a whole the researcher, together with the participant, construct meaning and make sense of experience in the world. And as our understandings of, and for, our lives emerge from within the context of our communities, based upon past and present experience, it follows that our constructed meanings are open to enduring change and refinement (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Finally, as an interpretive researcher I am always in the midst. Cresswell (2014) suggests the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative inquiry, not only in data gathering, but more essentially, in reflecting upon how "their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations and the direction of the study" (p. 186). This personal investment in questions formulated, methods selected, interpretations made, and conclusions drawn is a hallmark of interpretive inquiry and when, together with participants, understandings are constructed both the researcher and the participant are transformed through

the fusion of their different horizons into new understandings that are now held in common, yet never finished (Smith, 1991). This collaborative, interpretive process of seeking insight into how professional identity is nurtured during the weeks of an internship, a borderland of uncertainty and possibility, was well suited for exploring the questions that shaped this study.

Case Study as a Research Design

> I call a study an *intrinsic case study* if it is undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case. Here, it is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, this case is of interest.
> (Stake, 2000, p. 437, italics in original)

There are three characteristics of case study research that made it an appropriate design for this inquiry. First, the case study is "a bounded system" (Stake, 2000, p. 436) which invites an in-depth examination of a particular experience and the specific circumstances that nurture what exists within the boundaries. It is a specific and complex, functioning thing (Stake, 1995); a real-life phenomenon that has a concrete, identifiable manifestation (Yin, 2014). Merriam (1998) states that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case, thereby allowing "me to see the case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can 'fence in' what I am going to study" (p. 27). She adds that if the phenomenon to be studied is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case.

Second, because of the opportunity for intense investigation afforded by this delineated focus on a particular phenomenon, Mertler and Charles (2005) suggest one of the reasons researchers select case study as a methodology is to offer the opportunity to provide a detailed re-creation of contexts, meanings, and intentions. Often thought of as "thick description" (Stake, 2000, p. 439), this re-creation of the case particularities, and even of its ordinariness, makes it possible for readers to vicariously experience specific circumstances and happenings. Finally, Merriam (1998) maintains case studies are heuristic; that is "they can bring about the discovery

of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (p. 30). Ultimately, case studies have the potential to shed light on the phenomenon under investigation by focusing on particular circumstances, by rendering thick, rich descriptions, and by constructing new understandings of the experience to guide future decisions.

Exploring the borderland as an interpretive case study. Taken together, these three characteristics supported my selection of an "intrinsic case study" (Stake, 2000, p. 437) as a suitable research design for this interpretive inquiry exploring the ways in which four student teachers puzzled out and constructed their professional identities during the weeks of their final internship. Given my past experience as a student teacher and my current work as a teacher educator, I am deeply interested in the borderlands, the liminal space, created by this internship. I want to know more about what it is like to be a student while becoming a teacher during this time of both struggle and possibility.

Yin (2014) suggests that in selecting a case study design there are at least two "fences" to be considered: the individuals to be included in the study and those who are outside of it as well as specific time boundaries to identify a clear beginning and end. This study meets both criteria: first of all, the inquiry was designed with an exclusive focus on student teachers in Professional Semester III. Given the nature of this final practicum invitations to participate in this study were extended to interns from the University of Lethbridge. And second, by its time frame: the PS III internship is 15 weeks in length. Student teachers began in their classrooms in the first week of January 2014 and finished by the middle of April. During this time participants constructed understandings of what it means to be a teacher and, as the researcher, I was able to explore the particularities of their context, their successes, and their challenges with each of them throughout these weeks. This has, I believe, led to thick, rich descriptions of their experiences. Merriam (1998) writes that "anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic

account of a phenomenon" (p. 41). By selecting a case study design for this inquiry I have invited consideration of what it means to live at the crossroads, in the borderlands, with the hope that "the reader comes to know some things told, as if he or she had experienced it" (Stake, 2000, p. 442). Finally, there are understandings to be the gleaned from this inquiry that will inform teacher education programs and, specifically, the structure and expectations of final field experiences.

Participants and Their Contexts

> Pre-service teachers find themselves living at the intersection of multiple worlds and multiple ways of knowing. Ideally, their goal is not to minimize or erase these borderlands, but instead to learn to occupy the space between them. The borderland is no longer defined as a gap or absence of identity, but rather as a space in which to experience a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other. (Alsup, 2006, p. 15)

Students in their final year of teacher education at the University of Lethbridge were invited to participate in this inquiry with data gathering taking place during their culminating practicum in an elementary classroom from January to April 2014. This field experience, Professional Semester III (PS III), is considered unique in the province of Alberta and offers pre-service teachers the opportunity to engage in a full-term internship that includes both teaching and professional study. *The Comprehensive Field Experience Handbook* (2009) describes this 15 week field experience as follows:

> Professional Semester III, or Internship, is an integrated semester that includes teaching and professional study. Interns teach approximately one half of a teacher's assigned workload. The professional study may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, seminars with mentors and colleagues, professional reading, collaborative projects with mentors, and/or independent projects. (p. 5)

Designed to build upon the academic and practicum components completed during previous years of study within the Faculty of Education, this PS III Internship, with its combination of

classroom teaching and professional study, offered unique possibilities for examining the construction of identity with pre-service teachers in elementary classrooms in the southern region of our province.

Professional Semester III as a borderland space. In addition to acting as the professional bridge between the more formal aspects of their academic study and the official beginning of their teaching careers, the PS III Internship is a borderland space that situates these interns as being both students and teachers. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) define borderlands as "those spaces that exist where one lives within the possibility of multiple plotlines . . . where conceptual boundaries are still in the making and the possibilities for what we might do are diverse" (p. 59). Alsup (2006) suggests borderlands offer a space in which "to experience a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other" (p. 15). As the culminating experience in their teacher education program, these 15 weeks were more than simply a transition from one way of being to another, from being a student to now being a teacher; rather, they were that rich time in-between, a liminal space, that invited consideration of diverse ways of being.

For student teachers living in the borderlands of the PS III Internship, these weeks were times of struggle. Without clear margins, or a carefully divided landscape, it was challenging to know "where one leaves one way of making sense for another" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 59) especially when confronted with greater expectations for teaching involvement and professional responsibility than had existed in previous practicum placements. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) suggest this time of initial practice presents a unique context:

> Although student teachers may have a developing notion of who they are as teachers as they move through teacher education programs, the shift from the protected environment of such programs into initial practice in schools can be destabilizing and is a period of identity change worthy of investigation. The influence of the school context has an effect

> on the often fragile identity of a newly formed teacher. Moving from a university community of student teachers to the community of a school as a new teacher implies multiple tensions as adaptations and adjustment to identity are necessitated or provoked**.** We understand this period as an intense identity experience, a time when the new school context causes a beginning teacher to question and perhaps reframe her developing identity. (p. 6)

This specific context - the 15 week Professional Semester III Internship - was a borderland between being a student and becoming a teacher and, as such, was particularly well suited for an interpretive case study.

Recognition of the importance of the final field experience. This culminating field experience was a time of hard work, great expectation, and stress for students involved in this study. In addition, the final evaluation completed by a school administrator is a critical document for ultimately securing a teaching contract. In other words, much rested on the successful completion of this field experience. My experience as a teacher educator, a field experience supervisor, and the coordinator of classroom placements for our collaborative Bachelor of Education program provided me with a keen awareness of how very overwhelming these weeks can be. Moreover, as the individual responsible for responding to students in crisis during practica, over the years I have worked closely with University Facilitators, classroom teachers, and school administrators when students are in difficulty during field experiences.

As a researcher entering into this study involving participants who were in the midst of such an intense experience I recognized the critical importance of being sensitive to every student teacher’s needs and responsive to each particular context. Some inquirers may choose not to involve student teachers in research studies during field experiences believing it will become a burden and add yet another element of expectation on individuals. I appreciate this point of view

and certainly agree with the characterization of this time in the life of a student teacher as one of stress and expectation. However, the very nature of this field experience, as a borderland between being a student and becoming a teacher, provokes inquiry. I see two very important benefits of conducting research during what is a stressful time in the development of a teacher.

First, the understandings that emerged from this inquiry have the potential to inform teacher education programs as we consider the critical role of teacher identity formation. Second, and most importantly, I believe taking part in this study offered student teachers an opportunity to puzzle-out who they are becoming. Participation in this inquiry directly and intentionally involved pre-service teachers in the consideration of stories, experiences, challenges, and reflections related to the construction of teacher identity. This had the potential to enhance their internship by offering a forum for thinking about the ways in which they have been shaped by past experiences as well as about their future as classroom teachers. My role as researcher was to recognize the nature of this final field experience and to be sensitive to the expectations and stress that often accompanies being a student teacher in a classroom. As a program coordinator of practicum placements and a field experience supervisor I believe I have developed both the skills and mindfulness that supported productive engagement throughout in this culminating internship.

Timeline of the inquiry. Planning for this study began in Fall 2012 when I held a preliminary conversation with Dr. Lorraine Beaudin, Assistant Dean Field Experiences, in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge. At that time she indicated an interest in a study of this nature and a willingness to work toward having students completing their PS III placement in an elementary school become involved as participants during the academic year 2013-2014.

In Fall 2013 I contacted Dr. Beaudin and made arrangements to speak with possible participants in early December during a meeting organized by the Field Experience office for

mentor teachers and interns. Both the Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix C) were distributed to interested interns and by the middle of the December four students had indicated their willingness to participate in the inquiry with our first conversation set for the first week of school in January 2014. Data was gathered over the weeks of Professional Semester III with our final conversation together taking place in the middle of April 2014 following its completion.

Boundaries of the inquiry. This inquiry invited participation from students completing their 15 week Professional Semester III Internship at the University of Lethbridge in an elementary classroom from January through April 2014. While this particular field experience acts functionally as the transition from the academic portion of their teacher education program to the beginning of their career as a classroom teacher, I have suggested previously that it is more than this: it is also a borderland, a time in-between, "a space in which to experience a richer, fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other" (Alsup, 2006, p. 15). Given the unique context of this field experience in the province of Alberta, this inquiry was limited to student teachers enrolled in the Professional Semester III Internship.

Ethical considerations. Josselson (2007) states that researchers who seek out, listen to, and reflect on the lived experiences of individuals are engaged in an inherently relational endeavour. She suggests every aspect of our work is touched by the ethics of the research relationship and while our responsibility to protect the privacy and dignity of those whose lives we study is self-evident, this principle is "fraught with dilemmas of choice that attend ethics in all relationships" (p. 537). It is not a matter of abstractly correct behavior but of responsibility in human relationship with the essence of the ethical conundrum manifesting itself in the dual role assumed by inquirers: the desire to build an individual, personal, and intimate relationship with each participant and the researcher's professional responsibilities to the scholarly community (p. 538). Recognizing the "dilemmas and contingencies rampant in this work" (p. 560), Josselson

advocates, not for rigid rules, but for the cultivation of an ethical attitude that acknowledges the tensions and dilemmas inherently part of our work as interpretive inquirers.

Practically, within the realm of research with human subjects, two issues dominate the work we do with others: free and informed consent and the protection of participants from harm. First, participants must enter projects voluntarily with full understanding of the nature of the inquiry and the dangers and obligations involved; second, participants should not be exposed to risks greater than the gains they may derive from involvement in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 53). The Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix C) drafted for participants in this inquiry included a description of the study and its purpose; an outline of reasonably foreseeable risks and potential benefits; information about how the findings of this study will be shared with others as well as the assurance that each participant is under no obligation to participate and was free to withdraw at any time during the course of the inquiry. More specifically, the letter of information and the consent form adhered to the ethical guidelines contained in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research with Humans and approval for this study was granted through the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office (Appendix D) as well as through the Human Subject Research Committee, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge (Appendix E).

In addition to these formal, institutional procedures designed to ensure free and informed consent as well as protection from harm, care was taken in the relationships established through the course of this inquiry, recognizing that vulnerability will likely occur when human beings share inner thoughts and experiences with one another. In addition, and as outlined earlier, the nature of the PS III Internship presented a particular set of circumstances that required me to be sensitive and responsive to the emotional and psychological well-being of the student teachers involved in this study.

Finally, I entered into this inquiry with a sense of wonder and curiosity. Seeking insight about that what lies within the stories of our lives I encouraged student teachers to participate in this study in the hope their experiences would offer a glimpse into the "difficulty of life" (Caputo, 1987) and specifically, the challenges and possibilities presented by the constructing of a professional identity. I recognized that reflections and experiences were disclosed in our conversations together and regardless of how benign they may have seemed, opening oneself to another and revealing what is hidden, invites vulnerability. As a researcher, I appreciate this may have been deeply unsettling and am committed to honouring the shared experiences of my participants; this is an ethic of care and compassion.

Method

> In the everyday, ordinary usage of the term in qualitative studies, method denotes a procedure, tool, or technique used by the inquirer to generate and analyze data.
>
> (Schwandt, 2001, p. 158)

Conversational interviews with the four participants were the primary means of gathering data for analysis and interpretation. A detailed explication of my research plan follows in this section: an outline of the ways in which data was gathered through conversational interviews with specific reference to Kvale (1986) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009); a list of interview prompts and their relationship to the research questions that directed this study; and finally, a discussion of the ways in which I prepared for each conversation by using data gleaned from transcripts and field notes of previous interviews.

Data collection. Data was gathered from three of the four participants in this study through three conversational interviews held over the 15 weeks of the internship; however, given her change in placement in early March, one participant and I met four times: twice during each classroom experience. All conversations were approximately an hour in length and took place in locations convenient for each student teacher. Prior to the first conversation in early January 2014

an email was sent to the participants welcoming them to the inquiry (Appendix F) and asking them to think about and respond to one, or more, of the prompts suggested in the a Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A). These prompts were designed to explore their initial thoughts in response to the question: "Who is the self that teaches?" (Palmer, 1998, p. 7).

The pre-interview activity. Ellis (2006) maintains that using pre-interview activities cultivates appreciation for the wholeness and complexity of a participant's life as well as the more immediate context of the experience being explored. These activities, offered to the participant through a selection of prompts or suggestions, "facilitate such learning through friendly, comfortable, conversational occasions" (p. 118). Typically, pre-interview activities are related to the research topic with the intention of encouraging reflection, directing initial conversation, and invoking an atmosphere of respect (Ellis, Janjic-Watrich, Macris, & Marynowski, 2011). While offering each participant an opportunity to shape the initial stages of the conversation through reflections on their completed activity, it is important to note that because three of the four participants were meeting me privately for the first time, my work was greatly facilitated by the clear conversational invitation offered by a general request to "tell me about your pre-interview activity."

All four participants completed a pre-interview activity and brought it with them to our first conversation together. Three referred to notes as they spoke; David responded to all of the prompts. Mark shared a drawing he made in response to the provocation asking participants to use three colours to create an abstract diagram about how it feels, or what it is like, to be a teacher (Appendix G). My decision to begin this inquiry with a pre-interview activity was successful in two ways: first, it provided a safe, starting point for the relationship that was to develop over the following weeks and second, it offered a point of referral against which students could assess their increasingly complex understandings of who they were becoming.

Conversational interviews. Weber (1986) suggests that in "asking someone to participate in an interview, we are thus in a sense extending an invitation to conversation" (p. 65). If this invitation is sincere and genuine "the interviewer turns to the participant as one human being to another . . . in a way that confirms the other - the interviewer is genuinely present, committed, and open to the participant" (p. 65) prompting and evoking the participant's lived experience while together seeking shared understanding. Carson (1986) observes that the process of interviewing is "inherently conversational" (p. 76) and that in "real conversation" words have a *maieutic* quality: they become like midwives helping to bring forth thoughts and ideas the speaker has yet to overtly articulate (p. 81).

Kvale (1986) writes that conversation is a basic mode of human interaction; a research interview is a conversation that has structure and purpose. In an interview conversation the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world and hears them express their views on their work situation or family life, their dreams and hopes (p. 1). The qualitative research interview, described as a "construction site of knowledge, literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2, italics in original), is a means of understanding the world from a participant's point of view and working toward unfolding the meaning of his or her experience. He maintains that a strength of the interview conversation is its ability to "capture the multitude of subjects' views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial human world" (p. 7).

While we engage in conversation every day of our lives, Kvale (1986) warns that the very virtue of the research interview - its openness - poses a number of challenges for inquirers given the lack of standardized techniques and rules for interview investigations. Calling for sensitivity and empathy, the role of the interviewer is instrumental in gathering the data that will lead to deeper understanding. He suggests "interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can

become an art" (p. 13); this is accomplished through an emphasis, not on particular methods of interviewing, but on the crucial role of the person of the researcher.

Guidelines for interview conversations. Kvale (1986) offers two guidelines and a way of thinking about interview questions and prompts that support the qualitative researcher in her work as the primary instrument of data gathering. First, he identifies advance preparation as essential to the interaction and outcome of an interview. Well before the audio recording device is turned on, a substantial part of the investigation should already have taken place. He explains that the interviewer must possess background knowledge about the experience being explored, have a clear sense of purpose and direction, and be familiar with the types of interview questions that can be asked to elicit different types of responses from the participant (p. 126).

Second, Kvale (1986) suggests researchers prepare for conversational interviews by creating an interview guide that contains an outline of topics to be covered together with suggested questions. He defines effective interview questions as those that contribute thematically to knowledge production and dynamically to sustaining the conversation and motivating the participant to talks about their experiences. Specifically, the questions should be easy to understand, concise, and devoid of academic language; in short, when crafting interview questions the researcher must think about how best to "get at" the themes that structure the inquiry and engage the participant in the thinking about their own experience. And because interview conversations are intended to be responsive to what is shared, the researcher must listen actively to what is being said, and perhaps not said, in order to pose subsequent questions that will probe and clarify comments and reflections offered (p. 132). While I recognized that the interview guide was critically important for preparation and for support, I was aware of the need to bring my own knowledge, skills, and intuition to the conversation with the ultimate goal of constructing deeper and more complex understandings of the experience.

Seeking narratives alters the researcher-participant relationship. Identifying interviews as a discourse between speakers, Mishler (1986) states that while narratives are a naturally occurring feature of respondents' accounts they are often dismissed by researchers as distractions to the formal questions posed. Yet these stories refer to meaningful and coherent courses of action, with beginnings, middles, and ends that further our understanding of complex relationships that change through time and a particular context (p. 248). This shift in focus from eliciting specific types of interview responses to inviting the telling of stories about life events and experiences alters the essential relationship between researcher and participant. By assuming a more collaborative relationship wherein "together we try to understand what their stories are about" (p. 248, 249) the researcher and her participants have the opportunity to more fully construct understandings of social interaction, over time, and within a particular context (p. 241). This is made possible through an altered relationship between researcher and participant.

Conversation changes both participant and researcher. As the relationship changes from that of formal interview to one of collaboration and shared purpose it follows that the interpretive researcher will be affected by what is said and constructed during the course of an inquiry. It is only as the interviewer and the participant relate to each other as human beings, seeking shared understanding in the space *between,* that interviewing is even possible. Smith (1991) underscores the notion that the interpretive researcher is changed, even transformed, through involvement in the inquiry and cautions that the researcher must be prepared to deepen her own self-understanding in the course of the inquiry. Shaped by both the inquirer and the participant and with the power to transform all partners in the process, conversations together become "for the moment, their shared abode" (Weber, 1986, p. 68).

Interview questions and prompts. Kvale (1986) suggests crafting possible interview questions and prompts in response to the specific research questions they are intended to explore

(p. 131). Appendix B outlines a list of provocations generated prior to the beginning of the inquiry to explore each of the questions framing the study. While they had been intentionally aligned in this manner, I recognized during the course of the data gathering process that questions, like responses, do not exist as tidy packages; there is always overlap. I used this outline extensively throughout the 15 weeks of this study to direct my thinking and to ensure I was, as much as possible, inviting consideration of each of the questions structuring this inquiry. Of course, as the conversations developed and my relationship with each participant deepened over time, additional areas were revealed for more specific examination. As a starting point, this generated list offered a framework to support on-going conversations while the unfolding data directed other, more specific prompts and questions.

Visual images informing and supporting my work. Two visual images guided my understanding of what it is like to be an interpretive inquirer who selects conversational interviews as the primary means of data gathering. First, Weber's notion of a "shared abode" (1986, p. 86) created during moments of conversation encouraged me to think about how the collaborative experience of sense-making has the generative power to open up a resting place, an abode, for the new understandings constructed together. Since childhood I have created images in my mind of what things will be like; in recent years they have become metaphors to direct my thinking and my actions. The notion of a "shared abode" offered me a compelling image as an interpretive researcher and provoked me to focus on building relationships of trust with the four participants.

One of the characteristics of interpretive research is its essential human-ness: "meaning is embedded in people's experiences and this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and was aware of my responsibility to be responsive to the context in which each student teacher

resided, able to adapt to circumstances emerging from my inquiry, sensitive to nonverbal aspects of the conversations, and able to clarify and summarize as the study unfolded. Knowing that together we sought deeper understanding of their experience in the borderlands of this internship, interpretive inquiry became an intensely human endeavour built on relationships of trust in which we, the researcher and the participant, resided, for a time, in a shared abode.

The second image is related to the role of conversation is the process of sense-making. Carson (1986) suggests the words of our conversation have a *maieutic* quality: they can become like midwives helping to bring forth thoughts and ideas the speaker has yet to overtly articulate (p. 81). While I tried to be sensitive to these developing understandings during our conversations together, it wasn't until afterwards, when I listened to the audio recording and reviewed the transcripts, did I recognize there were the beginnings of ideas lying beneath and within our conversation. This image of words as "birthing" the often inchoate thoughts existing, half-formed, in our minds encouraged me to think of questions and prompts to draw out those ideas present, but merely alluded to or touched on briefly, in previous conversations. And then, together with prompts from the generic structure I created using the four research questions (Appendix B), I included these individual provocations in the document I prepared and shared with each participant prior to our next conversation. Appendices H, I, J, and K are examples of my on-going desire to return to the ideas mentioned in previous conversations and to invite participants to give life to those thoughts and ideas not yet fully articulated.

My experience as a conversational interviewer. Conversations took place in a private, quiet location after school was finished for the day. For the three participants living in the Lethbridge area, we met at the university in an office space; the fourth participant was completing her internship in Medicine Hat and we met together in my office. Participants were emailed prior to each conversation and in preparation for our first meeting in early January 2014 I

attached the Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A). For subsequent conversations a one-page document highlighting possible areas of discussion was provided (Appendices H, I, J, K). Each conversation was audio-taped, transcribed for analysis, and formatted with a five cm margin on the right-hand side of the page to accommodate my notes. After every conversation, I sent transcripts to participants electronically requesting they read it over to ensure it was an accurate rendering of what they remembered of our conversation together. Verification of the transcript's accuracy was indication of each participant's ongoing consent.

Interconnected nature of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. Once I received this verification I reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio recording and made observations, posed questions, and identified connections in the margins of the document. Merriam (1998) writes:

> Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of the data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformulation of question. It is an interactive process throughout that allows the investigator to produce believable and trustworthy finds. (p. 151)

I used these margin notes and my written reflections from the previous conversation to craft the next set of interview prompts based on these questions: What do I want to know more about? What might be hidden beneath particular comments made by this participant? And as I gathered more data themes and categories began to present themselves. For example, early on in the study all participants spoke about their mentor teacher and her role in this internship. David identified the principal of the school as being particularly instrumental in his professional development. I wanted to know more about the role of the more-skilled peer and the mentor-protégé relationship: What is it like? What qualities are found in a "good" mentor? In what ways will they (the

participants) mentor student teachers in the years to come? These questions emerged from the transcripts I reviewed and found their way into the prompts I posed for our next conversation. In this way, data collection and data analysis were on-going and concurrent.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe this process as "spiraling backwards" (p. 111). As the researcher constructs increasingly complex understandings of the experience under investigation she returns to earlier stages for direction: "Questioning may continually improve as the researcher learns more about a topic, ideally resulting in a sophisticated form of interviewing that is receptive to the nuances and complexities of the topic explored (p. 112). This process of spiraling backward resonates with the understanding of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation as a series of hermeneutic circles drawn together into an unfolding spiral, wherein each rotation of the spiral is comprised of both a forward and a backward arc that represent projection and evaluation (Ellis, 1998). What one learns in the evaluation phase of the previous loop of the spiral may dramatically change the questions asked of the direction assumed in the next forward arc. Smith (1991) maintains "this is because *what* is being investigated itself holds part of the answer to *how* it should be investigated" (p. 198, italics in original). While other forms of inquiry may ensure that all data is gathered prior to beginning the analysis, the very nature of interpretive inquiry as "concerned engagement" (Packer and Addison, 1989, p. 279) required a commitment from me to engage in data gathering, data analysis, and the construction of interpretations in an on-going manner, directing my attention to the emerging spirals of understandings shaping the questions still to be posed. The visual representation of unfolding spirals, or a series of connected hermeneutic circles, offered an interpretive frame for conceptualizing *how* to work while recognizing and appreciating both the immediate and emergent quality of this inquiry.

Composing field notes. Schwandt (2001) maintains that for interpretive researchers field

notes are highly personal, individualistic and reflect the unique ways in which each researcher works. He offers three comments on the nature of field notes that helped inform my work: first, they have a dynamic character. What I knew and recorded early in my inquiry was qualitatively different from what I knew and recorded later. In effect, my field notes were responsive to the changing context as my insight and understandings developed and were refined. Second, preparing field notes requires interpretive and textualizing practices as these notes were not merely a kind of recording; rather, they were a space - both physical and metaphorical - in which I explored the beginnings of understanding about the experience of student teachers in this borderland. Finally, though field notes preserved my observations and emerging insights they were only one aspect of the interpretive process.

I prepared for this inquiry by putting together four binders - one for each participant - into which I placed all of the paperwork pertaining to that student teacher. In addition, I included a notebook to record notes and observations, questions and emerging understandings. Once transcripts were verified for accuracy, reviewed, and initial observations and comments noted, I placed them in the participant's binder. Emerging thoughts and possible areas of further inquiry were recorded in the notebook assigned to each student teacher and acted as a space for puzzling out what I was learning. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that in this "work-journal" (p. 112) the researcher should also note the ways in which her understandings are changing so that, ultimately, there will be a record of the processes and changes in the knowledge constructed throughout the inquiry (p. 113). As I am most comfortable with words most of what I recorded in these notebooks were in the form of point-form observations and questions to myself about what appeared to be emerging in our conversations.

I tried valiantly to make notes and observations during our conversations but early on found this distracted me from listening closely and responding to the comments made by the

participant - a key element of establishing a relationship of trust. I realized I needed to briefly jot down the idea I wanted to explore immediately while the participant was talking and completed the detailed observations and notes after the conversation finished. While it would have been helpful to have observations made throughout, I decided, given the developing level of my interviewing skills, it was more important to be attentive and responsive.

Responding to circumstances by adapting the research plan. Originally, I intended to complement the conversational interviews with two focus groups: one prior to the start of the internship and another once it was complete. My purpose for structuring the research plan in this manner was two-fold: first, by inviting participants to come together and explore some of their initial ideas about who they are as teachers and then to share their growth at the end of the internship, I hoped to draw them together into a small cohort which could have offered the opportunity for support through the internship. While in the same Bachelor of Education program, I did not assume the participants were necessarily acquainted, let alone colleagues or friends. The focus groups could have established relationships of support. And second, I believe we are provoked to other ways of thinking when we sit together with someone whose experience is similar, whose circumstances mirror our own. As the researcher in this inquiry, as a teacher educator and a classroom teacher, I understood my perspective on what it means to experience the borderland of this internship to be qualitatively different from that of my participants. And so, it seemed advantageous to bring the four of them together and to facilitate conversation among and between them.

Unfortunately, circumstances did not allow for the focus groups to take place. It took much longer than expected to receive ethics approval first from the University of Alberta and then from the University of Lethbridge, and once those approvals were established, we were quickly approaching the end of the academic term. I was invited to speak briefly at a meeting of

PS III students in the second week of December 2013; however, I wasn't able to confirm participation of all four interns until just before the vacation period. And by then, it was too late to arrange the first focus group. I had also hoped to use this initial focus group to introduce myself more fully, to share some of the organizational details of the study, and to explain the Pre-Interview Activity and its purpose. In order to accomplish these goals, given the circumstances, I crafted an introductory email (Appendix F) and sent it to each of them on December 17, 2013 just prior to the vacation period.

Early on in the study I suggested to the participants it might still be possible to meet together at the end of the internship; all thought this would be a good idea. However, two sets of circumstances intervened to make this impossible. First of all, because one intern had been given a second classroom placement beginning in early March it was not clear she would be finished her internship at the same time as the others, and second, two of the participants were leaving to return to other parts of Canada directly following the completion of the 15 weeks. In the end, I adapted my original research plan of two focus groups to accommodate circumstances that, given the tight timelines of the internship, were beyond my immediate control.

Data analysis and interpretation: Taking apart and putting together. Stake (2010) describes the process of data analysis and interpretation as follows:

> Research involves both analysis (the taking things apart) and synthesis (the putting things together). We gather data. We increase our experience. We look closely at patches of collected data, the parts of our experience; that is, we analyze. And we put the parts together, often in different ways than before. We synthesize. (p. 133)

And through this process we begin to make sense of what we have gathered, observed, and puzzled out about the circumstances or experience under consideration. While we do much of our work intuitively, he suggests we come back, again and again, to our research question with the

goal of creating a report that will help others understand (p. 134).

This process of taking apart and putting together further locates the researcher in the midst of the inquiry. First of all, as the key instrument in qualitative studies, Cresswell (2014) suggests the researcher must appreciate how "their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations and the direction of the study" (p. 186). This personal investment in questions formulated, methods selected, interpretations made, and conclusions drawn is a hallmark of interpretive inquiry. And second, through conversation and consideration, researchers and participants co-construct understandings of the experience being explored with the hope of acquiring deeper, more complex understandings. In other words, it is a collaborative effort to take apart and put together, to consider how the gathered data informs and directs our shared puzzling out.

Taking apart and putting together this borderland experience. I was keenly aware throughout the planning stage of this inquiry of how I would need to attend to each participant's context, both personal and professional, and also to how our conversations would invite different kinds of reflections from each intern: I would need to be sensitive and responsive to these shadows of not yet articulated thought (Carson, 1986). With this in mind, and beginning immediately after our first conversation together, I began to think about the ways in which I might provoke deeper reflection. The framework of prompts based on the four research questions (Appendix B) offered the beginnings of a structure to guide future conversations; however, once I reviewed the transcripts while listening to the conversations and making notes in the margins additional areas for inquiry and follow-up became evident. I then crafted the next set of prompts often seeking clarification about comments or observations made earlier (Appendix H, Appendix I). In this way, the inquiry became more responsive to the particular context of each intern and to the shadows of unarticulated thought while at the same time remaining tethered to my essential

questions.

Coding the data from transcripts. After all of the conversations were transcribed and each participant had verified the final transcript for accuracy I began the formal process of data analysis: the taking apart. Because the four questions structuring the inquiry had been so helpful in guiding my preparation for conversations with participants, after rereading each participant's transcripts I decided I would extract chunks of text and rearrange them in four separate documents as if "in answer" to that specific question. While I began to see areas of overlap as the comments and observations from participants were rearranged in this manner, I completed this process before beginning the next stage: coding the data.

Cresswell (2014) writes that coding is "the process of organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins" (p. 197). With large tracts of data to look over in response to each of the four questions, I began to organize and categorize the threads in the margins of the document. On a separate piece of large paper I recorded these threads and added to them as new data presented itself. It was fascinating to watch how ideas began clustering together, illuminating each other. Once all data from that specific question was reviewed I then used coloured highlighters to identify and draw the common threads together. Appendix L is an example of how the emerging themes sheet for Question 1 appeared once this 'taking apart' was complete.

Beginning to put together. As I had become well-acquainted with the data and its emerging categories through the coding process it seemed reasonable to begin the 'putting together' by creating a concept map for each inquiry question. Glesne (2006) suggests that displaying data in a visual representation enables the researcher to see the overall patterns in the data without becoming lost in the details. Specifically, a concept map encourages complex and meaningful thinking as it illustrates how the map-maker understands the relationships between

concepts as she links and connects, classifies and arranges key ideas (Bennett and Rolheiser, 2008). I was guided by the categories and themes I recorded on the emerging themes sheet (Appendix L) as I worked to construct the beginnings of understandings: clusters of data, associated with each other, or as subsections of thoughts, began to find their counterparts on the other side of the concept map, joined by lines and arrows. This process was tremendously helpful: I had to think carefully about the data clusters and their relationship to one another and then, once complete, the visual representations, one for each inquiry question, became artifacts of the inquiry to guide further sense-making. Appendix M, the concept map for inquiry question 1, is an example of how the themes were recorded and explored in clusters, then connected to other concepts emerging from the data.

Synthesis: themes emerging from the borderlands. Once all four inquiry questions were mapped, I began to see ways in which the concepts on one map were also linked to themes on the other maps: either they reiterated what was already recorded, they augmented the concept with additional ideas or examples, or they presented another facet of understanding. Stake (2010) refers to the resulting clusters of data as "a collage of patches" (p. 180); as I looked over the emerging themes I began to consider ways to draw the four maps together into a more comprehensive representation of what I was learning about this experience of the borderlands. In the end, I resorted to a very 'low-tech' solution: using scissors and a glue stick I cut up copies of the four concept maps and arranged the "patches" on two pieces of chart paper taped together, identifying places of overlap, connecting ideas, and clarifying relationships. While it appeared I had numerous ideas as a result of my 'taking apart' once they were anchored on this larger sheet of paper, five integrated understandings emerged. Stake (2010) writes:

> For the final report, you have many ideas to put together. Synthesis should not be primarily a matter of presenting them all, in order of importance or in clusters, but

> reaching some new, composite, integrated understandings by considering all of the ideas together. (p. 184)

Initially, the final concept map identified five broad clusters, "patches" that examine the tensions, ambiguity, uncertainty, and possibility of this in-between space: the context of the classroom, becoming part of an educational community, relationships with mentors, the role of past field experiences and academic coursework, and the intentional consideration of becoming. However, as I examined the map more closely a few days later, thinking about possible ways of re-presenting these interconnected categories, I realized the themes, and their component parts, clustered, connected and linked one to the other, explore and clarify the broad statement: The borderland . . . challenges and nurtures the construction of professional identity (Appendix N).

This study contributes to our growing understanding of this in-between time as confronting and supporting the construction of a professional self. Just as an *ecotone* supports the existence of abundant plant and animal life uniquely suited to flourish within its dynamic boundaries, it is also a zone of transition, a space of tension and struggle. In addition to informing teacher educators as they make programmatic and curriculum decisions, the results of this inquiry - shared as stories, portraits, reflections, and observations in the next chapter - have been crafted so that others may understand more fully what it means to journey on the borderlands between being a student and becoming a teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Echoes on the Borderlands

Shadows and Echoes

> The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it. (Stake, 1995, p. 43)

Like thunderclouds gathering in the distance, questions amass, casting shadows of doubt and leaving a sense of apprehension: How will I "sophisticate the beholding" of this time on the borderlands? Am I capable of evoking this experience through the crafting of thick, rich description? How will the voices of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark be heard? As an interpretive researcher my task is to share this borderland experience in ways that will honour the experience of these four participants, invite readers into their journey, and offer understandings of this time in-between to inform the work of teacher educators. It is no small responsibility. The clouds accumulate, one on the other, moving steadily across the prairie sky.

Notions related to my physical environment have shaped this inquiry in essential ways; and as I think about sharing my emerging understandings I am drawn to the idea of echoes: the remnants of sound produced by reflected waves, as distinguished from the original sound caused by the direct waves (OED, 1961, p. 31). An echo allows for recognition of what is, or what was, by reflecting off, and occasionally emerging from within, the landscape. Given form by their context, echoes are the remnants of what was first uttered. They have the power to linger and hang gently in the air. My reflective journal gives evidence of early thinking about echoes. After reviewing transcripts while listening to the audio-recordings in early March, I wrote:

> As these voices thread through my thoughts they both echo and diverge from each other. Sometimes they sing in unison, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in dissonance. How can I draw out these echoes, these harmonies and contradictions born of different contexts

and different personalities?

What follows in this chapter is an exploration of diverse ways I have listened for, made sense of, and responded to what has lingered; the borderlands are rife with shadows of uncertainty and echoes of experience. But before beginning, a few thoughts about writing.

Thoughts on Writing

> Writing is a process of discovery. There is no single way - much less one "right" way - of staging a text. Like wet clay, the material can be shaped. (Richardson, 2000, p. 936)

Early in my doctoral studies Laurel Richardson was placed in my reading path. This was a fortunate happening as she challenged my understanding of writing and its purpose, particularly as writing relates to the 'telling' of research findings. While there are plenty of research reports and templates to guide my writing of what I have learned through this inquiry, Richardson (2000) suggests "writing is also a way of 'knowing' - a method of discovery and analysis" (p. 923). In short, the process of writing is, in fact, an integral aspect of the inquiry. As the researcher nurtures her own voice in the pursuit of more-complex understandings associated with the study, her self-knowledge develops which, in turn, provokes deeper considerations of the text. In this way, writing becomes, not merely a re-telling of the research story, but a means of making sense of the echoes that linger and hang in the air.

The second quality of writing, reiterated and expanded upon by numerous writers since, is the ability of the research texts to draw in the reader and evoke the experience being explored. Richardson's own work, particularly her narrative poem of Louisa May fashioned in response to an in-depth interview, compels the reader into another world re-presented through dramatic poetry (Richardson, 1993). Ely (2007) writes "no matter how excellent the gathering of information, in the final instance people must want to read what we wrote, must want to stay. Our reports must glow with life" (p. 569).

Finally, the decision to shape the wet clay in one way or another is, Ely (2007) argues, informed by the different meanings the writer seeks to communicate. In other words, there is a relationship between form and content, between meaning and re-presentation. Different writing conventions allow for the sharing of different kinds of understandings with the overall goal of helping us tell the stories of our research. Not easily accomplished: "This business of creating forms that come closest to the essence of our understandings and presenting them in trustworthy ways is a crucial, ongoing, interactive dance" (p. 568). My goal in this chapter is to construct re-presentations of the borderland journeys of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark that hum with reflection, that are crafted, not to harness but to liberate discovery and learning (Ely, Vinz, Anzul, & Downing, 1997).

In order to achieve this outcome I employed a variety of structures and formats: first, a number of sections highlight direct quotes from participants in text boxes nestled in the context of the analytic discussion of their significance. By selecting an organically contoured border and slight shading inside the textbox, I hoped to draw attention to the voice of each speaker while at the same time offering comment in the text surrounding it; I did not want their words "lost" in the body of the discussion. In addition, I crafted six interpretive accounts of experience on the borderlands. Pelias (2011) suggests: "Writing is a strategy of circling, of making present what might have slipped away, of calling into focus through an attentiveness to and negotiation with language" (p. 660). Using their words, phrasing, pauses, and sometimes, their thinking aloud complete with mis-starts, stumbles, and rewording, I drew together their ideas as they were shared over time. Occasionally, this meant a portion of our first conversation was placed beside comments made about the same theme in a later conversation. The only account that required the addition of transition phrases, which are my words, is the interpretive conversation constructed between two participants. In order to smoothly draw their voices together, I felt it necessary to

provide word bridges from one speaker to another. Otherwise, what is presented in the six interpretive renderings are the words of the participants, selected, and arranged to make visible their experience. The four portraits in the next section were crafted to introduce the interns in this study: their descriptions rely on observations I made during our conversations together, noted in my research journals, as well as information shared, recorded, and transcribed as part of the data gathering process. At all times, I have been mindful of constructing a trustworthy account as I invite consideration of these echoes from the borderland, that in-between space of both uncertainty and possibility.

Portraits of Becoming: David, Grace, Laura, and Mark

> Writing about another person's life is an awesome task, so one must proceed with a gentleness born from knowing that the subject and the author share the frailties of human mortality. (Nagel, 1986, p. 115)

The question of how to introduce the four interns in this study has been with me for some time now. Because they live vividly in my memory, and I still hear their voices when reading over transcripts, it should be a simple undertaking to describe them, to bring a semblance of life to this page. And yet, it seems a most difficult task. Perhaps, as Nagel (1986) suggests, it is the awesome nature of this endeavor that has left me struggling for the words that will honour who they are.

All four participants chose to become involved in this inquiry after listening to a short description of the project at a meeting arranged by the university to outline the upcoming internship and their responsibilities. While I was acquainted with one of the participants from previous coursework she completed at our institution, the other three individuals were entirely unknown to me. In the months since the completion of the internship, and certainly during the weeks I reviewed and mapped their data, I often marveled at how willing they were to thoughtfully consider my prompts and provocations during what was a very intense time in their

teacher education program. In different ways, and from very different contexts, each shared observations, reflections, stories, concerns, and questions emerging from their developing understandings of who they were becoming as teachers. The following portraits of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark have been crafted by referring to notes and comments from my research journal as well as by reviewing the transcripts made of each conversation and the observations I recorded earlier in the margins. As our relationship developed over the weeks of their internship my understanding of their lives developed such that I came to know each of them in small ways. These portraits are, in no way, meant to be definitive; rather, they offer a context for appreciating the discussion that follows in this chapter. It is, Nagel (1986) observes, an awesome task to write about another's life.

David. As a mature student entering a teacher education program in his mid-20s, David's previous life experience shaped the way in which he approached his academic studies as well as his previous field experiences. He was discouraged by school throughout his junior high years and it wasn't until grade 11, and the influence of two teachers, that David began to see himself as a capable and engaged learner. He believes that the ways in which these two teachers built relationships with their students significantly shaped the teacher he is becoming. While he attended college in a business program shortly after leaving high school, he "didn't really enjoy being in it." Eventually, with encouragement from friends who recognized his ability to connect with their children, David began to volunteer in a kindergarten classroom. Not only did he feel needed in this learning environment but also realized just how much he enjoyed seeing these children learn: "I just felt that seeing the children's faces and the joy that it brought myself when I'm in the classroom really made me feel like I actually wanted to be a teacher." He enrolled in a teacher education program soon after.

David's internship placement was in a grade two classroom. His previous practicum was

in a high school and he spoke about how much he enjoyed building relationships with these older students and having the opportunity to lead discussions related to curriculum content and what was going on in the world. Now, in grade two, he had some adjusting to do and, at first, he found this challenging. Not only were the relationships different, but the context of the classroom and the age of the students required thinking about learning in a different manner. Classroom management was, for David, an area of concern at the beginning of the placement; however, as he developed relationships with the grade two students and structured curriculum for engagement many of these concerns fell away. And at the end of the internship, when asked how his final days had been, he said: "I was very sad. I don't show my emotions a lot. I really grew a huge relationship with just everyone who was there, so it's tough to leave."

David arrived at each of our conversations ready to share his thinking about the prompts sent to him earlier that week. In preparation for our first conversation together, even though the instructions on the Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A) suggested selecting one or two items for response, David did them all! In great detail, and from a document he carefully crafted, he shared his thinking for each of the seven provocations. This level of engagement and thoughtful consideration was evident throughout our time together. By our final conversation David had traced the ways in which his understandings of who he was becoming as a teacher had changed over the weeks of the internship. By directly referring to the transcripts I sent after each conversation he was able to articulate his development for me using his exact words anchored in time. David's cognitive engagement, together with his reflective maturity, invited complex understandings of his experience.

Grace. Early experiences volunteering at a horseback riding camp prompted Grace to think about becoming a teacher. This was the first time anyone had said to her "you should be a teacher, you're good at this." Even though she thought she might pursue something in the artistic

realm the idea of teaching stayed with her and once done high school she applied to university. While attracted to the idea of being a teacher, Grace was not confident in this choice: “I do want to be a teacher, but I don’t know if I’m really going to be good at it.” However, initial field experiences in schools she described as positive environments confirmed her commitment to teaching.

Grace was very excited to be placed in a grade three classroom for her internship. A previous practicum in a junior high classroom had challenged her understandings of what it means to be a teacher and she had arrived at the conclusion she didn’t really have the personality, the presence needed for working with junior high students: “I’m not one of these people that really grab attention, so maybe I’m not absolutely right for it.” In addition, she shared that the mentor teacher in this previous field experience did not support her during these challenges in junior high. Now, to be in grade three with children she believed to be more suited for her personality, Grace was excited to be a part of this classroom and to prepare for her career.

At first, it seemed that Grace was unsure of herself and what she might bring to our conversations together. In response to the Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A) she assembled a timeline outlining the “facts” of her life and her time at the university. In order to encourage more detail about these life events I asked questions and prompted reflection. In our final conversation together Grace suggested it often took time for her to warm up to someone new and perhaps this was the dynamic at work in this first conversation together. Certainly, as the weeks unfolded and the circumstances of the classroom supported her development and a growing confidence, Grace became more willing to expand her observations and talk about some of her struggles to meet the specific learning needs of students. As she reflected on the internship she said: “ I remember feeling, in my last practicum, just really uncomfortable in my own skin, like it wasn’t really working and just awkward. And I don’t feel like that at all now.”

Laura. From early childhood Laura dreamed of being a dentist. She shared this aspiration with her family and with her friends: everyone knew her as the one who was going to graduate and be the dentist. As a motivated and successful student during high school she entered college in a pre-dentistry program and "hated every minute of it." She intensely disliked the feeling of coming home and wondering what she was learning and, more importantly, why? The course load was heavy and the work was relentless. Finally, she realized she needed to try something different. An advisor suggested she consider teaching and so she began by taking two education courses and really enjoyed it. Not only did the courses and the field experience engage her in a way the science courses did not, but she described the work as rewarding: "you can't get a child coming up to you to say how excited they are for math, and how excited they are to learn. You just can't get that anywhere else." While Laura's journey to become a teacher started by what she describes as "default" she entered this internship eager to be working with children and excited to be so near the beginning of her career.

Her previous field experience had been in a grade six classroom and she enjoyed working with the older children especially in the area of math and science. When she received her internship placement in grade one she wondered how different this would be from what she had experienced previously. And yet, as she got to know the younger students and saw how willing they were to learn, Laura found this work rewarding. However, the struggles and tensions associated with this placement, and specifically with her mentor teacher, resulted in Laura changing classrooms about half way through the internship. This experience of difficulty shaped how she came to understand her professional self both during those weeks as well as afterwards in her new context.

Laura arrived for our first conversation with a list of words that represented her experience as a student teacher (Appendix A). Altogether, she identified 18 words or phrases to

describe what it is like being a student teacher: “rewarding” was her favorite. As she told me about this word and its importance to her it became clear this was what convinced her to become a teacher; it may also have been one of the reasons, after six weeks of difficulty, she finally contacted the university to seek clarification about her placement. Being a student teacher in her current classroom no longer felt rewarding. Reflective and articulate, Laura understood right from our first conversation together that there is an essential connection between being who you are and being a teacher. And by holding onto this idea - the importance of being present as a person - she was able to recognize when this was not so and to request support in the midst of difficult circumstances. At the end of the internship, when asked how this experience of struggle had shaped her, she reflected: “If I’m not myself, if I’m not a person before I’m a teacher, or if I’m not Laura before I’m a teacher, it’s just not going to be an enjoyable experience. Being a teacher is being yourself first and then presenting that self to whoever you are teaching or whatever you’re teaching.”

Mark. Mark recognized that by talking he thinks things through. Involvement in this inquiry was perfectly suited to the manner in which he makes sense of experiences and constructs understandings. He admitted that had he been required to write his reflections he would not have felt compelled to do so: it was the conversational aspect of being part of the study that interested him. As I listened to him, especially in our first meeting, I realized just how important talking was as a cognitive process. He would start a thought, restart the same thought, then stop . . . and begin again . . . all the while clarifying the direction his thinking was taking him in his own mind. Mark’s need to think out loud and make sense as we talked resulted in all kinds of conversational detours that invited me into his life as a teacher.

As the oldest sibling in a large family living in rural Alberta Mark entered university knowing what it is like to be with children. And because his father is a teacher Mark appreciates

the kinds of responsibilities this entails in a small community. He described his previous field experiences as highly successful and was surprised by the level of anxiety and uncertainty he was experiencing at the beginning of this internship. And with good reason: there were 33 students in the grade five class, of whom 20 were boys, with another student expected in the next week. In our first conversation these circumstances threatened to overwhelm Mark as he related some of the struggles he was having with classroom management and student engagement. This challenging situation was remedied by the second time we met: the 34th student had arrived and the class was divided into two groups for most of the day. As he told me of this new classroom arrangement his relief was palpable.

Mark completed his Pre-Interview Activity by choosing three colours to create an abstract diagram about how it feels, or what it is like, to be a teacher (Appendix G). His rendering of small green organic shapes embedded within swirling red and blue hurricane-like waves represented the tiny moments of calm serenity that happen in the midst of the teaching experience. This image became a touchstone for his reflections over our time together. In particular, he wanted to assess whether there were more calm, serene moments occurring as the weeks went on and less of the confusion represented by the hurricane-like waves. In our final conversation together he observed how understandings of his image had changed:

> When I first did it at the beginning, it was either good or it was bad. This day was good because things went well and this day was bad because everything fell apart and I got nothing done and I want to cry. Oh, and then I might have had a five minute conversation with this student and that was a little green thing. Now, it's like I put on the serenity goggles almost. Like I just got to . . . I was able . . . I had the perspective to stand back and just view the entire experience through a little better lens of yeah . . . there's some good and there's some bad, but I'm feeling personally better about the whole thing.

Mark's visual representation, created prior to beginning his internship, provided him with a point of reference for his on-going observations and offered an image to prompt reflections.

All four participants - David, Grace, Laura, and Mark - entered into this inquiry with a willingness to think deeply about their experience and to share their developing understandings with me. Each brought unique personal circumstances and established understandings to the classroom context of their internship. In one way or another, these weeks were for each of them a time of struggle and uncertainty. They were also a time of possibility: a borderland space between being a student and becoming a teacher.

> I don't like being firmer, but my principal was telling me kids need boundaries, they want boundaries and they want to know how far they can go before things go down. And I kind of agree with him, but I don't like being that guy who is like, stop it, get out of here, stop it, get out of here, stop it . . . you have to act like this. I don't like it.
>
> I think it's that relationship. So you feel like your relationship is strong, and if you hurt that student's feelings, you're like, oh, this is going to hurt the relationship and I don't want that to happen, so you let it go . . . or I let it go. And you keep wanting them to see you be that fun-loving guy or the fun teacher or their friend almost, but it can't be that way. They have to see you as a teacher.
>
> David

Dwelling Aright Within the Tensionality

School has a relational and cultural character without which problem solving, skill acquisition, and intellectual inquiry would not occur, and which makes it the site of a search, sometimes a struggle, for identity (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 239). Just as the transition from being a child-in-family to becoming a student-in-classroom is one of struggle and uncertainty, the borderland of this internship challenged David, Grace, Laura, and Mark to assume a new position: the teacher. Transformed through discourse, cultural mediation, and within crucial relationships, Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) suggest that as the individual gradually

adopts this new subject position and becomes better able to manage the appropriate transitions between who she is and who she is becoming, a split is introduced. This division is provoked, in large part, by the individual's participation in community: a community that defines ways of being and the kinds of relationships in which recognition can be achieved. Simply stated, to become human is to be split; to become a participant in community is to be divided (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 233). Given the expectations of legislated curriculum, the challenges of classroom management, and the inclusive needs of every child it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to be both student and teacher in the context of the classroom community. School, Packer (2001) argues, "involves ontological change, change in the kind of person a child becomes" (p. 131); the borderlands of this final field experience invited ontological change: change in the kind of teacher these students were becoming.

> I'm a very quiet person when I don't force myself not to be, so I never thought that I would really be a teacher. I've had lots of ups and downs like last semester I was with junior high kids, and I don't have the presence for it really, I don't have the personality for it, so I just thought I'm not one of these people that really grab attention, so maybe I'm not absolutely right for it but . . .
> I kind of just realized you have to find your own teaching style, so I can still find the style that works for me even though it's not the same as other people's.
>
> Grace

The first section, entitled Tensions and Struggles, presents aspects of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark's borderland journey by exploring the discourses, cultural mediators, and crucial relationships embedded in the classroom community - and more broadly, in the culture of teaching - that contributed to the split between these two subject positions for the interns in this inquiry. Three facets of the teaching context will be examined: first, the tension that grew up around what was learned in academic coursework and the relational expectations of the

classroom. Often presented as the tension between theory and practice, I have come to think of it as the tugging and pulling that takes place between our knowing and our being. Second, the cultural expectation for teachers to meet the learning needs of every child in a classroom of many provoked a deep struggle for each of the participants. How can I *be* a teacher in a context that makes it difficult to accomplish the very task defining my profession: successful learning experiences for all children? Third, the relationship between a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) and the student teacher is central. In the context of teacher education it is usually, but not always, the mentor teacher who offers the guidance and encouragement required to support the process of internalization; however, as Laura experienced, this relationship can be fraught with difficulty and the site of deeper struggle. Bruner (1985) suggests learning involves entry into a culture via induction by more skilled members: "Aspirant members of a culture learn from their tutors, the vicars of their culture, how to understand the world" (p. 32). When this relationship with the mentoring teacher is compromised, or broken, the split between being a student and becoming a teacher is made deeper, sometimes irrevocably so.

And yet each of these four interns were able, over the course of the 15 weeks, to reconcile the tension and uncertainty created by their teaching context and the expectations of a new subject position: the teacher. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) suggest "the search [for identity] is an effort to overcome division; not to root it out or eliminate it as much as to transcend it" (p. 234). Aoki (2005b) writes it is "not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it" (p. 163). Ecologically, the borderlands invite both uncertainty and new life: novel species are nurtured in these in-between locations called *ecotones*. Metaphorically, it is a zone of transition shaped by past experience and current context: a rich, shifting space of identity nurturing unique prospects and possibilities. What circumstances,

activities, involvements, and relationships helped, at least in part, to make possible the transformation from student to teacher?

Conversations together identified five facets of the internship experience worthy of highlighting in this second section entitled, Being and Becoming. Each nurtured a context in which the split between being a student and becoming a teacher could be more easily transcended. These are: scaffolding the current experience onto understandings established in previous practica; being involved in a nurturing relationship with a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86); becoming part of an educational community; telling stories of success; and the intentional consideration of becoming. If the work central to schooling is the effort to answer the question, "Who am I?" (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000), then the work central to teacher education is the effort to answer the question, "Who am I becoming as a teacher?" And in order to accomplish this work, it is necessary to note the ways in which these four student teachers were guided and supported in their efforts to dwell aright within the tensionality, to explore what is possible on the borderlands of this final field experience, and to construct a professional identity.

> Being a teacher means being a person first.
>
> If you go in with your self you're teaching children. You're present as a person and as a teacher.
>
> Laura

Tensions and Struggles

> An ecotone is the border area where two patches meet that have different ecological composition. (Graves, 2011)

Theory and practice: knowing and being. Students in teacher education programs engage in academic coursework designed to build background knowledge of subject matter, engage ideas of learning theory and pedagogy, explore

> I'm feeling kind of tossed in the deep end . . . there is just so much to know and absorb.
>
> Mark

understandings of children and their learning needs, examine and work with legislated curriculum, and address issues related to classroom management. And while there are formative field experiences during which student teachers have opportunity to begin making connections between theory and their practice, much of what is learned in the course of formal studies is theoretical: ideas not yet embedded in the real world of the classroom. All four participants in this study talked about the uncertainty and struggle they experienced, particularly at the beginning of the internship, related to what they had learned at the university and what was expected of them - day to day - in their classrooms.

> The math, yes, for sure. I'm really confident with math. The literacy, when I first started it, I was terrified, because I'm teaching these kids to read and a lot of them have not so good home lives, so they're not going to get any extra help or extra reading time at home, so having that responsibility was really intimidating. But now that I'm doing it and seeing them progress, it's really exciting and I want to go plan that lesson for tomorrow.
>
> Laura

Typically, the elementary classroom teacher is a generalist: all subject areas are part of the classroom curriculum and therefore, the responsibility of the teacher. Laura, a science and mathematics major teaching grade one in her first classroom placement, found the expectations for early literacy and reading instruction to be overwhelming. Coupled with her observations that many of the children were not getting the support at home to practice their emergent reading skills, Laura's worry about her ability to be an effective grade one teacher only began to wane when she saw children develop essential literacy skills in response to the lessons and activities she planned. She felt unprepared for this level of responsibility.

Academic coursework addresses the context of the classroom by outlining the nature of children and their learning needs. This is often accomplished by introducing students to numerous categories of learning challenges, how they can be identified, and strategies for

> Definitely it's good to have that knowledge about psychology, kids and all the codes. I don't know if that class helped enough though, because you never really understand codes and behaviors until you experience the real thing.
>
> Grace

working with children who display these learning needs. This coursework helps provide categories for teacher education students to appreciate the many different types of learners in any given classroom and to introduce them to the expectation that lessons must be intentionally focused to include all students. As Grace observed, however, these categories are only understood once they are experienced as real children with specific learning needs in the context of a classroom.

> Students are never the cookie-cutter mold. I find the content very important to learn but you can never really say students are going to be like this, they're always going to be different, so they're never really the same.
>
> It's okay not to paint students in a single stroke; they're all going to be different colors, as a metaphor.
>
> David

And once immersed in a community of students, each of whom is an individual and not a category, David found that previous academic coursework suggesting children were going to be and act in particular ways - even the students with specific learning needs - was restrictive. Contrary to what he had been taught were predictable expectations for what students would be like, he preferred to view the children in his classroom as different colors; he would not paint them in a single stroke.

Finally, all of the interns talked about how getting to know the children in their classroom and building relationships with each was the essential aspect of being a teacher. For Laura and David this understanding prompted them to begin seeing the student as primary and the curriculum, or the content, as secondary. It was not that either of them dismissed the importance of curriculum-specific learning but rather they understood the need for the children and their

> I would like to become a teacher that teaches children, not curriculum. I feel like I often forget this as I am so busy assessing outcomes, planning lessons, making sure I'm on track with timelines. I would love to get to the point where it comes naturally for me to teach the children, not curriculum.
>
> Looking back on my school experience, it's the teachers that I remember, not necessarily what I learned. I hope one day it's a possibility for me to become this teacher.
>
> Laura

learning needs to come first. However, for Laura, the early stages of her internship presented a struggle to be this teacher: the one who teaches children, not curriculum. When asked how she might become this teacher, Laura responded by saying she needed to keep in her mind "who I am teaching, not what I'm teaching" and that by doing this she could, more easily, plan her lessons and make modifications during the day. Tasks of instruction worried Laura as she could see how these responsibilities were taking away from a focus on children and their learning needs.

> The students change you.
>
> Some students really need you to explain it this way, and then others will need you to explain it that way, so I find myself caring more about the students versus the content.
>
> Right off the bat, it was all content. In my first practicum it was content: this is health, this is math, this is language arts, but now it's more about the student and I'm focusing myself more on the students. Being in the classroom you want everybody to succeed.
>
> David

David explained his growing understanding of the relationship between the student, the teacher, and curriculum by identifying the children as changing who he was becoming as a teacher. In previous field experiences he taught content: "If you don't get it, you don't get it. If you get it, you get it, good. So I was kind of leaving kids behind." Now, in this internship with grade two students, their learning needs were changing who David was becoming. His desire to see each student succeed prompted him to

build relationships with the children, to consider their needs first when planning lessons, and to engage them passionately in learning.

> I think what makes teaching an art is that you have to wrap up the curriculum in this magical gift and then give it to them.
>
> There are thousands of little things that will engage them and sometimes you're not really able to predict what that little hook is going to be, but it's so important.
>
> Grace

While David and Laura articulated these understandings in our first conversation together, Grace came to them over time and with experience in her grade three classroom. Initially, she felt that being a teacher involved "taking a curriculum document, breaking it down for the kids so that they can learn it, and also taking care of all of their other little needs and issues if they have them." As the weeks progressed, she recognized the essential role of relationships and the way in which curriculum becomes a gift, wrapped by the teacher, to engage students in learning. Grace's growing understanding of the students and her care for their success prompted deep thinking about curriculum and the ways in which children are drawn into learning.

> You can't teach the students if they don't trust you and if you don't build a relationship with them.
>
> To me it's about building relationships.
>
> Mark

Knowing about the nature of children, legislated curriculum, theories of learning, instructional methods, and classroom management are all necessary outcomes of teacher education programs however, *becoming* a teacher requires participation in a community: the classroom, the school, and the broader educational context. This membership comes at a cost to the student teacher who struggles to construct a professional self, to become a teacher. And while academic coursework is designed to support the successful completion of field experiences,

interns in this study recognized the primacy of building strong relationships with their students. In effect, they understood their knowing about teaching as in the service of being a teacher.

Meeting the learning needs of every child. Pre-service teachers in the province of Alberta are guided by the expectations of the 17 knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) required for interim teacher certification (Appendix O). Teacher education programs intentionally engage students in coursework and practica that, over the years of their studies, addresses each of the 17 descriptors of teacher performance. In addition, pre-service teachers assess their professional growth by reflecting on these expectations and setting goals for improvement. Once ready to complete their final field experience every student teacher is well acquainted with these expectations and knows the evaluation completed by the school administrator at the end of the internship will address their ability to competently demonstrate these descriptors of teacher performance.

While all are important and, taken together, offer a comprehensive outline of the responsibilities assumed by educators in the province of Alberta, the fifth KSA calls on teachers to recognize the following:

> All students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn. They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs. (Alberta Education, 1997)

The expectation is clear: teachers are to ensure that every child in their classroom experiences success. However, in the context of a learning community, the implications of this responsibility are manifold. David, Grace, Laura, and Mark all struggled with the ways in which their teaching context challenged their ability to meet the needs of every child in classrooms of many children

from diverse backgrounds with particular learning needs.

This tension was closely connected to the desire of these interns to build vibrant relationships with the children in their classroom. Class size, the backgrounds of the children, a wide variety of learning styles, and a range of cognitive capabilities all compromised, first of all, their ability to sustain relationships and second, to plan for and implement appropriate instruction for each child. The borderland became a place of struggle: they understood that becoming a teacher included the expectation to meet individual learning needs however, their classroom and school context seriously challenged their ability to do so.

This facet of their struggle will be re-presented through the words of two interns, Mark and Grace, as they describe and explain the nature of this tension emerging from their borderland experience. I have chosen to share these understandings by crafting two "poetic representations" (Richardson, 2000) focused on the words, phrases, and pauses found in the transcripts of our conversations together. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) suggest "poetry allows for maximum input – in and between the lines" (p. 135); Richardson (2000) maintains "writing up interviews as poems honors the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting in prose snippets" (p. 933). The goal is to convey, if only in part, the struggle experienced as these two pre-service teachers worked to meet the needs of every child in their classroom.

> The challenge I'm finding is a lot in being able to actually try and differentiate for those students. And how do you . . . it's, yeah, quite a challenge . . .
>
> Mark

Teaching in the midst of difficult circumstances. Mark's internship in a classroom of 33 grade five students - of whom 20 were boys - challenged his ability to build meaningful relationships with each and to offer instructional programming ensuring success. His commitment to active involvement and hands-

on learning, especially during science classes, was seriously compromised by the needs of his students and also, quite simply, by the sheer number of students to monitor and guide while exploring science concepts with all manner of materials, some of which needs to be handled safely. In addition, Mark explained the difficulties of planning lessons and designing activities for the many different kinds of learners in the classroom while, at the same time, maintaining a productive learning atmosphere.

The completed pre-interview activity (Appendix G) he brought with him to our first conversation shared his frustration and anger, joy and success, and finally, the calm and serenity he had experienced in previous field experiences but had not yet, in these early days, been part of his current context. By selecting the colours red and blue and presenting them as a swirling, hurricane-like shape spiraling from the centre and interspersed with tiny, curled-in green moments of calm and serenity, Mark explained this was what "teaching is like" as he entered the borderland of his internship in a classroom context expecting a great deal from him. The poem below draws together his words with my understandings of this tension: the uncertainty and self-doubt about his ability to *be* a teacher for each of the 33 grade five students for whom he was responsible.

Swirling in a hurricane of frustration
Alongside ripples of joy
Yet nestled within, contained and waiting
Serenity.
I'll do my best . . .
absolutely.
Don't know if it's possible
Don't know if it's possible
to teach every single student.

It's going to stretch me . . .
way more than I'm comfortable with.
Don't know if it's possible
Don't know if it's possible
to teach every single student.

Being a teacher is . . .
understanding,
providing an environment for each.
Don't know if it's possible
Don't know if it's possible
to *be* for all.

And then . . .
Craziness and goodness collide
Leaving little bits of peace, serenity
Rare, calm, wonderful times.

Mark's responsibility to meet the needs of all students in his classroom existed in tension with the reality of his classroom context. When we talked together in mid-January he had just been told another student would be joining the class to make a total enrollment of 34; in response to my question about how he was coping with the challenges of his classroom when we met in early March, Mark replied: "Actually, much better. A few weeks after we spoke, they hired another teacher to teach grade five. So planning is halved and class size is exponentially lowered. The 33 students was insane." His sense of self, of being a teacher, struggled to take hold in this demanding context; however, while the reduced class size eliminated the most immediate stress of managing so many learners at once, an administrative decision was made to place the children with the greatest learning needs together in one class which Mark taught for half of the morning. In reflecting on how his visual representation (Appendix G) might have been altered by these new circumstances in his teaching assignment, Mark observed there was now "less red, more blue and a less swirly, less all over the place." In terms of green moments of calm and serenity, he was still working on that!

> There have obviously been things that have gone well, but I don't think I'm at the point yet where there's a whole lot more green.
>
> I'm getting there.
>
> Mark

Coming alongside the student. Grace's struggle to meet the individual needs of students in her grade three class prompted her to think deeply about their circumstances and then to respond to their unique contexts. Over the course of our conversations together she related one more-lengthy story and a number of short anecdotes demonstrating how very difficult it is being a teacher of children, when each child responds to instruction and classroom interaction in different ways. I have taken Grace's description of a child who disappeared on her twice, his circumstances and behavior, and her puzzling out of how to reach him as a learner and crafted a poetic representation to share her struggles and frustrations, and eventually, her success with him. As she told me of these events her voice gave evidence of how pleased she was to have found ways to meet his specific learning and behavioural needs in the context of her classroom.

> I feel like I've really been struggling with differentiation because I do have such a range of learners in my class.
>
> It just feels like a daily struggle to be able to reach some of the kids.
>
> Grace

so he bolted
twice on me and tried to leave the school . . .

that was alarming!
terrible!

he felt like he was in trouble
avoiding confrontation
in the bathroom.

he's gone, it's been way too long!

found
hiding behind the door, dressed,
ready to go home, waiting.

I think he had no friends to hang out with at lunchtimes
He just felt very down, very sad
He is really quiet
so you don't really know how he is with the other kids at recess.

In the afternoon he's just so grumpy
His pill makes him not hungry
So he doesn't eat his lunch
but then he has no energy, can't think very well.

Head down on his desk, refusing . . .

It took me a while to realize
Oh, he just doesn't understand what he is supposed to do
He is not, just not doing it
it's just that he doesn't know, so he's frustrated.

I learned he is really, really good in groups, a leader
so I've been putting him with others.
I've been chunking things down for him
so that he can just do little pieces.
I've been noticing all his successes
so I've been telling him how good he's doing.

He is so much more responsive
I feel like maybe we've turned a corner
He doesn't try to leave class anymore.

Seeing growth, I feel very successful.

I know the kids a lot better than I've ever known any of my students.

Yeah, I think it's just thinking like a teacher in all areas like planning, knowing how to talk to students, taking advantage of other teachers in the school.

I don't know how else to describe thinking like that teacher mindset, but I know I didn't have that two years ago.

Grace

As Grace told this story in early March - about eight weeks into the internship - her voice rose and fell as she related her worry at his disappearances but, also, how pleased she was with her ability to connect with him and draw him into learning. She attributed her success to having more time than in previous field experiences to nurture relationships with her students and to understand their learning needs; however, she also acknowledged she felt herself developing a

"teacher mindset." By setting out to develop a stronger presence in the classroom, by becoming more direct with the students, by planning with each child in mind, and by working with other teachers in the school Grace found she just started to feel like a teacher.

A strained and broken relationship. Vygotsky (1978) describes the relationship between a "more capable peer" (p. 86) and the learner as an essential aspect of cognitive development: what is first made manifest *between* individuals, is then nurtured *within* the learner (p. 57). But what if this relationship is one fraught with difficulty and becomes the site of struggle and uncertainty? Laura's first internship placement, lasting almost seven weeks, prompted her to question decisions she was making in the classroom and, ultimately, to wonder whether she was capable of becoming a teacher.

In our first conversation together in mid-January she related little of the difficulty she had already begun to experience at the beginning of the placement. Later, she shared that even before the internship began she had concerns about whether she would be able to establish a relationship with her mentor: for example, she had had no contact from either her mentor teacher or the school administrator prior to the orientation session held in early December. Neither attended this workshop. She later reported that she requested details of her teaching assignment by email and had received no reply. Ultimately, she arrived at the school on the first day of her internship, not having met or been in contact with her mentor, and with no direction about the half-time curriculum for which she would be responsible. Once in the classroom she was given discrete lessons to teach on a day-by-day basis however, there seemed little willingness to offer direction about what topics had already been covered or support for how to plan four months of curriculum. There was, also, a lack of understanding related to the expectation that each intern is to be entirely responsible for planning, instructing, assessing, and reporting student learning as if she were a half-time teacher in her own classroom. As someone who viewed herself as well-

prepared, able and willing to assume responsibility of all kinds, and in her culminating field experience Laura was unsure of how to respond to this difficult and confusing context.

The following vignette has been crafted to invite "the reader to step into the space of vicarious experience, to assume a position in the world of the research – to live the lived experience along with the researcher" (Ely, Vinz, Anzul, & Downing, 1997, p. 72). Described as a "brief portrayal that captures an important slice of what has been learned" (Ely, 2007, p. 585) this portrait relies on Laura's retelling of the specific circumstances of this first placement, her experience of trying to resolve the emerging issues, and her reflections of how these weeks were shaping who she was becoming. As a researcher and a teacher educator it was difficult to listen to Laura's struggles and her eventual arrival in that dark place of self doubt where she almost believed what she was being told by her mentor and the school administrator regarding her suitability for teaching. In addition, her situation was exacerbated first, by her placement two hours from the university and second, by the illness of her faculty supervisor. While he visited the school early in the term attempting to clarify the expectations of the internship, by the end of the first month Laura received no responses to the email she sent to him. In the midst of these struggles, she realized, "I'm actually here on an island without any support or anything." This is Laura's retelling of how the weeks of her first placement unfolded: her experience of becoming a teacher in the context of a strained and broken relationship.

Not with My Whole Heart in It

> I started out so excited! When you first get your placement you're so excited and I contacted my mentor teacher and principal just to say, hello, this is me, I'm really excited to be part of your school and to learn as much as I can from you. And that was that.
>
> Then after they didn't come to the orientation session I emailed my mentor asking if she could let me know, maybe, what I'm supposed to be teaching or what she's covered. I got nothing. By this time it's the vacation and I'm supposed to be planning for the four months I'm about to start and I have nothing. So I go to the school the first day, and I

> have nothing. I haven't met my teacher, I haven't really heard anything from them . . . anything. Anyway, I get to the school and I love it. I love the kids. I love being in the classroom . . . grade one is so different and interesting. It was new, it was fun.
>
> From the beginning my mentor decided she would stay in the classroom while I was teaching. She said she was acting as an assistant because this is a tough class, it's grade one, and there's lots going on, there are lots of high needs kids. She said she didn't want me to fail, she wanted me to succeed.
>
> But she would interject and sort of interrupt when I was giving directions and stuff like that which I found frustrating and undermining. Because it's my own thing. I want to do my own thing and try my own things and take risks and stuff like that. I do sometimes feel like I am being undermined with my discipline because I'll be in the middle of disciplining and instead of letting me follow though, she will just pull the kid.
>
> From my point of view how am I going to get the experience? This is my test run before I get into my career. It was frustrating because I felt like I wasn't really trusted or I felt like the decisions that I was making weren't necessarily what they would be doing. It's scary when someone is telling you no, this is how we do it, and you haven't followed through right now and I'm going to pull the kid before you get a chance to do anything.
>
> So I started thinking maybe I am completely just doing the wrong things and completely just not meant for this job and not meant for this lifestyle? I mean why is she saying these things to me that, I don't know, almost make me feel ashamed of what I tried, or ashamed of what I had done? Why are you telling me that, that's horrible!
>
> Being around her just made me feel so unsure and just really uneasy and just not comfortable. I came home upset almost every single night. I went to sleep, could not sleep, woke up feeling . . . just dreading it, just dreading going. I would go and not want to be there because everything I was doing wasn't right, and I just didn't feel confident at all. I kept thinking I have to guard myself; I can't open up. And then I realized I'm not here. This is not me.
>
> Friday was my last day. I thought I would be sad to leave these kids. It's honestly hard for me to say, because I feel guilty feeling this way. I'm not really attached to any of these kids and I think that's completely on my end. I wasn't myself, I couldn't be attached to them because I wasn't . . . I don't know . . . I think after a while I became closed off to the whole situation, the whole experience. I couldn't really be sad to leave if I didn't emotionally have space for those relationships. I did care about them but not with my whole heart in it.

Fortunately, Laura was given a second placement in a different school where she successfully completed the last weeks of her internship. Her experience in this classroom was entirely different: both her mentor teacher and her faculty supervisor identified her strengths and

supported her growth throughout. For Laura, the role of the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) was essential in her journey to be a teacher.

Being and Becoming

> It is only when we experience ourselves as taking risks, embarking on new beginnings, that the predictable gives way to the possible. (Greene, 1990, p. 69)

Over the course of our conversations together, and then later, as I more closely examined the transcripts and began the process of clustering the data into themes, five facets of the internship experience emerged to inform a growing understanding of the circumstances, activities, involvements, and relationships that nurtured and supported the transformation from student to teacher while journeying on the borderlands. Characterized by uncertainty, tension, and struggle as student teachers work to transcend the split created by membership in a new community, to dwell aright within the tensionality, this in-between time also invites possibilities: the possibility of who we might *become* as teachers. This section explores these five facets of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark's experience with the goal of illuminating how each contributed to the development of professional understandings.

Scaffolding the internship experience onto previous understandings. One of the ways in which all four interns made sense of their current classroom experience – its expectations and responsibilities - was to construct understandings of how this final practicum "fit" with previous practica. The most apparent difference was the length of this internship. To be involved in a classroom for 15 weeks made it possible to build stronger relationships with the children, with a mentor, and with the broader school and educational community. In addition, the responsibility of being a half-time teacher required planning learning and assessment activities

> In the first two practicums you're kind of learning and now, you're polishing . . . finding you own personal style and what works for you.
>
> Grace

for their portion of the daily curriculum. In both these ways the internship experience was substantially different from the two, six week field experiences that preceded it.

Mark used his pre-interview activity (Appendix G) to reflect on his previous field experiences and to make sense of his uncertainty at the beginning of this internship. He recalled how, as he got to know his students better and his instructional skills developed, he had more days toward the end of the previous practicum where the "green bits" became more regular. While not convinced this would happen in the next weeks with his 33 (soon to be 34) grade five students, his understanding of past successes and what contributed to them, helped him be hopeful. The visual representation was a graphic reminder of what teaching feels like: "it's not all good and it's not all bad and it's not all perfect." Mark's ability to articulate the thinking behind his swirling, chaotic hurricane of red and blue, interspersed with little bits of green serenity, provided an image to return to: a reminder of what was and of what could still be. It became a touchstone for our conversations over the weeks of the internship.

> The green ones are the rare days and I haven't had any of those yet this term but I got a bunch of them in my last practicum.
>
> The green is that lesson where everything goes perfect and you come through . . . that's to me the greens, the peace, almost like surreal kind of, wow, this is working.
>
> There were those little green bits there and that's kind of what I'm looking for, to try . . . I don't know if that's possible.
>
> Mark

David suggested the length of the internship and, in particular, the kinds of responsibilities assumed during this final field experience contributed significantly to his construction of a professional identity. Previous practica expected lesson and unit planning as well as an intense focus on classroom instruction and assessment. Now, in this internship, those skills were being put together into a "more complete package so it works for you and it works for

the students around you." The internship was viewed as a time to refine planning and instructional skills over the 15 weeks. However, in addition to classroom instruction, as a half-time teacher there was clear expectation for involvement in the life of the school, for collaboration with other teachers in your grade group, and in extracurricular activities like after-school skating. This expansion of responsibility prompted feelings of being a teacher; David understood this transition as part of the gradual building of skills and ability through the two previous field experiences and now, culminating, in this internship.

> With the other practicums you just felt like a student teacher but now you feel like a teacher because you are doing the things that teachers do.
>
> You go to the staff meetings, you are in the staffroom eating lunch with other teachers, and then you're also helping out at the school with other teachers who are doing the same things. So you felt like a teacher more so than just a student teacher when you're just up there teaching, that's it.
>
> David

Laura identified the continuum of skills from her first six week field experience, through the next six week practicum as first, focusing on the lesson and lesson plans then, learning about unit planning and teaching this unit during the weeks of her second professional semester. She believed these two practica prepared her best for the challenges of the internship where the expectations are to create long-range plans and implement multiple units at the same time. And yet, even with the experience of the 12 previous weeks of practica in two

> I'd say more than anything the previous practicum components of all of the courses have prepared me.
>
> I think that is what has developed me into the teacher that I am right now.
>
> Laura

> From this experience I would like to take confidence . . . just knowing I did that, I can handle that kind of thing, I could be a teacher.
>
> Laura

different classrooms, Laura expressed concern about whether she was adequately prepared to plan for the months of her placement and to successfully teach many subject areas. However, this did not dampen her determination to be a teacher.

Nurturing a relationship with a mentor. The relationship between a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) and the student teacher is essential in the construction of a professional identity. In the context of teacher education it is usually, but not always, the mentor teacher who offers the guidance and encouragement required to support the process of internalization where every function appears twice first on the social level and later on the individual level: "first, *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)" (p. 57, italics in original). It is here, during the internship, pre-service teachers find themselves most capably managing the cultural mediators of teaching. Introduced and practiced over previous practica, the tools of teaching are taken up and refined over these 15 weeks as a half-time teacher. Vygotsky (1978) suggests tools serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity and are, therefore, externally oriented (p. 55). In the culture of teaching this would include lesson and unit planning and implementation, classroom management, assessment practices, and the day-to-day tasks that make for the smooth running of a classroom. As the mentor models effective instruction and interaction, engages in discussion with the student teacher about their developing abilities, supports risk-taking, and provides opportunities for practice and reflection the skills and attributes of teaching are internalized becoming part of their "independent developmental achievement" (Vygotsky 1978, p. 90).

In addition, the relationship with a mentor helps the student teacher transcend the division prompted by the individual's participation in community: in this context, the community of teaching that defines ways of being and the kinds of relationships in which recognition can be achieved. Rogoff (1990) uses the word "apprenticeship" to describe how mature members of a

culture introduce novices to both the overt aspects of a skill as well as to the more hidden inner processes of thought which may not be consciously apparent to the mentor (p. 40). Vygotsky (1978) suggests this is accomplished, psychologically, through a process of mediation wherein the individual actively constructs new understandings. Described as a "second order stimulus or sign" (p. 39) this intermediate link fulfills a special function: it allows for the complex construction of a new way of being. Vygotsky (1978) writes: "The use of signs leads humans to a specific structure of behavior that breaks away from biological development and creates new forms of a culturally-based psychological process" (p. 40). Immersed in the culture of schooling and the responsibilities of teaching, student teachers actively construct understandings of who they are becoming - their professional self – from within a context shared and reinforced by vicars of this culture: the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

While all of the field experiences in a teacher education program are considered an important part of becoming a teacher, this internship offered a final, and extended, opportunity for mentors to draw pre-service teachers into the culture of teaching and support their transition from the subject position of student to teacher. This section will examine the relationships established by Grace and David with each of their mentors and highlight the ways in which these more capable colleagues supported the construction of who they were becoming as teachers.

> We got along super well.
>
> She told me on the first day, "This is going to work, we have so much chemistry!"
>
> Grace

We have so much chemistry! As a more capable colleague, Grace's mentor teacher understood the need to establish a relationship with her intern teacher right from the beginning of the placement. Even though unsure of how the internship would unfold over the 15 weeks, Grace saw herself as part of this classroom community: her mentor teacher acknowledged

their suitability for each other and her confidence in what was to come. This developing relationship of trust and care made it possible to have a difficult conversation together as Grace struggled with classroom management.

> I'm not quite so good at noticing all the chaos that happens in a classroom and my mentor teacher is very structured.
>
> She told me, "We need to get on the same page because all of this chaos is hurting their learning."
>
> Well . . . I just kind of took it personally.
>
> But she noticed right away that I took it personally and said, "Oh, don't take it personally, it's not about you, it's just about how the classroom should be run."
>
> So we talked for quite a while, kind of hashed it out, got on the same page, and then it was fine.
>
> Grace

Described as "the only time I've really been upset this practicum", Grace shared how her mentor observed the level of disruption in the classroom during her lessons and initiated a conversation with her about the way learning is affected when children are not in control of themselves. By identifying her first concern as the compromised learning of their students, Grace's mentor presented the observation so as not to be critical. She was also sensitive to note by her face and body language that Grace had, indeed, taken the observation as a personal criticism and was quick to respond with comments of support and understanding.

Three qualities of being an effective mentor are highlighted by Grace's comments: first, it is important to build a relationship of trust so that these difficult conversations can take place. Second, by focusing on the learning of their students, the mentor demonstrated her commitment to the children and their academic success. Finally, by being sensitive to Grace's body language and response to her classroom observations, they were able to sit down, hash it out, come to agreement, and move on. Through this experience Grace was drawn further into the world of teaching, supported in altering her instructional habits

and expectations for student behavior, and, in the end, acknowledged, “She’s right. They don’t learn well in chaos, so I just need to do a better job of being more structured.”

School administrator as mentor. Over the weeks of his internship David developed a strong relationship with the principal of the school. Although he understood the principal was in an evaluative role and would be observing him in the classroom and writing a final report at the end of this field experience, David appreciated and valued their growing relationship. By being available for conversations together - during what must have been very busy school days - this mentor demonstrated his commitment to David and who he was becoming as a teacher.

> He’s very understanding.
>
> One of the most important things was he had an open door policy and he was always willing to listen to you. Whenever I had a problem I could just send him an email.
>
> “Hey, can you meet with me?”
>
> “Yeah, sure.”
>
> David

> “Have you tried group work?”
>
> I had in the past but it didn’t go over so well.
>
> “Try this.”
>
> So the next time I tried it.
>
> “That was great. You did it exactly.”
>
> So he gave me that opportunity or he gave me that extra push by suggesting it himself.
>
> David

David understood his principal’s keen interest in him to be related to his desire to share the learning acquired over a career of teaching. This included prompting - even prodding - David to try instructional techniques, like group work, that challenged him to move outside his area of comfort. And through the acquiring of new skills the mentor was clearly working to support David’s growth, to help him learn

as much as possible, and to communicate that "the students are always first."

The internalization of the more technical skills of teaching, like organizing and monitoring group work, as well as the construction of understandings related to what it means to *be* a teacher, like student learning always comes first, takes place in the context of the learning environment: the classroom and the school. The role of the more capable peer is essential: the relationship forged between the mentor and his protégé shapes the development of teacher identity.

Becoming part of an educational community. One of the unexpected understandings emerging from this inquiry is related to the powerful influence of involvement outside of the classroom in the construction of a professional identity. In earlier, shorter field experiences student teachers are taken up with acquiring and practicing the skills of planning, instruction, and assessment: oftentimes they do not venture much outside of their classrooms and responsibilities for their students and learning. However, in this culminating field experience, with many of these skills developed, there is more time and opportunity to become a part of the broader educational community: first, the length of the internship offers an extended, 15 weeks of experience and second, with half-time teaching responsibilities, there is time during the day to focus on their individual professional development projects and to become an integral part of the day-to-day life of the school. In addition, as an intern teacher, there are expectations for participation in professional development activities at the school level as well as in their local jurisdictions. Both David and Mark credited experiences outside of their instructional responsibilities and interaction with children as supporting the construction of a professional identity. This should not be surprising as the culture of teaching reaches well beyond the walls of the classroom.

Packer and Tappan (2001) suggest culture is a dwelling place that makes it possible for a human being to become a person. Rogoff (2003) describes human development as "a process in

which people transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities" (p. 37); and Bruner (1996) writes that "culture, though itself man-made, both forms and makes possible the workings of a distinctly human mind. Learning and thinking are always *situated* in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources" (p. 4, italics in original). Facilitated by a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), student teachers take up the "tool kit of concepts and ideas and theories" (Bruner, 1986, p. 73) embedded within the world of teaching and, over time and in various contexts, construct a professional identity. And while the acquisition of content knowledge and instructional competence - the knowing about teaching - are necessary for identity construction they are not sufficient. Bruner (1996) adds: "A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning" (p. 42). The culture of teaching - the arbitrating artifacts of an intentionally constructed world - is a professional dwelling place that makes it possible for a student to become a teacher.

Of the four interns participating in this study, David and Mark were most vocal about how involvement in their school community and in professional development activities at the jurisdictional level prompted consideration of who they were becoming as teachers. As they realized their colleagues valued their opinions and expertise, they began to view themselves as capable teachers. And, of course, this view was reinforced as they assumed additional responsibilities for professional involvement outside of immediate classroom learning. Gradually, and over time, the culture of teaching beyond their immediate classroom walls shaped construction of their professional identity.

While David and Mark did not have an opportunity during the course of the inquiry to share their growing insights, I have used their voices to construct a "conversation" based on our discussions together. From the beginning of this inquiry I heard the echoes of all four voices as I

reviewed transcripts and puzzled out where I might go next: sometimes they were in unison, and sometimes their voices were singular, unique. Increasingly, I felt compelled to incorporate these voices into the re-presentations I was crafting. Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing (1997) write:

> The ongoing, swampy and often shifting written narrative of the research is not reality, but a representation of that – a highly selective, virtually constructed understanding of what you have penetrated by being there and listening, writing, thinking, interpreting carefully and thoughtfully. (p. 58)

Because both interns remarked on the ways in which their involvement in the broader educational community was shaping how they viewed their professional self it seemed possible that a conversation "together" could honour their experience and the ways in which they were realizing a professional identity. The re-presentation that follows is, then, an interpretive construction: its goal is to draw out Mark and David's emerging understandings as they shared their reflections of what it means to *become* a teacher on the borderland of this internship experience.

Mark	***David***
I think the biggest kind of revelation I've had so far has been that this is my classroom. I've had that knowledge in my head but it's percolated its way into my actual actions and thinking.	
I mean, it's MY class and if I want to take a day and we're just going to chat and write in our journals about, you know, what did you do over the week? That's okay. I don't have to, you know, crash through pages and pages of curriculum every day or every lesson. If I want to take a lesson and foster our relationships. I can do that.	
	Yah, I know what you mean. Being able to make those decisions that say I'm the teacher. This happened for me last week when my teacher was away at a conference. It was Arctic Day and we were finishing up our Iqaluit unit so it was a very busy day.
	The substitute teacher had just graduated and she said to me: "I don't even know if I'm

qualified to be here."

Which was great . . . so I felt like the teacher and had the students for the whole day. I was responsible for the whole day and all the students, and it really went well. The other grade two teachers were asking how it would have to go because we were sharing activities. So I really felt like this is it: I'm a teacher, this is the day, this has proved to be the day.

But I guess the moment when I felt most being the teacher was high-fiving all the kids when they left, looking around the classroom before I left, shut out the lights, just to take a look: all right, everything is done. I've finished my job and that was it. I closed and locked the door and that was it because I was the last one there and it felt like my classroom because my teacher wasn't there.

For me, it's a confidence thing. Because I had 33 students to begin with, I felt like I was always trying to keep things under control. Now that I only have half of them at a time I am more confident I can risk taking some time to do other things.

Also, the unconscious assumption is, you know, it's going to be okay, you know, I'm a teacher. So, yeah, this lesson went bad and it sucks right now, but I'm going to go home at the end of the day and I'm going to mark some things, and I'm going to have a coffee and try again tomorrow.

I'm also finding my confidence is coming from just being with, and accepted by and interacting with the teachers as a teacher with the staff; working together with my colleagues, I guess, on things, and not just being a separate category by myself.

Yah, I really like that I'm not alone in this school. Every Monday we have little collaborations where we talk about what's next in the coming weeks in grade two. We're working together as a team.

I really like that because I haven't seen it before in any other schools but I really like it because you're not alone. Usually, you close the door and it's just you in there, but this school is like, oh, I found this, how about you use this? Hey, I found this resource, how about you use that? So, at times, the four teachers are teaching the exact same thing on the exact same day, but to different students, which is really good.

And now, they're asking for my ideas. Like during the Olympics I created different game and activities and I sent that out to everybody else and they loved it, so I guess maybe that was my foot in the door.

I know, it's been weird to me. Just in interactions with staff more so. Because I haven't done that before.

In the second practicum nobody really listens to what you've got to say. This is different: I even go to the staff room to eat my lunch and helping out at the school with other teachers who are doing the same thing. So you feel like a teacher more so than just a student teacher when you're up there teaching.

I mean, it's kind of been you know, they're the teachers and I'm here. I'm teacher to the students, but I'm still a student to the teachers.

One of my biggest areas of growth is seeing myself as part of the school and then acting on it to go and do . . . like I was really reluctant to go talk to the school's IT guy, because I didn't want to bother him and then I realized that is not a bother, that's what he does . . . so okay, if I need something, I'm going to go ask him for it. I'm just going to do it.

Like the other intern and I we're starting a club tomorrow. We just decided we wanted to do it and then we put it together and then we brought it to them and said: Hey, is this okay? Can we do it? Will this work?

Yah? Okay, good, we're going to do it and here's where we're going off on our own and do it.

I'm feeling more a teacher at this point. Comparing how I was treated and how I treated the students in earlier practicums . . . is nothing like how I am now. Nobody hands me anything, If I need it, I have to go get it.

I feel the same way . . . I really like where I'm at right now. I find myself thinking about the students, what they need and the different things I'm teaching. I'm really excited to wake up and see the kids and on reading week, I'm like, I haven't seen the kids in a week, and it's just great to see them during the day and then when they're succeeding, you're succeeding.

Yah, I even got to teach a PD session for the teachers. It was cool, and that was a big part of feeling like the staff and collaborating. I felt like I got to leave something for the staff and

I'm also helping out around the school with the Rocky Mountain Book Club and morning

the division . . . that I contributed to the community of the school.
It kind of happened because I showed my mentor teacher a spreadsheet I made and she asked if I would share it at the PLC meeting the next week. So the next week I showed them all and they asked if I could teach them how it works.

And then they just started planning a PD session. I went, oh, all right then, I guess I'm teaching the teachers, which was a little nerve racking. It went fine; it wasn't at all what I had expected it to be. It felt good and I think they're going to use it.

basketball and after-school skating. I feel like I'm part of the school.

It definitely helped me feel like part of the staff to have been able to do that, which I didn't know you could do as an intern teacher; I hadn't expected to.

You know the other part that's made me feel like a teacher has been building relationships with the parents. Lots of them come by to pick up their kids after school and wait in the hallway. I've had a chance to get to know them a bit.

And they have in their minds what a teacher should be like, so if they're saying you're doing things that a teacher does, that makes you feel more accomplished as a teacher.
But its been very important . . . well I guess not the most important thing that others view you as a teacher . . . but the things that they say can be like: you did a really great job with this.
And then I kind of push myself to do more of that.

I've also kind of been able to give the other student teachers some little pointers. There was one student teacher who I met again at the school and it was nice to be able to say, oh, did you try . . .? I threw out ideas to her and she threw ideas to me too. I guess that made me feel like a teacher, too.

Three themes emerge in this interpretive conversation between Mark and David: first, it is important to feel that this is my classroom, my space; it is my responsibility to ensure all is well as the day draws to a close, the lights are turned off, and the door is locked. And accompanying

this sense of ownership is the recognition that, within this learning space, I am making the educational decisions: I am trusted to make these professional judgments. Second, involvement in the school - even in such commonplace ways as eating lunch in the staffroom – allows for professional interaction not offered student teachers who are taken up, almost exclusively, within the walls of their classrooms. Contributing to collaborative endeavours, whether at the grade level or within the school, provides a sense of professional belonging. Both Mark and David expressed surprise and professional satisfaction at being asked for their ideas, for their contribution to involvements beyond their immediate teaching responsibilities.

Finally, outsiders, like parents and teachers from other educational contexts, shape professional understandings and encourage growth and development. By revealing to them expectations beyond the direct learning needs of their students, Mark's involvement with the jurisdictional Professional Learning Community (PLC) as a "teacher of teachers" and David's relationships with the parents of children in his classroom served to draw them into the broader world of teaching: a professional dwelling place that makes it possible for a student become a teacher.

Telling stories of success. Carr (1985) maintains that narrative is our primary way of organizing and giving coherence to our experience; Polkinghorne (1988) suggests narrative structures are the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful. Kerby (1991) specifically addresses the question of how the self is fashioned and suggests: "The stories we tell are part and parcel of our becoming" (p. 54). Indigenous to human experience, narrative structures act as the "primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves" (p. 3). And Bruner (2002) argues that cultural meaning, embodied within our narratives and mediated through language, comes to guide our lives: "Stories are a culture's coin and currency" (Bruner, 2002, p. 15). As signs and tools of culture, narratives play a

powerful mediating role.

This inquiry began with my story - the narrative of my final field experience - told only recently yet lingering in me for three decades. From the vantage point of "the Now" (Carr, 1986, p. 95) we survey both the past, with all its familiarity, and the future, with all its possibility, and seek narrative coherence in the everyday activities and experiences of our lives as well as in its overarching story. I recognize, only now, how this story shaped my professional identity as a classroom teacher and mentor as well as my more recent work as a teacher educator. Sense-making is a constant task: we seek a narrative that unifies our experiences and our selves (Carr, 1986). This story of long ago, of being a student teacher in a borderland fraught with tension and struggle, helps me make sense of who I am as a teacher. And so I thought it would be for the four interns in this study: that each would tell their stories and, in the process, make sense of who they were becoming as teachers. This did not happen; at least not in the ways I expected nor as often as I thought it might. They seemed reluctant to tell the stories of their experience - especially narratives of struggle.

"Tell me a story of . . . . " was asked of each intern at some point during every conversation together. Sometimes the prompt asked about a story of success, or a story of challenge, or a story about a past teacher who had influenced their decision to become a teacher. In response to the Pre-Interview Activity (Appendix A) provocation suggesting a timeline identifying important events and reflections that have shaped who you are as a teacher, David briefly mentioned two teachers who "inspired me to start trying in school again" as one of the milestones on his timeline. After listening to the audio recording and reviewing the transcript I followed up in our second conversation by asking him to "tell the story of this experience in grade 11" (Appendix H). This prompt was successful in eliciting comments about the experience however, he began by saying, "I just kind of wrote about the teachers themselves and then I

thought about how I felt before." He did not shape his re-telling into a story, but, rather, as a set of observations related to the kinds of interaction they nurtured in their classrooms and how that interaction changed the ways in which he came to think of himself as a learner. Now, in retrospect, he credits this experience in grade 11 as influencing his own pedagogy and shaping who he is becoming as a teacher.

In order to tell David's story of his journey as a learner and its influence on who he is becoming as a teacher, I have drawn together his comments, observations, and reflections from our first two conversations together. While he did not frame it initially as a cohesive story, this set of recollections is a narrative worthy of telling: David understood this to be his story of success.

Threads from the Past

> Well . . . if I think back and try to trace how I got into teaching . . . it would have started back when I was in grade six . . . in 1996. I had a teacher that year who actually said to us, to the whole class: "Boys are not as smart as girls." I was already kind of shutting down by then and her comment didn't help. After that point I really didn't try in school, or anything.
>
> This went on through junior high and into high school. I just didn't feel like school was for me but I couldn't drop out because I didn't feel like I could, because my parents wouldn't have supported that. I just didn't want to be there and the only reason I went to school was because it was free transportation to hang out with my friends. Well . . . that's the way I felt, I mean, I lived far away from the high school and far away from my friends so it was the only time I got to see them. But I didn't really try hard: I did ABSOLUTELY the minimum to pass. I even went to summer school in math because I didn't open my textbook after I went home. That's how it was with me.
>
> But then that changed in grade 11 with these two teachers; they opened my eyes to how school is important. The first was a history and law teacher; I had him for those two classes. I had seen him before when he was a substitute so I kind of knew what he was like. He asked lots of questions: "Why do you think that?" Not just yes or no answers. And he liked to joke around and use humour in the class. He would make these little sarcastic comments or we'd banter back and forth. He'd make a comment and I'd give it back to him and he'd give it back to me. It was just a fun relationship or fun atmosphere where I felt welcome to be in the classroom.

> The other teacher I had was an English teacher. She just had so much passion for her profession. It came through in everything and it really made me want to be there because everything was so exciting, everything was so new. Like . . . she used different books in her teaching. Instead of reading *Lord of the Flies* she allowed us to read this book called *Eye of the Needle* by Ken Follett. So that got me right there. That hooked me, and I think that was one of the only books I've read in English class, ever. It was really nice to be in that classroom.
>
> When I first met her I was worried . . . I mean I had bad experiences with female teachers ahead of that, and I was like "All right, is this going to be one of those semesters?" But it wasn't. She would give us positive reinforcement, like, all the time. I would make a comment and she would be like: "Exactly, exactly, yes, excellent, excellent." It really made me want to be in the classroom, which was a really different experience for me.
>
> Now, when I look back on my experience in grade 11 with these two teachers, I can see parts of them in my teaching. They cared that we handed in work and would push us, making sure that everyone was able to do their best. Like . . . right now I want everyone to succeed . . . I want to make sure everyone is the best they can be. I don't know if it came out in my early practicums but as soon as I started reflecting on these things I can actually see it in my own teaching.

David's growing understandings of the ways in which his past experiences as a learner are shaping his instructional practice and professional identity are evidence of how important it is to engage conversation prompting consideration of where we have come from: it invites a space for puzzling out how past experiences make sense in the context of "the Now" (Carr, 1986, p. 95).

In thinking about why these interns seemed reluctant to recall their experiences in the shape of a narrative, I began to wonder about how challenging it is to tell stories - especially those of difficulty - while in the midst. Is some distance required from experiences in order to make sense of them now? Is this true only of those parts of our past fraught with struggle? Recognizing it took me three decades to explore and tell the story of my own final field experience, is it reasonable to expect the interns in this study to share their own tensions, challenges, and perceived shortcomings while in the midst of a borderland experience? Or should stories of success come first so we begin with our strengths, with areas of capability? These questions remain unanswered; however, the overall reluctance of these four interns to share their

stories, especially those characterized by difficulty, frustration, tension, and struggle, continues to provoke my curiosity and inform my work as a teacher educator.

Intentional consideration of becoming. In what ways were the intern teachers in this study supported and nurtured in the construction of a professional identity through a deliberate consideration of who they were becoming as teachers? As the study drew to a close this question became increasingly important to me. A note in my research journal dated February 28, 2014 reads:

> We are constantly being influenced. How has being involved in this research - in the intentional exploration/examination of emerging professional identity - influenced who you are becoming? In what was has involvement been instructive? Helpful? This is an important question for our third conversation.

In the following week, when we met for our second conversation, Mark brought this very idea to our conversation after the recording device had been turned off. As he began to comment on how his participation in this study opening up a space for thoughtful consideration, I quickly restarted the recording to capture his thoughts, knowing that his observations reinforced my research journal note to make this part of our final conversation together. The document (Appendix K) I sent to Mark offering suggestions for our final meeting together reminds him of what he observed in this

> Having these conversations for me has been nice because it's just set aside an hour where I have, that's just what we do, we sit and think about it.
>
> I figure out my thoughts by talking a lot too, so you know, some of these things that we've come out with, I wouldn't have formulated it. You know, the basic ideas might have been there, but I wouldn't have put it into the concrete terms that you've come up with here without this kind of experience.
>
> Mark

earlier conversation and asks him to expand upon his comments provided as an afterthought, a postscript added only after the other, more important work was conducted!

And so, in the middle of April, after the completion of their culminating field experience, all four interns, now teachers, responded to the prompt asking how being involved in this study and the intentional consideration of who they were becoming, provoked the construction of understandings of professional identity. This final section will share their reflections and observations of what it means to be a teacher. In order to draw all four voices together I have decided to write this re-presentation as a readers theatre script. While, perhaps, an unusual format for sharing data gathered, I have heard these voices, and their echoes, throughout this inquiry. In fact, the day after our first conversation together I wrote in my research journal:

> As I was falling asleep on Wednesday after the first interviews I could hear the voices of these three participants in my head. It was as if they were talking to each other, or talking over and around each other. Their voices were merging, then separating like threads within twisted rope or cord. I wonder if readers theatre could help to represent this: the coming together and pulling apart of their voices?

McKay (2008) suggests readers theatre "brings text to life" (p. 51); Coger and White describe this form of presentation as "theatre of the imagination" (as cited in Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996, p. 3).

Over the weeks and months since making this note in my journal, and especially once I began to review all of the conversations and map the emerging themes, I wondered how I might draw and twist together all voices - David, Grace, Laura, Mark - in ways that would honour their experience of becoming. What was for me a vivid and powerful experience - of hearing their voices merging and separating, talking over and around each other - provoked a compelling challenge: how could this be shared? The following script, an interpretive construction,

endeavours to bring their voices to life through the use of a format that comes closest to the essence of my understanding, to the essence of my experience as a researcher. Ely (2007) suggests this is "a crucial, ongoing, interactive dance" (p. 568).

I've Been Noticing . . .

Characters

David:	teacher who recently completed his internship in a grade two classroom
Grace:	teacher who recently completed her internship in a grade three classroom
Laura:	teacher who recently completed her internship in a grade three classroom; started in a different classroom and moved to this new placement half way through the 15 weeks
Mark:	teacher who recently completed his internship in a grade five classroom

****

Grace	I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them.
David	Just asking that question - what is being a teacher? - I started thinking about am **I** being a teacher? Is **this** being a teacher?
Grace	Yeah . . . I am a teacher because I'm paying attention; I'm gathering evidence by. . .
David	I'm **still** thinking about what is a teacher, because we asked that question: what is being a teacher? If no one was asking that question, I don't think I would have thought about it.
Grace	. . . by looking for my accomplishments, looking for my successes . . . it's the same thing we try to do for our students, right? Point out their successes to them and point out they're growing, because that just has a snowball effect for them. It was the same thing for me.
Mark	Carving out time . . . to think about and talk about . . . how am I changing? What am I doing differently? In my normal day-to-day life I don't do that.
Laura	In the last couple of weeks in my first classroom I kept thinking about this: what does it mean to be a teacher?

Grace I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them.

Laura And I realized, I'm not here. This is not good. When I bring my **self** to the classroom then I'm there for the children. That question . . .

David What is being a teacher?

Laura . . . actually helped me decide I should do something about this; I should make a decision, I should decide.

Mark I hadn't realized how stressed and unconfident I was at the beginning. I knew I was feeling pretty bad but didn't realize what it was I was feeling until we had that conversation. And once I knew what it was . . .

Grace I don't think I spent too much time thinking about this before. Even a year ago I was definitely still a student. And even in January when we first started talking, I don't think I really felt like a teacher. I don't know if I was totally willing to buy into the fact that I was going to be one.

Mark . . . I could start to be intentional about going about fixing it. Talking together helped to shape and reshape things in my brain. Sometimes the thoughts are there, but I'm not really sure what to make of them . . . or how to apply them.

Laura Especially at the turning point in the first experience I realized, this reflection is really helpful. As I talked we would dig deeper and find more from what I was thinking.

Grace I was kind of just like, well, yeah, I'm going to do it for a job and I'll love my job but it's never going to define who I am, because who wants that? Now I feel way different.

David My thoughts have changed over the months about what it means to be a teacher. At the beginning I said, students come first. But now . . . it's like . . . **students come first!**

Laura Without being able to write or to think about what was going on I don't know I would have . . . lasted.

David Everybody knows teachers always put the students first but now I am actually doing it, I'm feeling it in my heart. That's how my life has change.

Grace I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them.

David I would go back and read the transcripts: oh, did I say that? That's funny because this week I did something totally different. It's interesting to see that . . . even to remember what I said the first couple of weeks.

Mark — I read the transcript, reflected on it, and go, yeah, that's where I was at that point. Well I'm not there anymore, I'm way past that now or . . . I'm still dealing with that and think some more.

David — I'd take a look just to see what I did say and I would read it. It made me think of the stuff I thought of. And I would compare what I said in the first conversation with what I said in the second and then, what I'm saying now. It's that feeling of success that drives me to want to grow.

Grace — Now, I'm not afraid to stand out and take charge of situations and be a good role model . . . just being aware of how I'm acting and what I'm doing and how I'm speaking to other people and asking myself, am I treating people with kindness? I'm a teacher now.

David — While you're asking that question . . .

Laura — What does it mean to **be** a teacher?

David the — . . . and taking a look back, you can see how you've progressed and think about different instances that changed you as a person.

Mark — It was good for me to sit and talk to somebody who had no idea what my situation was apart from what I talk about, who doesn't know the people I'm talking about. Someone who is completely outside of the rest of it, who I can talk with freely.

David — It's the reflective aspect: it is important to take a look at where you were and then have I got there in the end? Have I grown and changed?

Laura you — Being a teacher is being your self first and then presenting that self to whoever are teaching or whatever you are teaching . . . being your self in whatever you do.

David — I'm **still** thinking about what is a teacher, because we asked that question: what is being a teacher? If no one was asking that question, I don't think I would have thought about it.

Grace — I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them.

****

As I worked to weave together the voices, three themes emerged and are highlighted in this script. First, there is value in intentionally considering who we are becoming. Throughout this inquiry the construction of a professional identity was explored, primarily, by posing the

questions: What does it mean to be a teacher? Who is the self that teaches? (Palmer, 1998). All four participants remarked on the ways in which considering these questions shaped their internship experience and their growing understanding of themselves as teachers. Without looking, there is little chance of noticing.

Second, by reviewing transcripts of previous conversations both David and Mark identified areas of growth. Of the two, David was most intentional about reading over his transcripts and actually noting his comments and how they developed over time. He was working to make sense of "the Now" (Carr, 1986, p. 95) through his past experience shared in our conversations together. By the end he clearly articulated the changes in his thinking, tracing his understandings of what it means to be a teacher, over the 15 weeks of the internship. This physical record, in the form of transcribed conversations, provided the opportunity for David to identify growth, celebrate successes, and make sense of his emerging professional identity.

Finally, there is power in conversation together. While not included in the script, all four participants suggested it was the personal nature of our interaction that prompted serious consideration and reconsideration of who they were becoming. Reflective practice, an important outcome of teacher education programs, most often occurs in the form of daily plan book notes and journal entries. None of the four interns believed that written reflections, either throughout or at the end of the internship, would have provoked the same kinds of attention on their part: the act of talking together, of sharing confidences, of speaking with someone outside their internship experience was viewed as a valuable aspect of their involvement in this inquiry.

Echoes Hanging in the Air

> To survive the borderlands
> you must live *sin fronteras*
> be a crossroads. (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 195)

Borderlands, *los intersticios* (Anzaldua, 1987), are times of transition shaped by past

experience and current context; what lives on the borderlands is in a state of *becoming*. This rich, shifting space invites ambiguity and struggle, new life and unique prospects. The four participants in this inquiry - David, Grace, Laura, and Mark - journeyed these borderlands during the 15 weeks of their final field experience. This chapter explored three themes that emerged from our conversations together characterizing these weeks as times of struggle: first, a tension exists between what student teachers learned during academic coursework and the relational demands of the classroom. Second, the cultural expectation for teachers to meet the learning needs of every child provoked deep struggle and for Mark, in particular, frustration with what it means to *be* a teacher in a classroom of many students with specific learning needs. Finally, the relationship between a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) and the novice is central. What happens when this relationship is fraught with difficulty? How is emerging professional identity shaped when this relationship is strained or broken? Laura's experience sheds light on the site of this difficulty. These themes of tension and struggle echoed from the borderlands.

But borderlands are also spaces of becoming. Ecologically, *ecotones* nurture species that exist on the margins, uniquely suited for their rich context that is neither one thing nor another. This time of transition - from being a student to becoming a teacher - is characterized by opportunities that encourage the construction of a professional identity. Five themes emerged as supporting interns' understandings of who they are becoming as teachers: scaffolding the current experience onto understandings established in previous practica; being involved in a nurturing relationship with a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86); becoming part of an educational community; telling stories of success; and the intentional consideration of becoming. And in order to honour and illuminate the experiences of David, Grace, Laura, and Mark I shared their tensions and struggles, their being and becoming through a variety of re-presentational formats intended to draw the reader into their world, not to conquer, but to "sophisticate the beholding of

it" (Stake, 1995, p. 43). And still, echoes of their voices hang like threads in the air suggesting opportunities for teacher educators as they consider structuring curriculum and field experiences to best support student teachers on these borderlands of possibility.

CHAPTER SIX

Borderlands of Possibility

The Responsibility of Inquiry

> "I know," Dolores said, "you have been hearing some story from Mr. Watts, and a story in particular, but I want to tell you this. Stories have a job to do. They can't just lie around like lazybone dogs. They have to teach you something." (Jones, 2007, p. 86)

Becoming a teacher is a struggle; it takes courage to look beneath the ordinariness of our lives, to recognize and respond to the cultural expectations of who we should *be* as teachers, to dwell on the borderlands ever in a state of becoming. Caputo (1987) suggests "in the thin membranes of structures which we stretch across the flux, in the thin fabric we weave over it, there are certain spots where the surface wears through and acquires a transparency which exposes the flux beneath" (p. 269). In these moments, at the margins and fringes and interstices of everydayness, the habits and practices of our mundane existence are worn thin and what lies beneath is glimpsed (p. 270). This inquiry offered several opportunities to glimpse what lies beneath the struggle to be a teacher.

These glimpses, shared through a variety of interpretive formats in the previous chapter, summon responsibility: they have to teach us something. They cannot simply "lie around like lazybone dogs" (Jones, 2007, p. 96). Stake (1995) maintains the case study is "an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish" (p. 136). Yin (2014) writes "the good researcher might even think that the case study contains earth-shattering conclusions" (p. 206). As a teacher educator, the glimpses offered during this inquiry prompt thoughtful consideration of the ways in which pre-service teachers, especially those in their culminating field experience, can be supported and encouraged in the construction of their professional identity during this time of transition: the borderlands of

possibility.

This chapter is divided into three sections: To begin, this inquiry highlights the value of intentionally considering who we are becoming during these times of transition. In response to the questions: What does it mean to be a teacher? Who is the self that teaches? (Palmer, 1998), all four interns talked of how their involvement in our conversations together prompted deep reflection about their emerging professional identity. In fact, each suggested that without provocation, they may not have thought about these questions at all. Grace's comment reflects the value of this kind of intentionality: "I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them." Four essential elements emerging from this inquiry's focus on the intentional consideration of becoming will be represented in a conceptual framework to guide the crafting and adapting of teacher education coursework and field experience expectations. Specifically, this challenge involves constructing a model capable of supporting outcomes similar to those identified by David, Grace, Laura, and Mark during the course of this inquiry.

Second, I will present three recommendations emerging from the findings of this case study. This inquiry affirms their importance and suggests they assume more explicit prominence both during, and in the coursework leading up to, the final field experience. First, there is need to specifically explore the ways in which academic coursework prepares, or falls short of adequately equipping, student teachers for the relational expectations of the classroom. Second, student teachers should be encouraged to become integrally involved in the life of the school and, more broadly, their educational community; and third, field experience supervisors need to purposefully invite and support conversations with mentor teachers about the essential role of the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Taken together, these three recommendations inform my work as a teacher educator and support programmatic decisions involving curriculum and field experience expectations.

Finally, there are questions: the ones directing this study and the ones cultivated on the borderlands along the way. As a teacher educator with responsibilities for program organization I am keenly interested in what is possible; wondering "What if . . . ?" and "In what ways . . .?" is an integral part of my work with instructors, with student teachers, and with members of our educational community. First, I will review the four questions prompting this inquiry and reflect on the ways in which the data gathered, interpreted, and presented has assuaged my curiosity about this borderland space, this time of transition. And second, there are emerging queries: re-searching still to be taken up, points for departure, wonders to be explored. In what ways does this study provoke deeper examination of what it means to *be* a teacher? Two questions will be posed as possible areas for further investigation. Always, I am curious.

Intentional Consideration of Becoming: A Conceptual Framework for Engagement

> I'm still always thinking about what is a teacher, because we asked that question, "What is being a teacher?" So I was always evaluating . . . not necessarily evaluating but comparing to what I had said and where I'm going now.
>
> David

All four interns spoke about how being involved in this study prompted consideration of who they were becoming as teachers. Moreover, without this prompting each doubted they would have paid such close attention to the kinds of changes taking place within them as they worked to construct understandings of the self that teaches (Palmer, 1998). And while the development of a professional identity begins, more formally, during pre-service teacher education it is a dynamic, ongoing construction and reconstruction of who we are becoming as teachers: we never fully arrive. Laura recognized this when she said, "you're never really done becoming a teacher until you're retired, and even then, you could probably still become a teacher if you kept teaching." This inquiry highlights the value of intentionally inviting reflection and conversation in order to explore the construction of professional identity during the borderlands of the final field

experience.

In order to construct a conceptual framework capable of achieving outcomes similar to those identified by David, Grace, Laura, and Mark, it is necessary to identify the circumstances in this inquiry that prompted and supported emerging self understandings. A research study offers particular kinds of opportunities for interaction not always possible during academic coursework. The opposite is also true: academic coursework offers prospects not available in an inquiry, especially when participants are geographically dispersed. So while the context is different, what essential attributes of the inquiry can be embedded into a framework to guide decisions made by teacher educators? And how might the circumstances of a teacher education program support deeper opportunities for growth? This section of the chapter will identify themes emerging from this inquiry that have been arranged into a conceptual framework for guiding teacher educators.

A conceptual framework for engagement. Situated within a context of tension and ambiguity, the borderlands of a final practicum, four essential aspects of experience have been distilled from the findings of this inquiry to assist teacher educators when crafting curriculum capable of engaging student teachers, intentionally and purposefully, in the consideration of who they are becoming as teachers. Each of the four components will be explored individually as they emerged as distinct themes during data analysis; however, the strength of this conceptual framework lies in the overlapping nature of these four aspects of experience. Represented visually as four intertwined circles of engagement, existing within, and being made possible by, the tension and ambiguity described metaphorically as an *ecotone*, this model (Figure 1) highlights the importance of all four elements of experience, linked together, on the borderlands of becoming:

> Over time, in relationship with others, student teachers on the borderlands of their final field experience will share emerging understandings of their professional self during

conversations together, in written reflections, and through the telling of stories of their lives with the hope of making visible the teacher they are becoming.

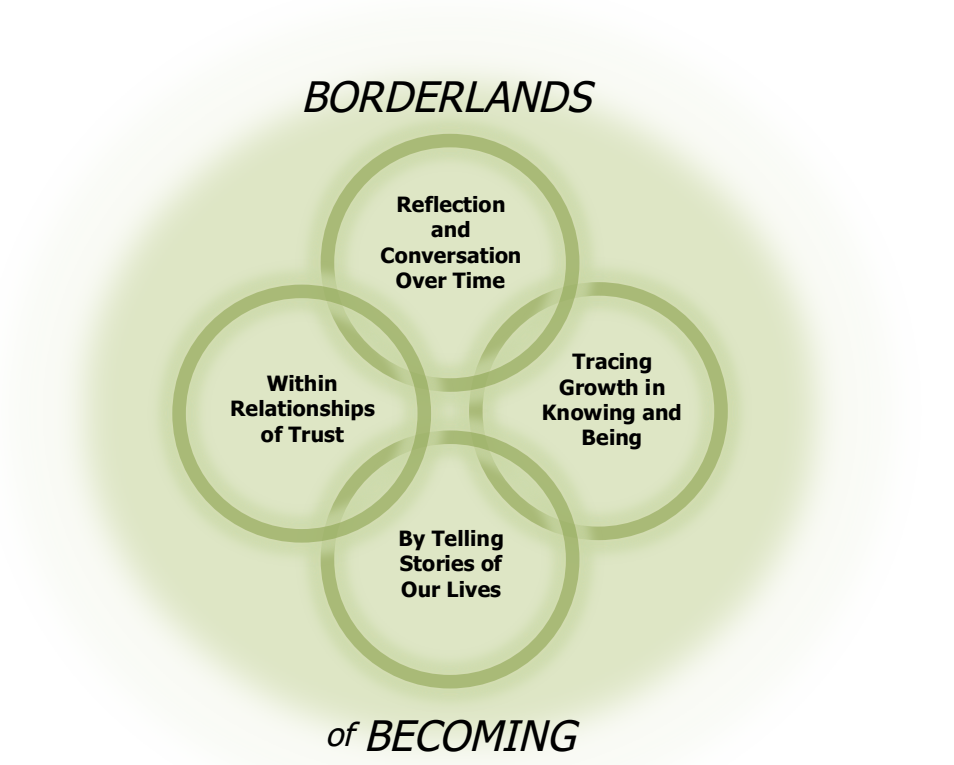

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Engagement

Emerging from inquiry, this conceptual framework has the potential to guide teacher educators as they consider ways in which curriculum could be crafted and adapted to invite consideration of becoming.

Being on the borderlands. This inquiry has been guided, metaphorically, by the experience of living on the borderlands. Described ecologically as an *ecotone*, the border area where two patches meet that have different biological compositions, this zone of transition is characterized by the tension and ambiguity that results as organisms, materials, and energy flow, reciprocally, across the margins of different ways of being. Not only does this liminal space support the existence of abundant plant and animal life from the neighboring ecosystems, it

nurtures “edge species” (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009, p. 6) uniquely suited for this emerging habitat. It is truly a crossroads alive with possibility. Metaphorically, I have suggested the final field experience is an *ecotone*: a time of transition shaped by past experience and current context, of being a student while at the same time becoming a teacher. And as with its ecological counterpart, these borderlands of becoming are shifting spaces characterized by tensions and ambiguities that provoke growth and new ways of being.

The experience of this internship challenged David, Grace, Laura, and Mark to become part of a new community and to assume a new subject position: the teacher. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) maintain that to become human is to be split and to become participants in a community is to be divided; these are the tensions and ambiguities lying within the borderlands of becoming. And the construction of a professional self is an effort to overcome these divisions, not to root them out or eliminate them, but to transcend them. Aoki (2005b) suggests that to be alive is to live in tension and explains its essential quality through the use of a metaphor:

> To be alive is to live in tension; in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck, and that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung. (p. 162)

For Aoki (2005b), it is “not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it” (p. 163). Finally, Anzaldua (1987) suggests these in-between spaces, *los intersticios*, are a constant state of transition and in order to thrive on the borderlands an individual must *be* a crossroads willing to develop a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity (p. 79). In like fashion, being on the borderlands of a final field experience means dwelling aright within the inherent tensions and ambiguities that support and provoke understandings of a professional self.

The conceptual model (Figure 1) works to represent the nature of these borderlands by

first, creating a background that is, itself, ambiguous: the margins have been intentionally crafted to be hazy, the colour selected, a light green, is not uniform, and some areas of the background are more transparent than others. In addition, the four intertwined circles of engagement are situated within the background; it is not possible to involve student teachers in consideration of who they are becoming apart from the context of the borderlands. In other words, the tension and ambiguity characteristic of these transition spaces cannot be eliminated. Rather, they are essential to the construction of teacher identity.

Four aspects of engagement. The four circles of engagement situated on the borderlands of becoming emerged as themes from the data gathered through conversations with all four participants in this study. While labeled individually, the conceptual model (Figure 1) attempts to represent these aspects as overlapping and without clear boundaries between one and the other. For the sake of clarity each is identified with its own label, however, the strength of this model is two-fold: first, it represents the intertwined nature of these aspects of engagement and second, all four circles are integrally connected within the larger whole situated on the borderlands.

Reflection and conversation over time. Reflection and conversation must take place over time. Just as our discussions together during this inquiry spanned the 15 weeks of their internship, teacher education curriculum designed for the intentional consideration of becoming must invite interaction throughout the final field experience. It will not be sufficient to engage conversations at the end of the practicum and expect rich reflections; interaction over time is needed for pondering the significance of events and for tracing the development of thinking and being. If possible, it would be ideal to begin prior to the start of the practicum, extend through the weeks, and offer opportunity for final reflections after the field experience is finished. In this way student teachers will have a chronological series of experiences and reflections to hold in mind as they engage in the process of making sense of who they are becoming.

Within relationships of trust. Those involved in making decisions about teacher education curriculum must recognize the need to offer opportunities for those involved to cultivate relationships of trust. This requires more than decisions about how and when to schedule times to meet together and topics to be introduced to prompt rich conversation. While both of these are important structural considerations, establishing relationships of trust between student teachers as well as between student teachers and their mentors poses inherent challenges.

First, it must be acknowledged that the final field experience is a time of stress and expectation for pre-service teachers and this emotional context may hinder the nurturing of relationships between students. They are keenly aware of the competition that exists to secure a teaching position once the final practicum is complete and, as a teacher educator, I have observed this reality undermine relationships established over the previous years of academic coursework. In contrast, I have also watched students, especially in the final days of the practicum when some have already been offered teaching positions, act in sensitive and caring ways toward their colleagues. Teacher educators need to recognize this particular context, talk openly with student teachers about this reality, offer opportunities to develop job-seeking and interview skills, and work intentionally to support their students during this time of uncertainty when, more than ever, relationships of trust are needed.

The second challenge is related explicitly to the mentor-protégé relationship. Traditionally, mentoring has been viewed as a hierarchical relationship where the mentor possesses the experience and as well as the knowledge and skills required by the protégé or mentee to become a successful practitioner (Ambrosetti, 2010). Ehrich and Millwater (2010) suggest this perspective is consistent with a clinical supervision model and its "notions of hierarchy and demarcation between expert and novice" (p. 469); Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum, and Wakukawa (2003) argue this traditional understanding creates an environment

for possible power struggles between the mentor and mentee. In addition, they suggest the very phrase “the role of the mentor” embodies a presumption of rank and of a hierarchical relationship in which the mentor “assumes the dominant role and the student teacher is relegated to the dependent position” (p. 48). Added to these relational challenges emerging from within the political context of schooling (Ehrich & Millwater, 2011) is the fact the mentor teacher, occasionally in collaboration with the field experience supervisor, drafts the final evaluation of pre-service teacher performance used by school administrators when considering applications for teaching positions. There is little question that establishing relationships of trust within this context is fraught with challenges.

In contrast to the typical mentor-protégé, teacher- student teacher relationship described above, my status as an outsider, a researcher divorced from their immediate experiential context, facilitated conversations with each participant and allowed a relationship of trust to grow over the months of their internship. Not only could they share observations and reflections about their classrooms knowing I had no direct connection to them, they were free to relate their shortcomings and frustrations knowing I was not, in any way, part of their final evaluation. Is it possible, even in a small way, to establish this level of trust between mentor teachers and their student teachers given the political nature of schooling, the structure of teacher education programs, and the expectation for evaluation? And if so, how might this be accomplished?

Recognizing both the inherent challenges and the significant benefits of working to establish these relationships of trust, numerous researchers have responded to these questions and offer suggestions for teacher education programming (see Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Ambrosetti, 2014; Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Awaya *et al.*, 2003; Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Of particular interest is the work of Awaya *et al.* (2003) which addresses the

imbalance of power between a mentor and her mentee by offering three programmatic suggestions: first, by creating a culture of mentoring that "encourages teachers and students to view each other as collaborators and fellow decision makers rather than figures holding unequal positions in a hierarchical structure" (p. 52). Second, prior to working together in the context of a classroom practicum there is an opportunity for members of both groups to become acquainted and to build relationships with each other. In the teacher education program explored during their research, the authors indicate this took place over the year prior to the start of the final internship. And third, these established relationships allowed for more informed pairings which were most often created by the mentor teachers and student teachers themselves who grew to recognize their suitability for each other. Rather than an arrangement made by a field experience officer, oftentimes based on teacher availability as well as grade and subject specialization, this model supports the understanding that mentoring should be both a personal relationship and a collaborative partnership.

There are neither simple nor foolproof ways to cultivate relationships between student teachers as well as between mentors and their protégés. They are, after all, human relationships subject to both the context of schooling and to the backgrounds and experiences of the individuals involved; however, it is our responsibility as teacher educators to be aware of the attendant challenges and to support both mentor teachers and their mentees as they share understandings, reflect on their growth, and work together to meet the learning needs of children. And as we reflect on the nature of the final field experience and the inherent challenge for classroom teachers to be both a mentor and an evaluator, it may be that the structure of the final report becomes more collaborative with all three individuals assuming significant responsibility for its creation: student teachers reflecting on their professional growth over the field experience, mentor teachers commenting on instructional and relational capabilities as observed during the

field experience, and practicum supervisors offering broader, more programmatic perspectives of student teacher development. Ehrich and Millwater (2011) write: “Mentoring is a reciprocal and dynamic power based relationship between a mentor and a mentee that requires careful negotiation” (p. 478). I suggest as teacher educators we are uniquely situated to assist in this careful negotiation by working to ameliorate the contextual challenges while at the same time facilitating spaces for fruitful conversation and dialogue.

Tracing growth in knowing and being. David identified one of the most powerful aspects for growth as the opportunity to refer to transcripts of past conversations in order to trace his thinking over time. While not realistic to audio tape and transcribe conversations in this way over the course of the final term with multiple students, reflective writing prompts could be crafted to act as a means of anchoring emergent understandings in time. In similar fashion, teacher educators could construct a reflective framework to engage students in considering these essential questions beginning in the first year of their teacher education program. Much like the transcripts on which David relied, these reflections could be used intentionally, at a later date, to trace growth in knowing and being.

In addition, practicum supervisors have two important responsibilities during these conversations together. First, they must intentionally invite consideration of the essential question: Who is the self that teaches? (Palmer, 1998). It cannot be assumed that this question will emerge naturally during discussion; in fact, given the experience of the four interns in this study, without clear provocation to think about their emerging professional self, they would have been unlikely to do so. It will be the responsibility of practicum supervisors to maintain this question as the focal point of interaction. Second, those involved with student teachers - either as practicum supervisors or as instructors - must share their own journeys to become teachers. The construction of a professional identity is a dynamic, on-going challenge: we are never fully a

teacher. By reflecting on their own developing understandings in response to this essential question, practicum supervisors will encourage conversations that draw all into the shared journey of becoming a teacher.

By telling stories of our lives. Finally, student teachers must be encouraged to tell their stories. Although interns in this study seemed reluctant to share stories of challenge and difficulty during our conversations they were more willing to recall episodes of success and anecdotes demonstrating their growing capability as teachers. I am convinced there is value in sharing these narratives of our lives, and, in particular, telling the stories of our teaching and learning lives. Polkinghorne (1988) maintains we make our existence whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. And because we are in the midst and cannot know how our story will end we are constantly revising this plot in response to new experiences: "Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be" (1988, p. 150). Who I am as a teacher - my professional identity - is part of my unfolding and developing story. This conceptual framework invites narratives of past, present, and anticipated experiences with specific exploration of the ways in which student teachers construct understandings of who they are becoming.

In summary, the final field experience is a time of both tension and possibility. The four themes directly emerging from this inquiry are represented as intertwined and overlapping circles of engagement on an ambiguous background: the borderlands of becoming. By encouraging and supporting the intentional consideration of professional identity during the final field experience of a teacher education program, this conceptual framework has the potential to guide teacher educators as they invite student teachers to construct understandings of their professional self.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

> We can encourage "becoming" by making processes explicit, assuring openness, and recalling that all things, including selves, are revisable and subject to negotiation.
> (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 197)

Three recommendations emerge from the findings of this interpretive case study. The experience of the four interns in this inquiry, our conversations together, my analysis of the data gathered, and the interpretations constructed in response have led me to recognize their essential importance: each recommendation encourages and supports student teachers in their quest to construct a professional identity. And while each may be reflected in expectations of established teacher education programs, in response to the findings of this inquiry I suggest they should assume more explicit prominence if student teachers are to successfully journey the borderlands of their final field experience.

Explore: Academic coursework and the relational expectations of the classroom. One of the struggles shared by interns in this study identified the tension between what was learned during academic coursework and the realities of their field experience. Often understood as the tension between theory and practice, I have come to think of it as the tugging and pulling that takes place between our knowing and our being. Certainly, knowing about subject disciplines, legislated curricula, effective instruction and assessment, child development and learning strategies are all necessary aspects of teacher education programs. The question is: are they sufficient given the relational expectations of the classroom? David, Grace, Laura, and Mark all recognized that their ability to engage students in the content of their lessons - the knowing - depended on the relationships they established with the children in their classroom. And academic coursework did not prepare them for this reality.

There are aspects of teacher education coursework designed to prompt students to think about and discuss the importance of building rich and respectful relationships with the children in

their classrooms. Sometimes these conversations take place during subject-specific coursework and sometimes as part of educational psychology courses intended to prepare teachers for the learning and behavioural needs of children. They are, however, theoretical; no matter how many examples are provided to reinforce the value of building relationships, until the student teacher recognizes the need herself and works to establish these relationships, it is not lived, not yet real. Both David and Grace recognized the importance of establishing relationships with their students; they also realized they had not been prepared, through formal coursework, for this classroom reality. So while they knew a great deal about what and how to teach children, they were left to puzzle out *being* with children.

There are three ways that teacher education programs could better prepare students for the relational expectations of the classroom during the final field experience. First, it is important to clarify the role of academic coursework and the ways in which these understandings support effective instruction; it is also important to highlight the relational limitations of this knowledge with student teachers. By entering the borderlands of their final field experience aware of what they know and its role in their work with children, student teachers will be better able to assess their responsibilities and respond to the students and their learning needs.

Second, Laura's comment: "I would like to become a teacher that teaches children, not curriculum" prompts consideration of how coursework and prior field experiences could support successfully achieving this goal. In addition, it should not be assumed that teacher education students intuitively appreciate the value of building relationships or that they possess the skills required to do so. Coursework designed specifically to engage these understandings and to offer opportunities for practicing developing relational skills would support the shift in focus from teaching curriculum to teaching children. This outcome might best be achieved as part of a course focusing on interpersonal communication and its role in establishing relationships. And if

accompanied by a field experience requiring student teachers to observe communication patterns in the classroom and engage teachers in conversation about the relational expectations of teaching, pre-service teachers will be more fully equipped to successfully assume these responsibilities.

Finally, student teachers should be offered the opportunity for involvement in a variety of classroom experiences prior to their final practicum. These may be shorter practica included in the early years of education coursework, visits to schools to observe children in different learning contexts, the completion of specific course-related assignments in classrooms with small groups of children allowing for feedback from the teacher without the formal expectations of a practicum evaluation, or opportunities to volunteer in local schools for special events. If students are prompted, through observation, involvement, and discussion, to recognize the relational expectations of being a teacher and to develop strategies for establishing connections with children, they will grow in their ability to meet these successfully in their own classroom.

Encourage: Involvement in the school and educational community. Both Mark and David identified involvement in their school and educational communities as instrumental in their construction of a professional identity. From the everyday practice of eating lunch in the staffroom to organizing an after-school student book club to working collaboratively with teachers in grade clusters to sharing expertise with colleagues in jurisdictional learning groups, these intern teachers grew more confident as they recognized that others valued their contributions and viewed them as capable teachers. In effect, the broader culture of teaching shaped who they were becoming; and, in response, Mark and David began to influence the educational culture of which they were a part. Because culture is a "dynamically changing set of practices and resources that require constant active engagement for their continued existence" (Cole & Gaidamaschko, 2007, p. 208) the involvement of student teachers in professional

activities beyond their immediate classroom supports the construction of their professional identity while at the same time offering opportunities to shape their educational context and, more broadly, the culture of teaching.

The particular circumstances of the Professional Semester III internship made this type of involvement more possible for these interns than in previous field experiences. As half-time teachers there were blocks of time during the school day available to facilitate responsibilities outside of their classrooms during the 15 weeks of the placement. In addition, the professional development project crafted by the intern may have required involvement in the school and jurisdictional community. However, these supportive conditions are often not part of other culminating field experiences where student teachers may assume up to 90% of the teaching responsibilities for approximately a third of the ten-week placement. How might involvement in the culture of teaching be encouraged given that often, culminating field experiences expect student teachers to assume an increasing degree of responsibility over a shorter period of time? Is it realistic to expect the kinds of professional interaction described by Mark and David from student teachers in a vastly different context?

Before I offer specific suggestions, it should be acknowledged that although community participation becomes more challenging given particular field experience circumstances, it is no less important: becoming a member of an educational community - the culture of teaching - is an integral aspect of developing professional understandings of self. However, it will be necessary to support growth without overwhelming the student teacher or taking away from her ability to successfully develop the instructional and relational skills rooted in the classroom context. Perhaps in the early weeks of the practicum, when less responsibility is assumed in the classroom, student teachers could be invited to take part in school-wide activities. This would offer opportunities to become acquainted with the school, its specialized programs, the teachers

in other grades, as well as to explore possible professional involvements. In addition to this more structured approach to inviting participation beyond the classroom walls school administrators might identify strengths of student teachers early in the practicum and encourage involvement in areas where each could contribute to their educational community in meaningful ways while at the same time monitoring their ability to successfully manage the responsibilities of the classroom. Regardless of how it is accomplished - either formally through structured involvement or more informally through individual encouragement - this inquiry reiterates the understanding that the construction of teacher identity, particularly in the culminating field experience, is significantly shaped by participation in the broader culture of teaching.

Support: Mentor teachers in their role as the "more capable peer." Mentoring student teachers is challenging. Not only is the classroom teacher called upon to share his physical space with another adult but for some there may emerge concerns associated with the ability of the student teacher to successfully plan, organize, implement, and assess learning for the children in his classroom. It is also highly gratifying. Over the two decades I mentored student teachers in my classroom I never tired of watching the almost 'magical' transformation taking place before my eyes: a growing confidence with curriculum, the development of a teacher voice, the generating of enthusiasm for learning alongside the children, and an increasing ease with responding to student difficulties. And while sharing a physical space with another can be challenging both my students and I missed her presence in our classroom when the practicum was done. In my experience the benefits of mentoring a student teacher always outweighed the challenges presented by their tentative steps and developing skills.

Vygotsky (1978) describes the relationship between a "more capable peer" (p. 86) and the learner as an essential aspect of cognitive development: what is first made manifest *between* individuals, is then nurtured *within* the learner (p. 57). This inquiry supports the understanding

that acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attributes of teaching is made possible within the relationship established between the student teacher and his "more capable peer", who is most often, but not always, the mentor teacher in the classroom. Laura's experience in her first placement highlights what occurs when this relationship is strained and broken: the field experience becomes a site of tension and struggle. Given the critical role of the mentor teacher in the development of student teachers - their instructional skills and their construction of identity - two suggestions are offered to support mentors as the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

First, mentor teachers need to appreciate the significant role they play on the borderlands. Because this transition, from being a student to becoming a teacher, is accomplished, in large part, through the relationship they nurture with their student teacher it is important mentor teachers possess the skills needed to successfully work with adult learners. Mezirow (1997) observes that a defining condition of being human is that we seek to understand the meaning of our experience and work to accomplish this over the course of our lives by pulling together a coherent body of experience made up of associations, concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses. These are our frames of reference (p. 5): the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. Because they define our life world, by the time we reach adulthood learning involves the altering of these frames in order to construct new understandings. In short, adult learning is transformative; it is "the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*" (p. 5, italics in original). In this way, Mezirow (1997) argues, working with adults in a learning context "involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one's reflective insight, and critically assessing it" (p. 11). The role of the mentor teacher, the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), in supporting this kind of transformational learning is both

essential and challenging.

This notion of adult learning as transformational complements the sociocultural understanding suggested by Packer and Goicoechea (2000) that "learning is at its most fundamental, about who I am and who I am becoming in the context of our social world which itself shapes, and is shaped by, the transformed and transforming human individual; in effect, learning is about ontology, what it means for something - or somebody - to be" (p. 237). The cultural institution of schooling plays a vital role in the transformation of who a student is and who she is becoming; I have suggested teacher education programs are the site for the production of teachers both epistemologically through the assembling of knowledge about learning theory, legislated curricula, lesson and unit planning, and classroom management, and ontologically through the construction of a professional identity: who we are and who we are becoming.

Mezirow's understanding of adult education as transformative learning, "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (1990, p. 1), offers guidance and direction for teacher educators as they work with mentor teachers first, to outline the critical nature of the relationship they cultivate as the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) and second, to design professional development opportunities exploring how best to support this ontological transformation from student to teacher. As no formal coursework or credential is required to be a mentor teacher in the province of Alberta, only interest and three to five years of successful teaching experience, it is particularly important that teacher educators engage mentors in thinking about their role and in developing the skills needed to interact effectively with their mentee. As an invitation for conversations, Mezirow's framework could be used to support the challenging, yet essential, work of encouraging student teachers to reflect on assumptions, validate contested beliefs through discourse, take action on their reflective insight, and critically assess their growth

and development on the borderlands of the final field experience.

Points of Departure: Questions for Further Exploration

> The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where one question grew before. Every goal of research is necessarily a point of departure.
> (Veblen, 1969, p. 33)

This inquiry invites a number of points of departure. Glesne (2006) suggests "true research does not end. Instead, it points the way for yet another search" (p. 220). Given my innate curiosity there were times over these past months when fascinating questions threatened to overwhelm my sense of purpose and direction. It was not always an easy task to stay on the path; however, I reminded myself during these forays into the forest - when every tree and rock appeared interesting and so very important - that, eventually, these questions would be shared as possibilities for re-search. However, before outlining two possible points of departure, I will review the four questions prompting this inquiry and reflect on the ways in which the data gathered, interpreted, and presented has assuaged my curiosity about this borderland space, this time of transition.

Questions directing this inquiry. Teacher education programs are typically designed to include coursework focused on knowing about how children develop and learn, legislated curriculum and its implementation, assessment practices, and field experiences to offer opportunity for apprenticeship with the overall goal of preparing student teachers for their professional responsibilities. Yet, Hamachek (1999) and Aoki (2005b) suggest who we are as teachers - our mode of being – more essentially shapes learning for children in classrooms. With this in mind, four questions related to the construction and development of professional identity in pre-service teachers directed this inquiry:

- In what ways do pre-service teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?

- What is the nature of the relationship between expertise acquired during formal teacher education coursework and who pre-service teachers are becoming as teachers?
- How do the stories pre-service teachers tell shape the construction of their professional identity?
- What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of pre-service teachers?

The four participants in this study - David, Grace, Laura, and Mark - responded to numerous prompts and queries during our conversations together over the course of their 15 week internship thereby assuaging (in part) my curiosity about this borderland space. As a time of transition, *los intersticios* (Anzaldua, 1987), a crossroads of being a student and becoming a teacher, these weeks in-between both challenge and nurture the construction of teacher identity: the self that teaches (Palmer, 1998). Findings from this inquiry offer glimpses onto these borderlands; as an interpretive researcher I have worked to evoke aspects of their experience in this journey to be a teacher. As a teacher educator with responsibilities for instruction, curriculum, and program development this inquiry offers support for established structures and direction for initiatives still to be considered. While not possible to definitively 'answer' the questions posed at the outset, results of this interpretive case study responded to these four questions and reiterated the critical importance of considering who we are becoming as teachers especially on these borderlands of possibility.

Points of departure. There are two points of departure apparent to me as areas in need of further exploration, journeys of re-searching. First of all, I am curious about the reluctance of the interns in this study to tell stories, especially narratives of struggle within their current experience. Laura, the student teacher moved to a second placement, related the tension and difficulty within her first placement classroom however, interestingly, this was not until after many of the critical decisions had been made. Although she was already experiencing uncertainty

with her mentor teacher and with a lack of clarity regarding her internship responsibilities when we met for our first conversation, she said nothing about the growing discomfort she was feeling. She told about the small triumphs she was having with the grade one learners; she did not share the deep worries already keeping her from sleeping much at night.

Similarly, the other three participants were very reluctant to tell stories of difficulty within the day-to-day routines and responsibilities of their classrooms and when encouraged most often related small episodes of activity but did not embed them into an overarching story of who they were becoming. It was as if what they were currently experiencing was too close, too current, too enveloping to be easily assembled into the broader narrative of their life . . . yet. And this is what I wonder: From our current vantage point - "the Now" (Carr, 1986, p. 95) where we survey both the past, with all its familiarity, and the future, with all its possibility - how challenging is it to integrate difficult experiences into the overarching story of our lives? Does this take time and experiential distance?

My own attempts to make sense of a final student teaching experience required three decades and a great deal of living in-between. So while we seek narrative coherence, trying to fit the disparate events of our lives together into a meaningful whole, perhaps when coherence comes at a cost too heavy to bear, we leave the painful stories untold. Kerby (1991) suggests "the stories we tell are part and parcel of our becoming" (p. 54) but what about the stories we don't tell; or don't tell . . . yet? Are they not, also, part of our becoming in their not-yet-telling? This inquiry prompts additional research into this borderland space in the lives of student teachers when they are most likely to encounter experiences that challenge their developing understandings of professional identity. In what ways do they incorporate stories of triumph, and especially of difficulty, into their overarching narrative of who they are becoming? How might teacher education programs invite these stories of wholeness?

The second point of departure involves the nature of the relationship between the student teacher and the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86): the mentor teacher. I suggested earlier in this chapter that by calling on established understandings related to adult learning teacher educators could support mentor teachers, through formal workshops and informal conversations, in building fruitful relationships with their student teachers. However, this point of departure seeks a deeper appreciation of the nature of the relationship between a novice and her mentor. And while there is a growing body of literature focused on mentor teachers and the nature of their work with student teachers, a number of questions emerge, specifically, from the findings of this inquiry; first, in what ways do mentor teachers participate in the process of internalization wherein every function appears twice: "first, *between* people and then *inside* the child" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57, italics in original). Is this process limited to the skills of instruction? In what ways does the mentor teacher also draw novices into the culture of teaching? And second, this study identified the essential role of the mentor teacher in supporting the construction of professional identity with interns on the borderlands of a final field experience. What is the experience of mentoring a new member of the professional community like? What does it mean to be a mentor? And in what ways could teacher educators support this relationship? These questions, and more, invite points of departure worthy of further exploration.

In summary, teacher educators interested in engaging student teachers, intentionally and purposefully, in the consideration of who they are becoming will be assisted in crafting curriculum by the conceptual model developed in response to findings of this inquiry. When taken together, the four aspects of experience arranged into a Conceptual Framework for Engagement (Figure 1) will guide decisions to support students in constructing professional understandings. In addition, results of this interpretive case study suggest three recommendations: first, teacher educators need to explore the ways in which academic

coursework prepares student teachers for the relational expectations of the classroom. Second, student teachers should be encouraged to become integrally involved in the life of the school and, more broadly, their educational community; and third, field experience supervisors need to purposefully invite and support conversations with mentor teachers about the essential role of the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Finally, I identified two points of departure for further research. First, there is need to look more closely at the stories student teachers tell during their final field experience, especially narratives of difficulty, and the ways in which they work to integrate these experiences into the overarching narrative of their lives. And second, an essential aspect of this internship experience was the relationship between the novice and a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In order to deepen and extend our understanding of this in-between time of transition more needs to be known about the nature of this crucial relationship.

Reflections on My Borderland Experience

> We think of the self as a central continuity, yet recognizing that the self is not identical through time is the first step in celebrating it as fluid and variable, shaped and reshaped by learning. (Bateson, 1994, p. 64)

The borderlands are rich, shifting spaces that invite ambiguity and struggle. Glimpsed during my journeys over months of doctoral studies I became captivated by these landscapes that were neither grassland nor parkland. Instead, foliage of all kinds exists side by side, or perhaps on top of the other. Ecologically, these are *ecotones*. Metaphorically, their existence provoked me to think about these spaces as crossroads of being and becoming: times in our lives when we are neither one nor the other, not a student or yet fully a teacher. Ultimately, I came to understand these times of transition as borderlands of possibility.

As a novice researcher I have been shaped and reshaped by this landscape of inquiry. In essential ways, this was my personal borderland experience: a crossroads of being and becoming. As someone who most often works to establish clear boundaries between one thing and another

in the hope of establishing a measure of order, living on these borderlands invited uncertainty, ambiguity, and struggle. It was not always clear which way to go or, indeed, to determine where I was going and how to get there! And yet . . . I knew the only way I would truly hear the reflections, observations, and stories of these four interns was to work productively within this tension between structure and possibility. Aoki (2005b) suggests the challenge is "not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it" (Aoki, 2005b, p. 163). In small ways, I have learned to dwell aright on these borderlands of possibility.

EPILOGUE

Stories are very patient things.
They drift about quietly in your soul.
Okri, 1997, p. 43

For three decades this story - its beginning and its ending - drifted about in my soul. Now, and only in retrospect, do I recognize its power: it shaped how I understood myself as a teacher and informed the ways in which I worked with student teachers over my many years as a classroom teacher. Yet, it did so quietly and patiently. I suppose it was waiting to be told at a time in my life when a great deal of the feeling attached to it could be taken up with different eyes and perhaps, a wiser spirit. However, the act of intentionally re-collecting these memories drew me back, not only to the happenings of that experience, but also to their sights, smells, and sounds and I found myself, often, overcome by emotion even though I now understood the experience from a significantly different vantage point.

I was prompted to tell this story by Leah Fowler who observed, during my candidacy exam, that a rather cursory referral to my experience as a student teacher in my final practicum precipitated an unexpected emotional response. She suggested I write about *it* in thick, rich detail and, to be honest, this notion worried me. While I vaguely appreciated that this story of my life had shaped, essentially, who I had become as a teacher I recall wondering if I truly wanted to 'go there': what would that be like? How could I record an experience three decades since? How long might those shadows be?

Over the next weeks I tried numerous times to begin: a sentence here, a paragraph there, never really making any headway, certainly not feeling particularly committed to the endeavour which felt like hard work, a difficult task. The words simply did not present themselves . . . until Laura sat in the chair in my office and related her experience in the first classroom placement of her internship. It seemed quite unbelievable to me that, while the specific circumstances were

different, the experience was uncannily familiar to my own of thirty years ago. I was reminded of the fears, the worries, the uncertainty, the feelings of being powerless as Laura shared her story and somehow, it seemed easier to write of my own experience. And as I gathered those memories together into its beginning - the story shared in chapter one - and into this ending I felt as if a circle was drawing together, as if what had begun all those years ago was somehow, now, finding its way home.

. . . of Possibility

Snow fell early that year; the air was crisp and by the beginning of December winter had settled in, wrapping itself around us. While cold, frigid even, the sky of a prairie winter can be dazzling: clear and blue and sharp. And as the sun struggles to warm the air, its light falls gently upon the snow illuminating a million tiny crystals that shimmer and dance with beauty. Even the schoolyard with its trampled paths and jagged snow mountains appear magical in the wintry light as children stream out the door for recess, dressed for play, with clouds of warm air trailing behind. My recollection of this second field experience placement is tethered to this landscape and to the quality of light characteristic of a bright prairie winter. In retrospect, it seems most unlikely there were no grim, overcast days during those weeks; however, as I poke and prod my memory three decades later, the images of being a teacher in that classroom are alive with light. These images are in stark contrast to what came before; in the days I spent waiting to begin this placement I grew increasingly apprehensive about how I would be received, with others knowing I had started elsewhere, and increasingly worried that I was without what was needed to *be* a teacher.

And so I arrived nervous and uncertain for my first day in this new school. All manner of worries chased about in my head: what will this be like, coming to a practicum classroom almost a month after its official beginning? What will my mentor teacher think of me and the circumstances of this late start? Perhaps I am truly unsuited to be a teacher and this will be a reliving of what had just taken place? My face must mirror this anxiety because when the university consultant arrives in the school office where I am waiting she tries to allay my fears, assuring me that my mentor teacher is so very excited to have a student teacher in her classroom of more than thirty grade six students. I do not recall feeling calmed by these assurances.

Click - click, click - click, click - click . . . sounds of high-heeled shoes drawing nearer alert me to the arrival of my mentor teacher. Like her footsteps echoing on the shiny hallway linoleum, Karen is filled with energy and purpose; she immediately gathers me up and takes me to her classroom that is absolutely filled with desks arranged, not in vertical rows, but across the room,

side by side, facing the front. Wintry morning light filters in through windows lining the outer wall of the classroom, spanning its length, and rising above the bookshelves all the way to the ceiling. She has already designated a small table for my desk and cleared a spot on a nearby shelf for my books. Our desks, both at the back of the classroom, also face the front and while close, offer space for students who need help or for private conversations. More than anything, the room feels full and just a bit overwhelming. Yet Karen draws me in by telling me bits and pieces about the students, their lives, the work they are doing, and what she has in mind for my teaching assignment. Does she know how unsettled I feel? Perhaps she does but she makes no mention of the past, only of what we will do together in the weeks ahead.

The morning bell rings and gaggles of children burst into the classroom, hanging their coats and hats and backpacks on their hooks while talking excitedly. Karen greets them as they arrive; some have notes for her, some have homework to hand in, some have questions. There is much commotion as I observe the chaotic arrival of these students while standing on the edge of the classroom. Then, all of a sudden, quiet prevails as the first notes of 'O Canada' thread their way out of the speaker in the front. Everyone stands and joins in: thin voices barely keeping up, more confident voices rushing ahead in the hope of finishing before the music. Once seated in their desks I can see they are a bit like sardines arranged in a tin: tightly packed yet each in its place. It is, I think, a beginning with promise.

Karen is like no teacher I have ever met. And certainly like no mentor teacher I have come upon in my teacher education program. She has clear expectations yet her manner is easy; she speaks directly to students yet laughs and plays jokes. She is particularly fond of leaving the room to use the photocopier, click-clicking her way down the hallway, only to remove her high-heeled shoes for the walk back, sneaking in, and 'catching' those not working - sometimes even arriving beside their desk unseen and unheard! As often as she performs this trick there is always someone in the classroom surprised by her reappearance. And we play games. School for these children is fun and while there is always work to be done it is accomplished with a light heart and gentle encouragement. She builds relationships with the students by treating them with respect and I can tell they care for her in return. This experience is entirely different than any of my previous practicum placements.

From the very beginning Karen seems to view me as a colleague, as someone to work with as we puzzle out how best to balance the natural enthusiasm of this many students with some measure of order. We plan lessons together and she offers feedback that supports my growth most often as verbal comments and observations. After a lesson on paragraph writing I suggest the students help themselves to loose-leaf paper to begin their assignment and am nearly trampled by the herd of gangly grade six students who rush to the front of the room. We laugh together about this after school remarking on what a dangerous job teaching can be but I have

learned the value of distributing paper and managing the movement of children in confined spaces with thoughtfully-given directions. As the weeks unfold I take on more and more responsibility even in areas like teaching French where I have little background and even less confidence. Karen encourages my risk-taking with assurances that doing this will be good for me and good for my resume. Through this all I feel free to make mistakes knowing that whatever doesn't work can be fixed with a new plan and another day. And before I know it, this final practicum is drawing to a close.

Outside the classroom window I see the early spring sunshine gradually shrinking the piles of snow cleared from the street and rubber boots replace their winter cousins as puddles appear in low-lying areas of the playground inviting exploration - especially while still covered with a thin layer of ice that first crackles, then shatters when stepped on. Oh, what a risky pleasure! Relieved of their winter blanket, patches of dirt and flattened yellow grass begin to appear giving off the rich scent of spring. On my final day of this field experience the students present me with a hand-woven willow basket overflowing with an assortment of teacher materials each labeled with a message of encouragement for my career ahead. It is a bright beginning.

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Appendix A

Understandings of a Professional Self:
Exploring the Construction of Identity in Pre-Service Teachers

Pre-Interview Activity

Please select one (or a combination) of the pre-interview activities listed below. Feel free to respond with words, pictures, and/or diagrams.

The purpose of this activity is first, to prompt you to think about who you are becoming as a teacher and second, to offer a starting point for our conversation together in early January.

- Create a timeline identifying important events and reflections that have shaped who you are as a teacher. This timeline could include words and/or pictures.
- Use 3 colours to create an abstract diagram about how it feels, or what it is like, to be a teacher.
- Share your most memorable experience as a teacher.
- Identify a selection of words that represent or speak of your experience as a student teacher.
- What kind of a teacher would you like to become?
- Describe - in whatever way is most comfortable – a time of difficulty in learning to teach.
- Share a story about who you are becoming as a teacher.

Please bring your completed Pre-Interview Activity with you when we meet for the first time.

Appendix B

Open-Ended Questions and Prompts for Conversational Interviews

Inquiry Question 1 In what ways do pre-service teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?

Tell me about a time when you felt most like a teacher . . .
Tell me a story of being a teacher.
What does the phrase 'being a teacher' mean to you?
Tell me about someone who has influenced you as a teacher?
How have you changed?
Tell me a story about an experience that has changed you.
    What did you learn about yourself through this experience?

Inquiry Question 2 What is the nature of the relationship between expertise acquired during formal teacher education coursework and who pre-service teachers are becoming as teachers?

In what ways have your courses prepared you for being in a classroom?
Tell me about a time when you taught an extraordinary lesson.
    How did you feel?
    What prompted those emotions?
    What did you learn about yourself through that experience?
Tell me about a time when your lesson was a 'flop.'
    How did you feel?
    What prompted those emotions?
    What did you learn about yourself through that experience?
What provokes joy for you in teaching? in learning?
How do you think this Internship will change you?

Inquiry Question 3 How do the stories pre-service teachers tell shape the construction of their professional identity?

Tell me about how you knew you wanted to be a teacher.
Tell me about your doubts about being a teacher.
Tell me about your most influential teacher.
    How has this person shaped who you are as a teacher?
Tell me the story of your earliest memory of going to school.
    How do you think this story has shaped who you are as a teacher?
    If you could change this story, what would be different?
What story would you like a child in your classroom to tell his/her parents
    after the first day of school?
    Why is this an important story to you?
Tell me a story you tell yourself about being a teacher.

Inquiry Question 4 What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of pre-service teachers?

When do you feel strong as a teacher? Why then?
When do you feel weak as a teacher? Why then?
Tell be about a time when you felt most like a teacher.
Tell me about a time when you felt least like a teacher.
Tell me a story about a challenging time as a student teacher.
- *How did you respond to the challenge?*
- *As you look back on the experience, how has your story changed?*
- *Why do you think that is?*
- *How might this story have ended in a different way?*
- *What troubles you?*

Tell me about a time of difficulty related to learning to teach.
In what ways have mentor teachers guided your journey to be a teacher?
- *Tell me a story of your "best" mentor teacher.*
- *Tell me a story of disappointment in a relationship with a mentor teacher.*
- *Who will you be as a mentor teacher? Why?*

Appendix C

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Study Title: Understandings of a Professional Self: Exploring the Construction of Identity in Pre-Service Teachers

Research Investigator
Sharon Allan
1345 11th Avenue NE
Medicine Hat, Alberta
T1A 6G7

slallan@ualberta.ca
403.527.8986

Supervisor
Dr. Jill McClay
Department of Elementary Education
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5

jmcclay@ualberta.ca
780.492.0968

If, at any time, you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta: 780.492.2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Background
As a student teacher soon to complete your Professional Semester III at the University of Lethbridge in the Faculty of Education, you are being asked to participate in this study in order to explore the ways in which pre-service teachers construct understandings of who they are becoming as teachers. This Internship will offer a unique opportunity for investigation as you are both a student and a teacher during the 15 weeks of this final field experience.

Understandings emerging from this inquiry will be used in support of my dissertation as part a Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Alberta. In addition, results may be shared in published journals or offered as part of conference presentations.

Purpose
This inquiry is guided by four questions related to the development of professional identity in pre-service teachers with particular attention to the ways in which the stories of our lives – the cultural, institutional and personal narratives – nurture who we are becoming:

- In what ways do pre-service teachers construct an emerging professional identity during the coursework component of their academic studies and during field experiences?
- What is the nature of the relationship between expertise acquired during formal teacher education coursework and who pre-service teachers are becoming as teachers?
- How do these pre-service teachers view the way in which stories of their lives shape who they are becoming as teachers?
- What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges, developing and shifting understandings of professional identity in the lives of pre-service teachers?

The construction of knowledge about learners, pedagogy, curriculum and the development of skills needed to work successfully with classrooms of children are essential aspects of teacher education programs. Through an exploration of the relationship between what pre-service

teachers know and their emerging understandings of who they are as teachers, this study will offer insight into the programmatic structures that currently exist within teacher education. It will also make recommendations for future academic involvement to support the transformation from student to teacher. Ultimately, who we are as teachers – our professional self – has the power to influence the quality of learning opportunities for children in classrooms.

Study Procedures
This inquiry will begin in late November 2013 and extend to the end of April 2014 when your Internship is complete.

Specifically, you are being asked to participate in:

- two audio-taped focus groups of 3 - 5 student teachers for 1 hour each; one in late November at the University of Lethbridge and the other after your Internship is complete at an agreed-upon location.
- three audio-taped conversational interviews to take place in a quiet, public location of your choosing during the 15 weeks of your Internship for 1 hour each; one conversation at the beginning, one in the middle, and one near the end of your field experience.
- responding to a pre-interview activity prompt. Your response may take the form of a written document that will be photocopied by the researcher and returned to you at our next meeting.

After each focus group and conversational interview audio recordings will be transcribed. You will receive a copy of the transcript electronically and be asked to verify the accuracy of the data gathered. In the event you disclose something during our conversation together you later regret, you may request that I remove specific comments for personal reasons. Your verification of the transcript's accuracy will be indication of your ongoing consent.

Benefits
As a participant in this inquiry you will have opportunity to think deeply about your developing professional identity. You will be asked to share your thoughts, observations, reflections, and stories with other student teachers during focus groups and with the researcher during conversations together. Personal insights often emerge during times of intentional exploration. This inquiry will invite the consideration of who you are becoming as a teacher and may be of benefit to you as you construct understandings of your professional self.

In addition, I anticipate the understandings emerging from this study will inform the work of teacher educators. They will do this first, by offering insight into the programmatic structures that currently exist within Bachelor of Education degree programs and second, by making recommendations for future academic involvement to support the transformation from student to teacher.

Risk
There are no known or potential risks anticipated with your participation in this inquiry. You will be invited to share experiences you believe have shaped the on-going formation of your professional identity. It is possible that during the relating of your stories and recollections emotional aspects of experience will be disclosed and this may be, for some participants, troubling or unsettling.

In the event you disclose something you might later regret a request may be made to remove specific comments for personal reasons. Any risks associated with the sharing of experience will not be greater than those you experience in everyday life.

Voluntary Participation
You are under no obligation to participate in this inquiry.

In addition, if you agree to take part in this inquiry you are not obliged to answer any specific questions and can request the conversation be ended. If, at a later time, you change your mind you can withdraw from participation without consequence or explanation up to May 30, 2014 by informing the researcher in person or by email. Upon request, your data will be removed and not included in the study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality
This research will be the subject of my dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at University of Alberta. In addition to the written dissertation, I intend to share the results of this inquiry in published journals and in conference presentations. While anonymity cannot be guaranteed during participation in focus groups the anonymity of participants will be ensured in all written documents and oral presentations through the use of pseudonyms.

Your involvement in this study and all data gathered will be kept confidential. The only individuals with access to the audio recordings and the written transcripts will be the researcher, her supervisors, and the hired transcriber who will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. The Research Ethics Committee at the University of Alberta has the right to review study data. In addition, all participants in this study will be part of two focus groups during which time reflections and personal observations will be shared. Due to the nature of these sessions it is expected that each participant will respect the private nature of the conversations together and maintain the confidentiality of all participants both in their identity and in the comments made during these focus groups.

Study data, including personal information about you, will be secured for five years after the completion of this project. Digital files of audio recordings and their transcriptions will be encrypted and stored on a password protected external storage device in a locked filing cabinet. Hardcopies of transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. At the end of five years all data will be destroyed in a manner that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

Once the final research report is complete, you will be notified by email and offered the opportunity to request a copy of the dissertation.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I understand that:

- my participation in this inquiry is entirely voluntary.

- this study will be the subject of a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at University of Alberta. In addition to the written dissertation the researcher will share results of this study in published journals and in conference presentations.

- I am not obliged to answer any specific questions or conversational prompts. And if, at a later time, I change my mind about involvement in this study I can withdraw from participation without consequence or explanation up until May 30, 2014. I can do this by informing the researcher in person or by email. Upon request, my data, including any documents I have created as part of the pre-interview activity, will be removed and not included in the study.

- anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the inquiry by the use of pseudonyms in all written documents, the final research report, and oral presentations. Instructors at the University of Lethbridge will not know of my involvement in this study.

- I can expect my involvement in and my comments offered during the two focus groups to be treated confidentially. I will maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all participants involved.

- after each focus group and conversational interview audio recordings will be transcribed. I will receive a copy of the transcript electronically and be asked to verify the accuracy of the data gathered. My verification will be indication of my ongoing consent.

- in the event I disclose something I might later regret the researcher will comply with my request to remove specific comments from the transcript for personal reasons.

- my data and personal information will be secure. Digital data will be encrypted, password protected and stored on an external device in a locked filing cabinet; hardcopies of transcripts as well as copies of artifacts I have created will also be secured in a locked filing cabinet. At the end of 5 years all data will be destroyed in a manner that ensures my privacy and confidentiality.

- once the final report is written I will be notified by email and offered the opportunity to request a copy of the dissertation.

_____ _____

Participant Date

Please sign two copies of this consent form: one copy for the researcher and one for your records.

Additional Information

If you have any further questions regarding this inquiry, please do not hesitate to contact me, Sharon Allan, or my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Jill McClay. Contact information is located at the beginning of this document

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780.492.2615.

Appendix D

University of Alberta Notification of Study Approval

Notification of Approval

Date:	November 7, 2013
Study ID:	Pro00043098
Principal Investigator:	Sharon Allan
Study Supervisor:	Jill McClay
Study Title:	Understandings of a Professional Self: Exploring the Construction of Identity in Pre-Service Teachers
Approval Expiry Date:	November 6, 2014
RSO-Managed Funding:	Project ID Project Title Speed Code Other Information There are no items to display

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

William Dunn, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix E

University of Lethbridge Notification of Study Approval

The University of Lethbridge

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sharon Allan
FROM: Kerry Bernes
Date: November 19, 2013

RE: Human Subject Research Application

Thank you for submitting the changes to your Ethical Review of Human Research Application Understandings of a Professional Self: Exploring the Construction of Identity in Pre-Service Teachers. These changes are **approved** and adheres to the Tri-Council Policy Statement, published on the website
http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/

Good luck with your research.

Kerry Bernes, Ph.D.
Chair Human Subject Committee
Faculty of Education

Cc: Graduate Studies
Leah Fowler, supervisor
Wayne Street

Appendix F

Email Welcoming Participants: December 17, 2013

Hello Mark, Laura, Grace, and David,

First of all, thank you for your enthusiasm and willingness to be involved in this study! While I recognize that PS III is going to be a busy time for each of you, I truly believe that our conversations together will be beneficial and will support your growing understandings of who you are becoming as a teacher.

A Bit About Who I Am . . .
First, let me tell you a bit about myself and what has led to this inquiry . . . for many years (about 20, I think!) I taught here in Medicine Hat and for the last 15 I was involved in an alternative program at River Heights Elementary. This was an exciting time as we explored various ways of engaging children in learning through an integrated curriculum with a specific focus on building student independence. I was fundamentally shaped - pedagogically - through this teaching experience and when I began an M.Ed. at the University of Lethbridge in 2005 it seemed natural that I would focus my project on how professional change influences our identity as teachers. All around me I had observed how relentless change shaped the teachers we were becoming and the focus of my inquiry, at that time, invited consideration of those experiences with 7 local teachers.

When I moved to Medicine Hat College in July 2007 to work in our education program I found that the idea of teacher identity continued to intrigue me; except now, I wondered about how pre-service teachers understood that construction first during academic coursework but, especially, during field experiences. As my curiosity about this grew I was drawn back into the world of study and in Fall 2011 began on PhD work at the University of Alberta. These past months have been intense times of reading, thinking and writing as I prepared myself for this inquiry. I am very excited to be embarking on this journey with each of you!

Getting Started
Initially, I had planned for us to meet together as a group prior to the beginning of your exams however, time has slipped through our fingers and here we are looking forward to the holiday season. So . . . I propose a modified plan that I have outlined below:

1. **Information about PS III Placement**
   In a short email please provide me with the basic details of your placement: location, grade, school. While this inquiry has nothing to do with your actual placement the information is needed first, so I know where you are, and second, so that your placement jurisdiction can be notified that you are involved in an approved study.

2. **Pre-Interview Activity**
   I have attached an activity I would like you to complete prior to our first meeting together in January. It is not "homework" but is, rather, a set of prompts to invite your thinking about your developing professional identity. The instructions are on the attachment. Please know there is no "right" way to complete this activity – be as creative as you like.

3. Our First Conversation Together

Early in the New Year I will arrange, with each of you, a convenient time and place to meet together within the first couple of weeks of January. At that time I will gather your signed Consent Form and answer any questions you might have about this study. I think this is likely the most expedient way of dealing with the "paperwork" involved.

However, most importantly, our first meeting will give us an opportunity to talk about your completed Pre-Interview Activity and to begin the process of thinking about this time of transition you are entering as both a student and a teacher. While I have questions drafted that can be used in our conversation together I expect that each of you will shape the direction of our discussions through your emerging understandings.

A metaphor helps me think about how our conversations might unfold over these next months: at first, the idea of an "interview" seems to suggest something of a well-travelled road that each participant is led along as the researcher asks set questions. However, I prefer to think of our conversations together more like paths that have not yet been walked. As the researcher I know generally the terrain we will explore but do not know yet the paths we will travel together.

Final thoughts . . .

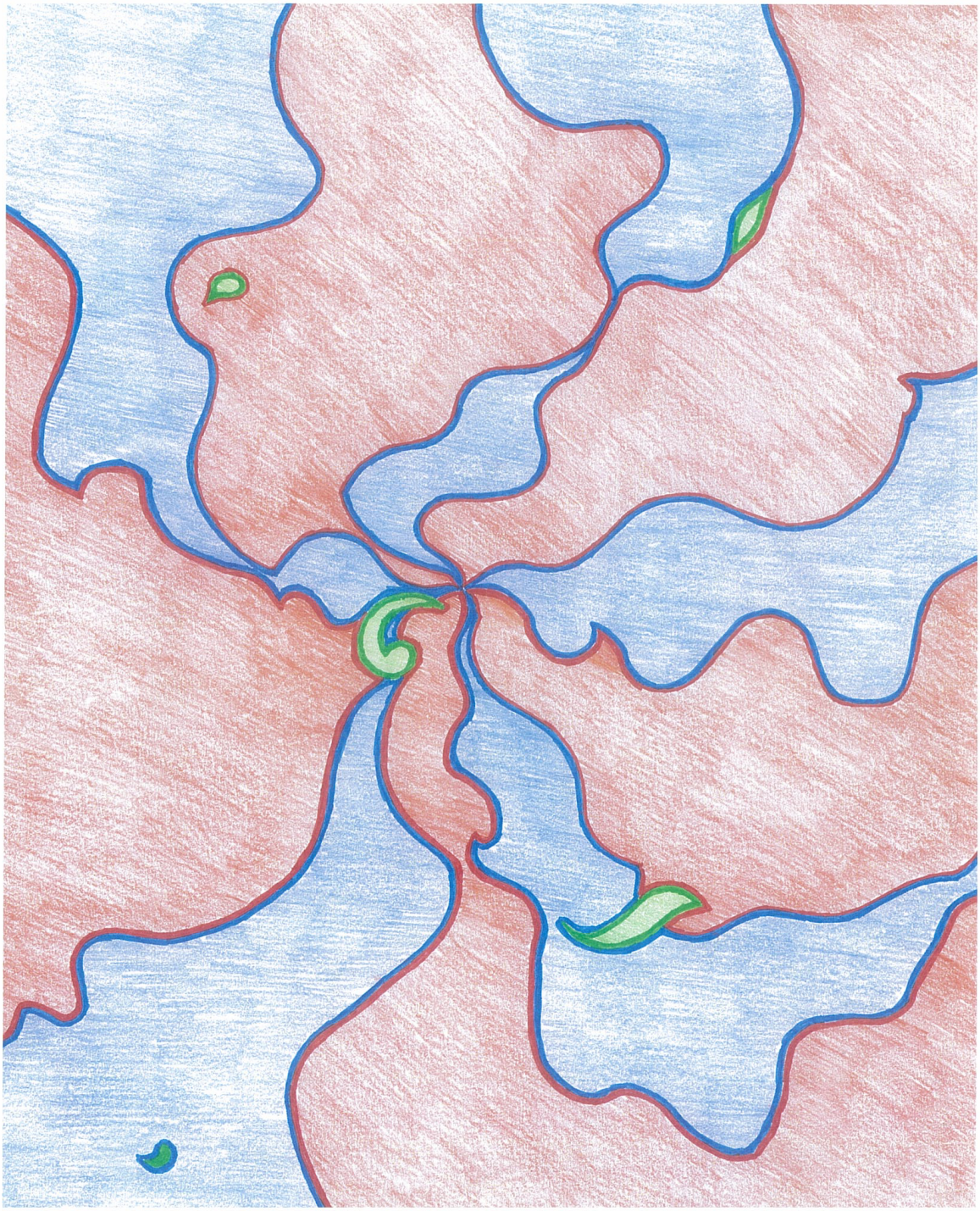
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the Pre-Interview Activity or your involvement is this study.

I am excited to begin getting to know each of you and look forward to rewarding months ahead!

Sharon

Appendix G

Mark: Pre-Interview Activity



Appendix H

David:
Thoughts for Our Second Conversation Together on March 4, 2014

As I listened to your voice and read over the transcript of our previous conversation together I noted directions that may offer fruitful opportunities for further discussion. Please consider the following questions and prompts as possible starting points for our second conversation together.

It is also likely you have been mulling over some of the ideas we touched upon in January. This study invites your thoughts and observations as you experience the borderland space between being a student and becoming a teacher. I look forward to your reflections and the ways in which they will shape our conversation together!

- Tell me a story - from these past few weeks - when you felt most like a teacher.
  Who was involved?
  Where did it take place?
  What happened?
  How does this story end?

- In this Internship I am learning how to . . .
- I am becoming . . .
- What does the phrase "*being* a teacher" mean to you?
  In what ways is your understanding changing?

- Tell me about a challenge or difficulty you have experienced recently.
  How has this experience shaped who you are becoming as a teacher?

In our first conversation together . . .

- you talked of being in grade 11 and having two very good teachers who inspired you "to start trying in school again" after a number of years of just shutting down.
  Tell the story of this experience in grade 11: how did you feel before you met these teachers and how did you feel afterwards?
  What qualities present in these teachers from your past are important to you today?

- you suggested you find yourself [in PS III] caring more about the students versus the content and that "basically the students are changing you" based upon what works in this grade 2 classroom.
  How are these children changing you?
  And . . . in what ways do you think they are being changed by you?

Appendix I

Grace:
Thoughts for Our Second Conversation Together on March 4, 2014

As I listened to your voice and read over the transcript of our previous conversation together I noted directions that may offer fruitful opportunities for further discussion. Please consider the following questions and prompts as possible starting points for our second conversation together.

It is also likely you have been mulling over some of the ideas we touched upon in January. This study invites your thoughts and observations as you experience the borderland space between being a student and becoming a teacher. I look forward to your reflections and the ways in which they will shape our conversation together!

- Tell me a story - from these past few weeks - when you felt most like a teacher.
  Who was involved?
  Where did it take place?
  What happened?
  How does this story end?

- In this Internship I am learning how to . . .
- I am becoming . . .
- What does the phrase "*being* a teacher" mean to you?
  In what ways is your understanding changing?

- Tell me about a challenge or difficulty you have experienced recently.
  How has this experience shaped who you are becoming as a teacher?

In our first conversation together . . .

- you said you hoped in these weeks of your Internship you will be able to develop the skills needed to deal with lots of different situations so that you "feel like I'm really ready to start my career."
  How have your experiences over the past weeks influenced this understanding?
  Are you ready to start your career? How do you know this?

- you told the story of developing a friendship with a young girl learning to ride a horse and observed that "forming a relationship with your students is super important to me."
  Now that you are in the midst of this Internship, in what ways have relationships with your students developed?
  How is building relationships in your classroom connected to who you are becoming as a teacher?

Appendix J

Laura:
Thoughts for Our Final Conversation Together on May 10, 2014

As I've been thinking about our last conversation together I wonder how these final weeks of your Internship have continued to shape the teacher you are becoming?

In order to explore these curiosities I have drafted a few prompts to get us started; however, as always, your own interests and reflections are the core of what we will explore so please bring with you any reflections that might help us construct understandings about how you are changing and developing and becoming.

- Tell me a story - from these past few weeks - when you felt most like a teacher.
  Who was involved?
  Where did it take place?
  What happened?
  How does this story end?

- What do you think the relationship might be between *what you know* and *who you are becoming?*

- How has your involvement in this study – the intentional consideration of who you are becoming – influenced who you are as a teacher today?

  In other words, how has this focused exploration of who you are becoming – your teaching self – provoked you to construct understandings of who you are as teacher?

  While a speculative question, might you have thought of these constructions without being involved in this study? Why or why not?

- How have you changed?
  In what ways has this Internship changed who you are as a teacher? As a person?

- What does the phrase "*being* a teacher" mean to you?

Appendix K

Mark:
Thoughts for Our Final Conversation Together on April 28, 2014

As I've been thinking about our last conversation together I wonder how these final weeks of your Internship have continued to shape the teacher you are becoming?

In order to explore these curiosities I have drafted a few prompts to get us started; however, as always, your own interests and reflections are the core of what we will explore so please bring with you any reflections that might help us construct understandings about how you are changing and developing and becoming.

- Tell me a story - from these past few weeks - when you felt most like a teacher.
  Who was involved?
  Where did it take place?
  What happened?
  How does this story end?

- You talked over the past two conversations about the organic green shapes in your drawing as "little bits of serenity . . . when everything goes right; where the craziness and the goodness collide and then you get a peaceful time."
  Tell me about "bits of serenity" you have experienced in the final weeks of your Internship.

  In early March you suggested that there was "less red, more blue, a little less swirly but I don't think I'm at the point yet where there's a whole lot more green." Thoughts on this?

- I know we explored this a bit at the very end of our last conversation however, how has your involvement in this study – the intentional consideration of who you are becoming – influenced who you are as a teacher today?

  In other words, how has this focused exploration of who you are becoming – your teaching self – provoked you to construct understandings of who you are as teacher?

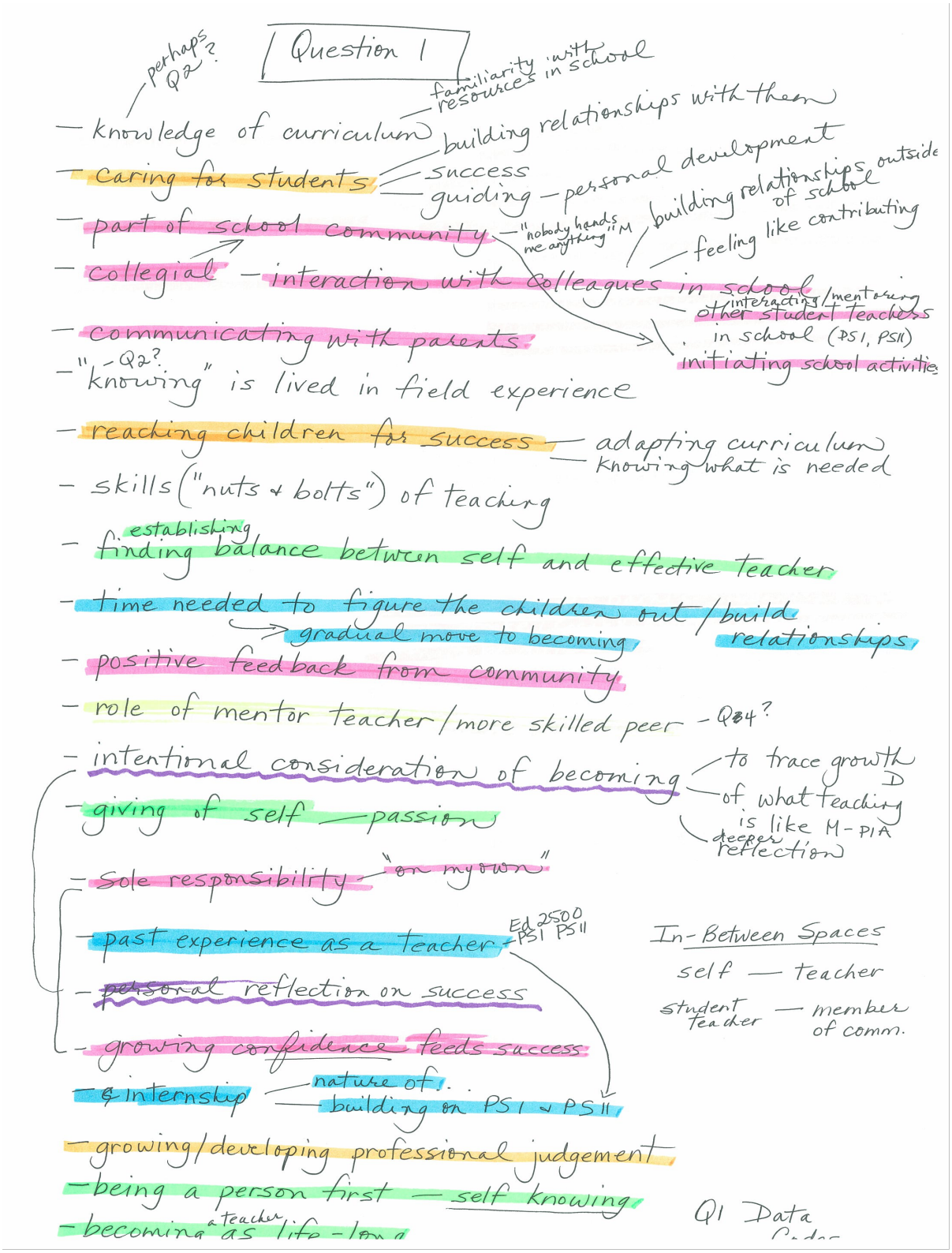
  While a speculative question, might you have thought of these constructions without being involved in this study? Why or why not?

- How have you changed?
  In what ways has this Internship changed who you are as a teacher? As a person?

- What does the phrase "*being* a teacher" mean to you today?

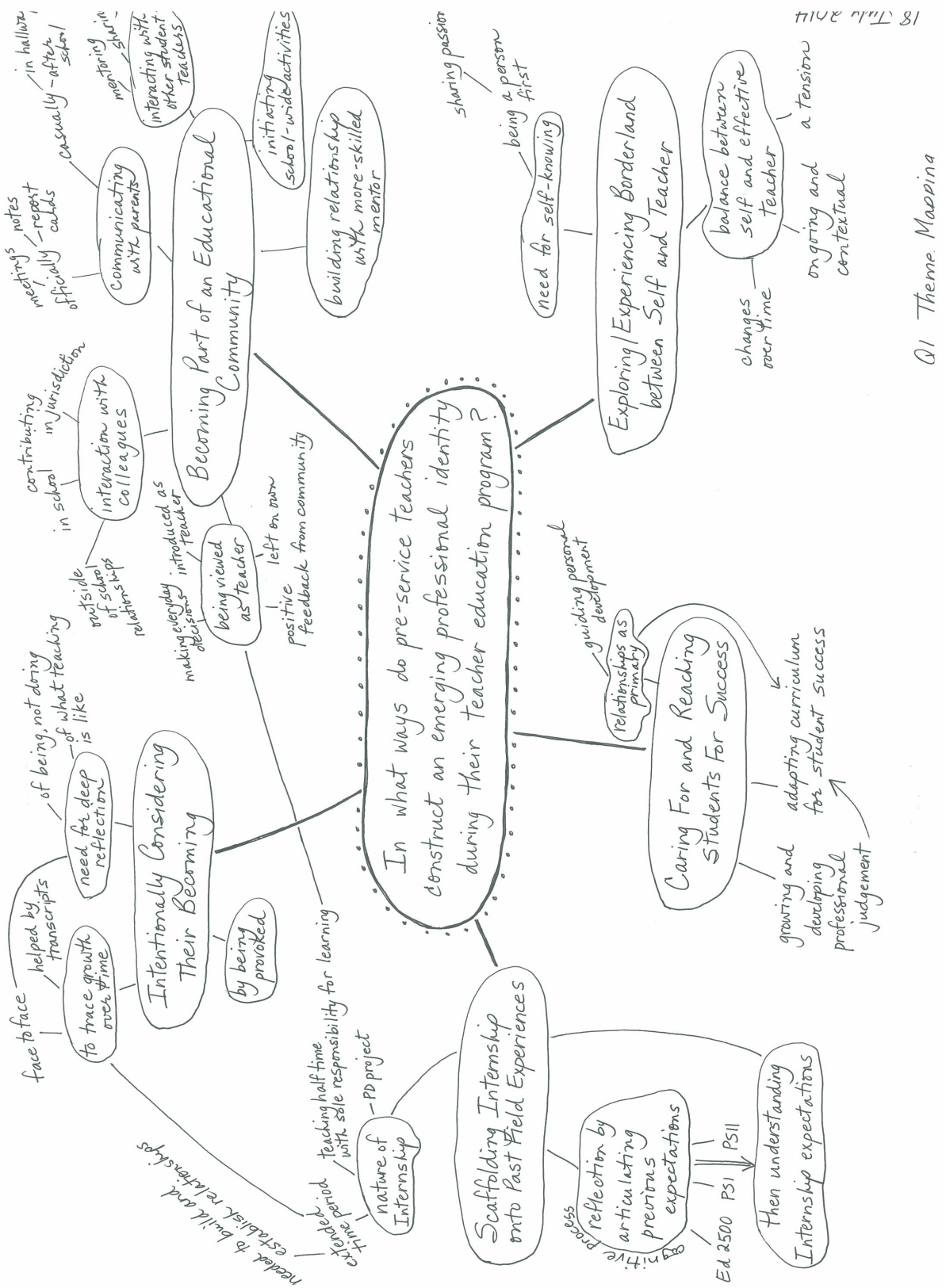
Appendix L

Emerging Themes: Question 1



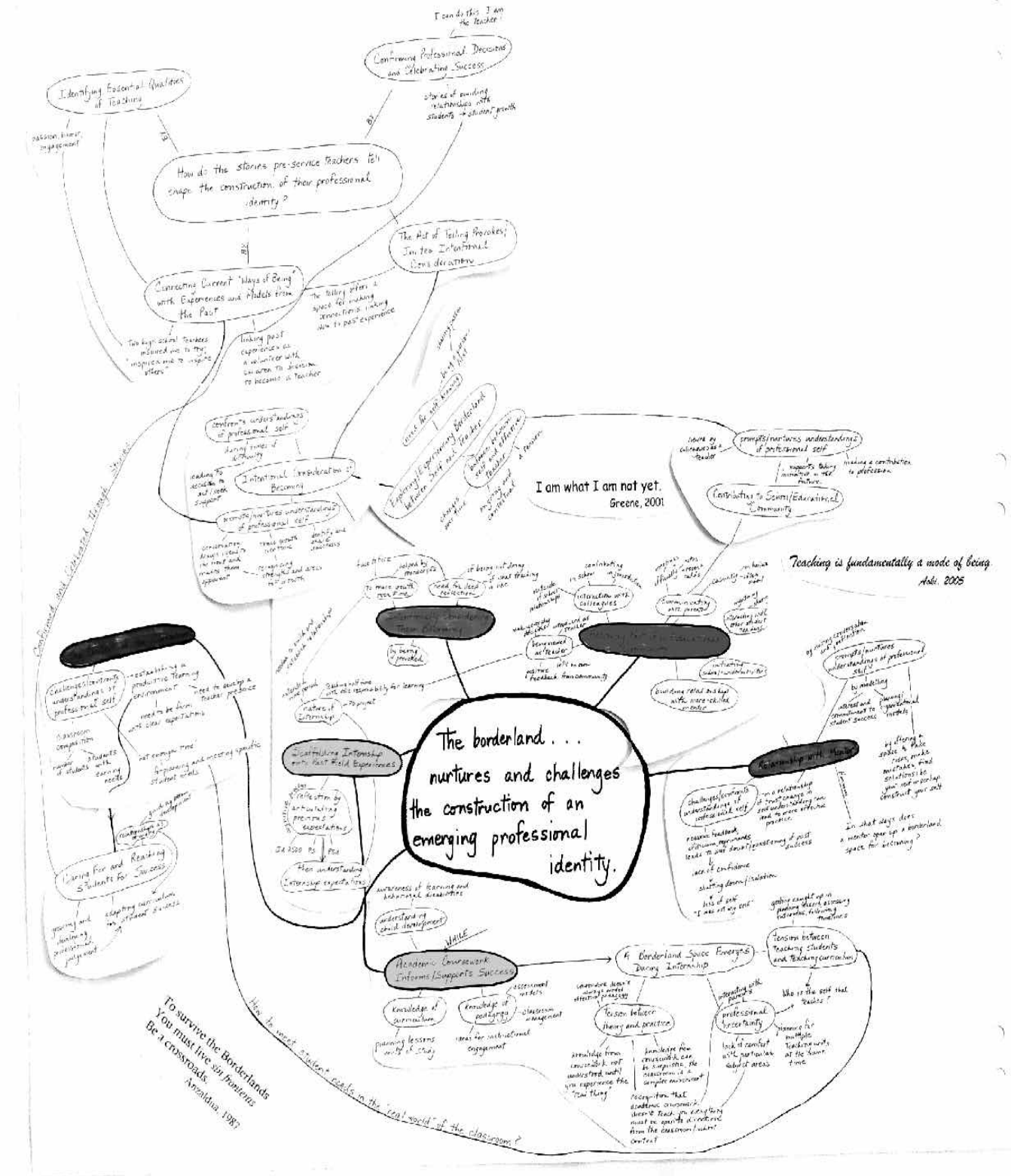
Appendix M

Concept Map: Question 1



Appendix N

Final Concept Map



Appendix O

Teaching Quality Standard
Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta (1997)

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students.

Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Interim Certification:

Teachers who hold an Interim Professional Certificate are expected to demonstrate consistently that they understand:

1. contextual variables affect teaching and learning. They know how to analyse many variables at one time, and how to respond by making reasoned decisions about their teaching practice and students' learning;

2. the structure of the Alberta education system. They know the different roles in the system, and how responsibilities and accountabilities are determined, communicated and enforced;

3. the purposes of the Guide to Education and programs of study germane to the specialization or subject disciplines they are prepared to teach. They know how to use these documents to inform and direct their planning, instruction and assessment of student progress;

4. the subject disciplines they teach. They have completed a structured program of studies through which they acquired the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions in one or more areas of specialization or subject disciplines taught in Alberta schools;

5. all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn. They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs;

6. the purposes of short, medium and long term range planning. They know how to translate curriculum and desired outcomes into reasoned, meaningful and incrementally progressive learning opportunities for students. They also understand the need to vary their plans to accommodate individuals and groups of students;

7. students' needs for physical, social, cultural and psychological security. They know how to engage students in creating effective classroom routines. They know how and when to apply a variety of management strategies that are in keeping with the situation, and that provide for minimal disruptions to students' learning;

8. the importance of respecting students' human dignity. They know how to establish, with different students, professional relationships that are characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony;

9. there are many approaches to teaching and learning. They know a broad range of instructional strategies appropriate to their area of specialization and the subject discipline they teach, and know which strategies are appropriate to help different students achieve different outcomes;

10. the functions of traditional and electronic teaching/learning technologies. They know how to use and how to engage students in using these technologies to present and deliver content, communicate effectively with others, find and secure information, research, word process, manage information, and keep records;

11. the purposes of student assessment. They know how to assess the range of learning objectives by selecting and developing a variety of classroom and large scale assessment techniques and instruments;

12. the importance of engaging parents, purposefully and meaningfully, in all aspects of teaching and learning. They know how to develop and implement strategies that create and enhance partnerships among teachers, parents and students;

13. student learning is enhanced through the use of home and community resources. They know how to identify resources relevant to teaching and learning objectives, and how to incorporate these resources into their teaching and students' learning;

14. the importance of contributing, independently and collegially, to the quality of their school. They know the strategies whereby they can, independently and collegially, enhance and maintain the quality of their schools to the benefit of students, parents, community and colleagues;

15. the importance of career-long learning. They know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers;

16. the importance of guiding their actions with a personal, overall vision of the purpose of teaching. They are able to communicate their vision, including how it has changed as a result of new knowledge, understanding and experience; and

17. they are expected to achieve the Teaching Quality Standard.

Alberta Education. (1997). Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta. education.alberta.ca/media/6734948/English%20tqs%20card%202013_3.pdf